
**AN EDITION OF A SELECTION OF POEMS
BY JOHN RANDAL BRADBURNE**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the life and work of John Randal Bradburne (1921-1979), poet, mystic, musician, cenobite, sometime soldier, pilgrim and wanderer. His religious experiences, particularly, gave rise to a vast corpus of verse, virtually all of it as yet unpublished. This study provides a brief overview of his life, and a critical and textual introduction to a sample selection of poems entitled *Bradburne's Assays*.

The biography has been compiled from published and unpublished sources, as well as from personal interviews and correspondence with Bradburne's friends, relatives and associates in South Africa, Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom. Chief among these are two unpublished biographies by Judith, Countess of Listowel.

Bradburne's extant corpus consists of over five thousand titled pieces of verse, ranging from brief lyrics to verses hundreds of pages long. The forty-seven poems comprising *Bradburne's Assays*, published here for the first time, were selected and arranged by Bradburne himself in a single sequence. A unique collection in his corpus, they are unified by their common sonnet form and their contemplative approach to secular and religious experiences.

An accurate reading text of this set of poems, transcribed from Bradburne's typescripts, currently held at Holyhead in Wales, is provided. These typescripts have been electronically scanned and are presented in the Appendix. Editorial intrusion, which has been kept to a minimum, is recorded in the critical apparatus beneath the text of the poems. Since all the poems in this edition are presented here for the first time, each is accompanied by detailed commentary on their form and content. Where necessary, interpretations of obscure passages have been suggested. A general index to the Introduction and Commentary is supplied, along with indexes of first lines and titles of the poems.

It is hoped that this thesis will stimulate further study of the life and work of a unique and intriguing figure.

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Deo Gratias.

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CONVENTIONS

For the purposes of this edition of *Bradburne's Assays*, each poem is referred to by the abbreviation *BA*, followed by a number I have assigned to it, for example *BA 27*. Poems cited here, other than *Bradburne's Assays*, have been taken from David Crystal's database in Holyhead, Wales, and are referenced according to catalogue numbers assigned by Crystal. Where a date is supplied, the catalogue numbers reflect the year of composition. For example, *Bradburne's Assays*, composed in 1970, bear the numbers 70.82-70.128. The catalogue numbers for some undated collections use abbreviated titles together with poem numbers. For example, "To the Warworn School", poem 21 in the collection "Odds and Ends", is referred to as O&E.21. Where catalogue numbers have not yet been assigned, Crystal's reference numbers have been used, as in "Ut Unum Sint": BRAD0876.

Unless indicated otherwise, Biblical quotations are from the Authorised Version of the Bible, the version used by Bradburne.

All references to Shakespeare's works are from Peter Alexander's edition of *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. London: Collins, 1951.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* has been consulted throughout this edition, except in instances where the required definition was not available, or where the definition found in *Collins English Dictionary* or in *Chambers's 20th Century Dictionary* was a closer approximation to Bradburne's meaning.

ABBREVIATIONS AND CUE TITLES

- ABD* *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Ed. David Noel Freedman, *et al.* 6 vols. New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1992.
- Brewer* Brewer, E.C. *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*. 14th ed. Rev. by Ivor H. Evans. London: Cassell, 1989.
- CE* *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. 2003. New Advent. 2004-5 <<http://www.newadvent.org/>>.
- Collins* *Collins Dictionary of the English Language*. Ed. Patrick Hanks. 2nd ed. London: Collins, 1986.
- Daily Missal* *Daily Missal and Liturgical Manual*. Compiled from the *Missale Romanum*. 1564. 14th ed. Leeds: Laverty & Sons, 1961.
- EEC* *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. Ed. Everett Ferguson. 2nd ed. 2 vols. New York: Garland, 1997.
- English Hymnal* *The English Hymnal With Tunes*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1933.
- Grove* *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. 20 vols. Ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan, 1980.
- IB* *The Interpreter's Bible*. Ed. George Arthur Buttrick, *et al.* 12 vols. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951-57.
- ICB* *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*. Ed. Charles M. Laymon. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1971.
- IDB* *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Ed. George Arthur Buttrick. 4 vols. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962.
- NCE* *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. 17 vols. Palatine, IL: Jack Heraty, 1981.
- NEB* *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 29 vols. Chicago, IL: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2003.
- OCB* *Oxford Companion to the Bible*. Ed. Bruce M. Metzger & Michael D. Coogan. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- ODCC* *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Ed. F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- ODEP* *Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*. Ed. William George Smith. 3rd ed. Rev. F.P. Wilson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

- ODQ* *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. Ed. Elizabeth Knowles. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- OED* *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. 2004-5 <<http://dictionary.oed.com>>.
- Oxford Companion to Music* Scholes, Percy A. *Oxford Companion to Music*. Ed. John Owen Ward. 10th ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Oxford Dictionary of Music* Kennedy, Michael. *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*. Rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Prayer-Book* *Prayer-Book for Religious*. Comp. F. Lasance. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1904.
- Roberts* *Roberts Birds of South Africa*. Rev. G.R. McLachlan and R. Liversidge. 3rd ed. Cape Town: John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, 1975.
- Shield Magazine* "Face to Face with John Bradburne". *Shield Magazine: A Monthly Magazine of the Catholic Church*. No. 231. A.W. Barwell, March 1965.

INTRODUCTION

The poetry of John Randal Bradburne (1921-1979) was largely inspired by the events and circumstances of his life experiences. His many idiosyncrasies are reflected, with surprising frankness, in his poems, of which there are over five thousand extant. From an early age he demonstrated a complex set of characteristics peculiarly his own. Among these were an awareness of a spiritual dimension underlying all of life, a fondness for flouting convention, a certain wilfulness verging on obstinacy, a restlessness and impetuosity, a fierce sense of justice, a quick temper, a deep love of the natural world, a great love of women, a profound sensitivity to music, including bird-song, and an appreciation of English literature. As an adult he developed an intense mystical devotion to the Trinity and the Virgin Mary, which became a governing principle in his life. All these characteristics are illustrated in his life and find expression in his poems. A thorough understanding of the events of his life and of his character thus greatly enriches any interpretation of his poetry.

BIOGRAPHY¹

John Randal Bradburne was born on 14 June 1921 in Skirwith, Cumberland, the third child of the Reverend Thomas William Bradburne (1875-1953) and his wife Erica Mae (née Hill) (1894-1982). He had two brothers and two sisters: Philip and Mary were older, Audrey and Michael younger. His father was the sixth child of the Reverend

¹ Much of the biographical detail presented here is derived from copies of two unpublished typescripts drafted by and found among the papers of Judith, Countess of Listowel, currently in the possession of her heir and executor, Lord Grantley, in London. Photostatic copies of these typescripts have been lodged in the National English Literary Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown, South Africa. The catalogue numbers referred to in the text are those assigned to these photocopies. The first of these (NELM MS 2005.66) is of a carbon copy of the longer of the two completed biographies and bears the title "The Black Lepers of Mtemwa: The Story of John Bradburne". The second, shorter biography, entitled "God's Jester: The Story of John Bradburne and the Black Lepers of M'temwa", is a photostatic copy of an original typescript (NELM MS 2005.67). Neither of these documents is dated. Judith Listowel, a professional journalist and ardent traveller, first met Bradburne during a visit to Rhodesia in 1970. In researching his biography, she interviewed and corresponded with dozens of people who had known him at various stages of his life. The research presented below relies heavily on the numerous letters Listowel quotes from Bradburne's family and friends. An additional primary source of information has been John Dove's biography *Strange Vagabond of God*, but it has needed great supplementation since Dove does not refer to many key events in Bradburne's life. Further research has been conducted by personal interview and/or correspondence with, amongst others, John Dove, Pauline Hutchings, David Harold-Barry, Celia Brigstocke and Heather Benoy.

Charles Randal Bradburne² and his wife Sarah Catherine (née Husband), while his mother had been born in India, the second child of Arthur Philip Hill and his wife Mabel (née Higgins). Thomas Bradburne had followed in his father's footsteps by entering the Church, and, at the time of Bradburne's birth, was the vicar of the (Anglican) Church of St John the Evangelist in Skirwith (a position held from 1913-1929). Thomas Bradburne had been educated at Pembroke College, Cambridge; his father at Trinity College, Oxford.

Bradburne's early years were spent surrounded by the natural beauty of the Cumbrian countryside. He revelled in its magnificent fells, lakes and wildlife. Bradburne enjoyed the devotion of his parents and nanny at Skirwith, and grew to be a sturdy, healthy child. As vicarage children, he and his siblings had a modest upbringing, apart from the treats they were given by generous parishioners. In the absence of neighbourhood children, they relied on themselves for entertainment, and spent much time playing outdoors with one another and their many pets – mice, owls, rabbits, fish and birds. Church-going with his family was a large and unavoidable part of Bradburne's boyhood, one which he accepted.

He learnt to read and write from his father and nanny, who used a Victorian reading primer, inappropriately called *Reading Without Tears*.³ Bradburne so loathed these lessons that he escaped up a tree in the garden whenever a lesson seemed imminent. (Tree-climbing became and remained one of Bradburne's favourite pastimes.) His mother read to the children every afternoon. Amongst the literary works she selected were *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, and the works of Beatrix Potter and Charles Dickens. On Sundays she read from *The Young Christian's Progress*.⁴ Since both parents were at home for most of the day, the Bradburnes' family life was close.

They were a cultured family, with a deep interest in music, literature and art. Early on, John Bradburne developed a great love of literature and music. In the course of his life he learnt to play numerous wind instruments, including the recorder, clarinet, bugle and flute. He also learnt the organ and was said to have a beautiful singing voice (see *JBMS Newsletter*, "Winter 2000", 2). As a child he spent time listening to gramophone recordings of music by such composers as J.S. Bach, Wagner, Mendelssohn and Bizet. He developed a great love of madrigals and motets, and was particularly fond of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English composers, such as Thomas Tallis,

² The Bradburne family are landed gentry of Derbyshire whose known ancestors date back to the thirteenth century.

³ This book, by the fervent Mrs Favell Lee Mortimer, is full of tales of gruesome injuries and deaths.

⁴ An adaptation of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* by Rev. J.A. Douglas, published by Faith Press, London, 1911.

William Byrd, Henry Purcell, John Dowland and Thomas Morley. Later, Bradburne also developed a great love of poetry from this period, which greatly influenced his writing style, as evidenced by his preference for archaic English (see pp. 56-57).

At the age of eight, Bradburne was sent away to join his brother Philip at Seascale, a preparatory school in Cumberland. Bradburne was so unhappy there that he cried himself to sleep almost every night. He missed home greatly, for which he was bullied and made fun of by the other boys. He tried to get himself expelled, and had frequent tantrums when the time came to return to school after the holidays. His sister, Mary, described Bradburne as a very passionate child, with strong feelings of love or hate. He had a hypersensitive nature and an uncontrollable, fiery temper that would explode in physical rages, but he was also an excellent mimic and would often entertain the family with his imitations of different people (see NELM MS 2005.66 9).

In 1929 the family moved to Norfolk, where Bradburne's father had been appointed vicar of Tilney All Saints, King's Lynn. The children missed the Skirwith countryside, and the family soon took a great disliking to the Vicarage, claiming it was haunted. (The house had witnessed the shooting of a young girl and the death by hanging of a previous incumbent from the kitchen ceiling.) The one consolation for Bradburne was the heronry in the neighbouring village of Islington, where he would spend hours watching the birds in a colony of some sixty nests (see NELM MS 2005.66 23).

Bradburne and his elder brother had to negotiate a 250-mile train journey between Cumberland and Norfolk at the beginning and end of term, until the summer of 1930. The brothers were then both transferred to King's School, Ely, in Cambridgeshire, but Bradburne was so miserable there that he soon ran away. After he was found in a terrible condition, his parents brought him home to rest for a few days. Eventually they decided to have him tutored privately along with a few other boys to prepare him for his next school. A family acquaintance, Laurence Sargent, ran a cramming school called Up Pantiles, at Westgate on Sea, Kent. He agreed in January 1933 to prepare the eleven-year-old Bradburne for his entrance examination into senior school. Bradburne fared much better under Sargent's tutelage.

In the same year the family moved again, when Thomas Bradburne became Rector of St Agnes Church in Cawston, Norfolk. Bradburne's parents remained here until their retirement in 1946. Bradburne grew to love this home and the wooded countryside nearby in which he spent many a happy summer holiday.

In 1934 Bradburne was accepted into Gresham's, a public school close to Cawston in the town of Holt, and took up residence in Farfield House at the school.

Sargent had entertained hopes that Bradburne might win a scholarship, but he lacked the necessary motivation and made little effort. Thanks to a wealthy patron his parents were able to afford the school fees. Bradburne enjoyed the increased amount of freedom afforded him at Gresham's, as well as the absence of corporal punishment. Although he soon became known as a bully himself⁵ he began to learn how to control his temper and sensitive nature, and developed an increasing sense of responsibility. His talent for mimicking teachers made him popular with the other boys.

The school syllabus included lessons in English, Latin, French, Mathematics, Geography, History and Divinity. Bradburne developed an early interest in English literature, and a great admiration for many writers and poets. He played minor roles in some of the annual productions of Shakespearean plays, including *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Henry V*, *Twelfth Night* and *Romeo and Juliet*, which were performed in the school's open-air theatre. He played hockey, rugby and cricket, took music lessons and sang tenor in the school choir. He also took up archery and falconry with enthusiasm, managing to train and tame a falcon until it finally escaped. While at Gresham's Bradburne did his military training in the Officer's Training Corps (O.T.C.) and played bugle in its band. (O.T.C. was a regular part of British education, and compulsory for all boys at the school during Bradburne's time there.)

Instead of going for the customary Sunday afternoon walk at school he was often found climbing in the school woods, either alone or with a friend. He loved climbing a particularly tall tree, which he nicknamed the "Monarch". He said it reached a height of ninety-seven feet. In later poems he describes the views of Norfolk from the top, from where he could see all the way to the coast.

At home in Cawston, where he sometimes cycled to spend weekends, Bradburne climbed everything in sight, from the enormous copper beech in the front garden of the rectory to the fifteenth-century rood screen inside the church. During school holidays he used to cycle all over Norfolk with his elder sister, Mary, visiting village churches where he would play the organ after a glass of cider at the local pub. They spent time bird watching in the marshes, swimming in the sea and exploring the woods. Other forms of entertainment included teenage tennis parties, which his parents held at Cawston Rectory.

In June 1939, shortly before leaving Gresham's, Bradburne qualified for the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, the centre for the training of officer cadets in the British Army, but he did not secure a vacancy. He had vague plans to go up to Oxford, but was untroubled by what the future might bring. When the Second World War broke

⁵ Personal correspondence with Mr Tony Foster, a close friend of Bradburne's at Gresham's.

out on 3 September 1939 and mandatory conscription was enforced, Bradburne's future was decided for him. He gave up any career plans of his own, and waited for his call-up to the British Army. In the interim, he found a job packaging flower and vegetable seeds in a store in Twyford, Berkshire. A friend of his, Stephen King, was already working at the firm. In his spare time Bradburne climbed trees, went ice-skating and listened to records of J.S. Bach and Brahms. For the time being the two friends were carefree.

Their time together ended when Bradburne was called up in June 1940. From August to November he was sent for rigorous training in the Officer Cadet Training Unit 162 (OCTU 162) in Bulford, Wiltshire. He hated the strict discipline and military life, but completed the course. His talent for mimicry again stood him in good stead, and he made friends easily with fellow cadets. He received his commission as a second lieutenant in the Indian Army on 20 December 1940, the same day as his elder brother, Philip. While the brothers waited for their transport to India, they spent a month with their old headmaster from Seascale, Frank Burnett. Once more Bradburne's days were relaxed. He enjoyed the holiday, flirting with the local girls. Bradburne, who was now almost six feet tall, good looking, with light brown hair and bright blue eyes, took great pleasure in female company (see NELM MS 2005.66 28, 31). In addition, he was happy to be back in the beautiful Cumbrian countryside.

The brothers finally set sail from Liverpool for India in February 1941, aboard the *S.S. Mulbera*, which transported both cargo and passengers, and formed part of a large convoy. For the ten-week voyage, the brothers, who shared a cabin, occupied themselves by sunbathing, taking Urdu lessons, reading about India and flirting with the few unattached ladies on board. Bradburne especially enjoyed the stopover in Cape Town, where the ship docked for three days. Upon arrival in Bombay on 15 April 1941 the two brothers were both sent to Hyderabad, in the Deccan Plateau, though to separate divisions: John to the 28th Indian Infantry Brigade, Philip to the 27th. John was posted to the Second Battalion of the Ninth Gurkha Rifles, and stationed at Bollarum. His bungalow was seven miles from Philip's so the two were able to meet occasionally.

On 19 May 1941 Bradburne wrote to his parents of his first impression of India:

India is a weird country – the people give me the impression of being passively miserable, and they just seem to exist without any particular love or interest in anything. Their predominant quality seems to be of absolute refusal to do anything for nothing. But the East is interesting me, even if it 'isn't alluring'.

(Quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 36)

He enjoyed some of the scenery and wildlife, but was adamant that nothing was more beautiful than the English countryside, which he missed greatly. While he found local

Indians exasperating, he developed a high regard for the Gurkha men (of Nepalese origin) who served under him in his battalion, and he would play basketball with them in his free time. They, in turn, though they admired him, were bewildered by his behaviour – Bradburne was still in the habit of climbing trees whenever he could and would often play his recorder in the high branches. He enjoyed flirting with young women in India, and felt relatively relaxed for the time being. This was not to last, however, as in August 1941 Bradburne's brigade set sail for Malaya⁶ (the Malay Peninsula and Singapore). A few weeks later Philip's left for Persia, and later Iraq. The brothers did not meet again until 1946.

Upon landing at Penang in September, Bradburne took an instant liking to the countryside. He wrote home:

Malaya is one of God's own countries with one of the Devil's own climates. Sticky as anything, and rains every day intermittently. We are surrounded by high hills, covered in equatorial forest. Colours are really vivid... All in all, I like it very much, ten times as much as India. (*op. cit.* 40)

When Japan invaded Malaya in December, not only were the British taken completely by surprise, but, having grossly underestimated the Japanese forces, they were woefully unprepared for the onslaught. Within hours of the bombing of Pearl Harbour (7 December 1941), the Japanese landed at Singora (Songkhla) and Patani (Pattani) in Siam (Thailand), and Kota Bharu on the north-eastern coast of Malaya. After their initial invasions, Japanese forces worked their way down through Malaya, engaging the Allied forces in jungle warfare and driving them out of the peninsula. Without sufficient training or equipment, the Allied forces were soon overrun, without having been able to destroy much of their equipment or supplies. The Japanese, boosted by these supplies, were able to advance even more successfully, using a combination of infantry and air forces. By 15 February 1942 Japan had taken Malaya, killed and wounded some 9000 Allied troops, and captured a further 130,000 (see Swinson 721). Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom at the time, later described the loss of Malaya as "the greatest disaster in British military history" ("Malaya Campaign", *Encyclopedia of World War II*, 3: 935).

Bradburne resented the barbaric fighting methods imposed by the Japanese, whose ferocious frontal attack and encirclement of Allied troops meant hand-to-hand combat with rifles, bayonets, kukris,⁷ machetes and revolvers. He understood the costly

⁶ Place names known to Bradburne have been used here, with any later changes recorded in parenthesis.

⁷ Heavy, curved knives used by the Gurkhas.

mistakes of the British military command, and was furious about the superior training, equipment and air cover of the Japanese forces.

Following the rapid fall of Jitra, Bradburne was involved in heavy fighting when his battalion bore the brunt of the rearguard action in the retreat from Alor Star.⁸ The battalion went on to suffer heavy casualties in the battle of Slim River on 7 January 1942. Those who survived, and were unfortunate not to secure departing transport with other divisions, dispersed to avoid capture, and attempted to make their escape back to India as best they could. Bradburne paired off with the commanding officer of his company, Captain James Hart, under whom he served as Second Lieutenant. The two survived for five weeks, hiding in the jungle and living off wild fruit, roots and whatever rice they could obtain from villagers, who showed them secret paths through the forests.

The effect of all this on Bradburne was traumatic, and in his distress he turned to God in prayer. He never talked to his family about his war experiences, but later told a friend in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) that it was in the Malayan jungle that he first felt he had a sixth sense and decided to seek God more actively (see p. 36).

Bradburne and Hart headed for the coast near Kuala Selangor, where they managed to capture a sampan and set sail for Sumatra. Their attempt at escape was thwarted when they were struck by the tail end of a typhoon and washed up on a Malayan beach. With their sampan wrecked, the exhausted pair, their shoes in tatters, found themselves stranded until they met up with some Scotsmen from a Highland Regiment. This time the group found a Malayan fisherman and forced him at gunpoint to transport them to Sumatra in his sampan. By this stage Bradburne was very sick and completely reliant on his companion. Bradburne was half starved, suffering from cerebral malaria, sunstroke and a nervous breakdown.

The group reached Bagansiapiapi on 15 February 1942, the day Singapore fell. The local hospital immediately sent Bradburne to a large modern hospital in Medan for treatment. After ten days he was well enough to stand up, but his mind was still badly affected. Years later, in Rhodesia, he confided what had happened to him to a friend, known only by the pseudonym Joan.⁹

John told me of his growing belief that he had a sixth sense and had to use it to find God – how for the first time in his life he really prayed but could not find God – how his body and his mind began to disintegrate and he asked for help and did not get it. His nerves gave way – he was no longer in control of himself – he had visions – only later did he learn that this was due to cerebral malaria and sunstroke... . He also told me of the excellent treatment at the Dutch Hospital in

⁸ The Allied forces fought a fighting retreat from Jitra to Alor Star.

⁹ “Joan” wished to remain anonymous when Judith Listowel interviewed her, hence the pseudonym. See NELM MS 2005.67 21, 24.

Sumatra and what happened after he had been allowed to get up... Then he said: 'At the time I went out of my mind and for three days I was locked up. When I was at the bottom of my insanity, I had a vision of Our Lady. This and my newly found faith led me out of the Abyss.' (Quoted in NELM MS 2005.67 22-23)

He also confided in Jack Dunn, whom he met after the war, that it was during this time, after his vision of the Virgin Mary in hospital, that he became interested in Roman Catholicism.

As the Japanese were now establishing control over Sumatra, the British had to flee the island in haste. Bradburne was sent, probably by air, to Padang on the west coast. Here, on 1 March 1942, Hart carried the unconscious Bradburne onto an already overloaded destroyer, the *H.M.S. Tenedos*, and put him down as the gangplank was being lifted. The ship ferried them to Colombo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), from where the cruiser *S.S. Chitral* transported them to Bombay. Hart and Bradburne were two of only eight surviving men from their battalion not to be captured by the Japanese. (Hart is believed to have committed suicide a few years later by throwing himself into the Thames: see NELM MS 2005.66 44a.)

Bradburne's first letter home since October 1941 was written from Bombay on 16 March 1942. It reveals a dramatically altered mind. The composition, so different from earlier letters, is illogical and haphazard, with some mystical elements. A passage from it reads:

Life in peacetime is a fair fight with the dunce, wherever he is found. Our war is a fight against anti-Christ, using the methods of anti-Christ. And when it is over, I am going to Wells, in a country where summer is set, to prepare for a fair fight. I called Father 'Fist'¹⁰ unwittingly – but now I realize that he always fought fairly. Mother I called 'Mist' – and in a mist is a great deal of love and beauty. And Philip – 'Broibe' was a word without meaning and it signifies nothing. But I know Philip, and what is the first thing men say of him: 'How straight he is as he walks.' And Mary – Mary is a true painter, and was with me very often in my dreams. Audrey likes tawdry goods, cheap good, inexpensive things – simple goods. And Michael I still call 'Lamppost' – a tall post with a light on the top, a light to lighten darkness. Do you still wonder, Fist, whether Shakespeare is Bacon?

The Baconian Theory
Fiddlesticks
The Shakespearean Truth
Shakespeare is bacon
Shakespeare is dead pig
Shakespeare is self which
No longer exists.

¹⁰ As a child Bradburne nicknamed all the members of his family except Audrey. His father and mother were "Fist" and "Mist" respectively. Philip was "Broibe", Mary was "Mare", and Michael was "Lamppost" (see NELM MS 2005.66 7).

Shakespeare is a Christian – true and honest – and the father of English literature.
O Wonderful, wonderful, 'tis wonderful, passing strange.

Yes, strange is passing, still passing and will not be past until Utopia is here – world without end. And I want to help with the Amen.

(Quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 45-46)

After a very brief period spent recovering in Bombay, Bradburne returned to the Ninth Gurkha Brigade towards the end of March 1942, where he joined the Third Battalion. They were training in Dehra Dun in the foothills of the Himalayas. It was here that Bradburne met his lifelong friend, Thurston Dove (more commonly known as John Dove), likewise a young British officer at the time. The two became instant companions, sharing a room in the same bungalow, where Bradburne would play records early in the morning of Bach and of Beethoven's *Appassionata Sonata*. In April he was promoted to adjutant of his battalion, which gave him hope of the offer of a captaincy shortly – a hope that was fulfilled the following April. His job involved a great deal of office work, but he was content, writing to his parents: "Life at present is as good as I've ever known it, twelve hours work a day, good friends and lovely surroundings" (quoted in NELM MS 2005.67 28). Bradburne and his cousin, Peter Comber, who later married Bradburne's sister Mary, took long walks together in the foothills of the Himalayas as Bradburne tried to come to terms with the effect the war and cerebral malaria had had on him.

During this time Bradburne developed a deep respect for and attraction to Eastern mysticism. Its influence on him was profound and long lasting. In Rhodesia, many years later, his interest was still keen, which led him to borrow a friend's copy of the Bhagavad Gita to read.

Eastern prayer wheels and the repetitive plaint: 'Om mani padme hum' quite fascinated him. Later he delighted in the opinion that 'Om mani padme hum' was a corruption of 'Domine permene mecum'. (Dove 16)

He adopted as a personal mantra the single syllable "Om", which he used in his personal meditation as he sought to commune with God.

Alongside his spiritual development, Bradburne also enjoyed the social life of the hill station, attending Mess evenings and the occasional party at the Dehra Dun Club. Dove described Bradburne as "the life and soul of a party with his antics and ready wit" (Dove 13). He fell in love with numerous beautiful young ladies in the area and as a result was said to have "sustained a series of severe heartbreaks" (Hanley 7).

Bradburne and Dove took leave together the following year (1943), travelling by train to Naini Tal, higher up in the Himalayas, over six thousand feet above sea level.

They spent three memorable weeks recuperating in this beautiful mountain region. As became increasingly apparent in his letters, Bradburne was being deeply influenced by Dove, who had been raised a Roman Catholic. Dove, in turn, claimed that his later decision to join the Society of Jesus was a result of Bradburne's influence. Although Bradburne never mentioned Dove's name in his letters home, he did write of his spiritual dilemma:

I am faced with the everlasting problem of conquering self – which only God can do: I am miserably insufficient, but my devout intention stands. The other problem is the Roman Catholic Church, but that must be faced thoroughly later on: at this time, I have the deepest respect for that Church; it seems to me that all those things which we hold dear, are native of her, whilst foreign to the Church of England... .
(Quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 54)

Knowing how much distress a conversion to Rome would cause his father, he added "Please know that I will not treat this matter lightly; I realise both its importance and my own too facile nature" (*loc. cit.*). Bradburne decided to dedicate his life to the service of Christ, a vocation he initially thought would lead him into the parish ministry. However, he soon decided against this, and instead saved his monthly salary for tuition fees at Oxford, hoping to read English when he returned.

Following Japan's successful invasion and occupation of Burma in 1942 and Britain's humiliating and drawn-out retreat, General Orde Wingate devised a plan to recapture north Burma. He formed and led the Chindits,¹¹ a special force trained to operate behind Japanese lines in Burma using long-range penetration operations. On the strength of the initial Chindit expedition in February 1943, Wingate planned a second expedition. In preparation for this, Bradburne's battalion, now part of the Chindits, began strenuous training in jungle warfare.

With more action imminent and with his increasing devotion to God, Bradburne wrestled with the tension of his simultaneous loyalty to Christ and his country. Since he found little time for prayer, he decided to use his military duties for God's glory. "He vowed to save the wounded in the face of danger; to climb the highest tree to gather information; to undertake any dangerous mission – but not to kill" (NELM MS 2005.66 52).

With the Japanese involved in operations to invade India, Wingate launched the second Chindit expedition, "Operation Thursday", on 5 March 1944. Bradburne's battalion, along with the rest of the 77th Brigade (of which they were a part), were flown

¹¹ Derived from the Burmese word "Chinthé", "the name of a mythical, griffinlike creature, stone effigies of which guard the entrance to Burmese temples" ("Chindits", *Encyclopedia of World War II*, 1: 339).

into Burma in gliders towed by Dakotas.¹² Their gliders – loaded with men (mostly Gurkhas), ammunition, mules, equipment and supplies – landed in a jungle clearing code-named “Broadway”. Many crashed in the initial landings, sustaining heavy casualties. The one directly in front of Bradburne’s crashed into the trees, killing the mules it was carrying. Once on the ground the 77th Brigade were given the task of cutting Japanese communications, blocking their flow of supplies and reinforcements northwards, and inflicting maximum damage on the Japanese forces. They did this by establishing various bases and from there attacking road, rail and river traffic in the area. They were repeatedly engaged in fierce jungle fighting in close combat with the Japanese. Throughout their time in Burma they were forced to rely solely on airdrops for supplies. Their rations very seldom included fresh food, a factor which contributed to the deteriorating health of the soldiers.

When the monsoon came, the fighting continued in a sea of mud, with the Chindits often starving and short of ammunition since the low lying cloud prevented supply drops being made to them by the RAF and USAAF. Inflicting enormous casualties on the enemy, they also took heavy casualties from battle and sickness until, at the last, broken in body but not in spirit, less than 5% of those who still survived were judged on medical examination to be physically fit enough to continue the fight.

(Towill backcover)¹³

Their orders were remorseless: the 77th Brigade was to continue fighting under exceptionally difficult conditions without relief. By August men were dying of undiagnosed illnesses. The doctors speculated that having “suffered so much and for so long...some of them quite simply had just lost the will to live” (Towill 119).

During this time Bradburne served in the mortar platoon, despite contracting malaria again, for which he dosed himself with quinine. The mortar platoon operated three-inch mortars, often under heavy fire and without infantry protection of their own. Major S.N. Shead, a fellow officer, remembers an incident where, in the midst of battle, Bradburne leapt out of the slit trench and strode around with his arms outstretched shouting to the Gurkhas “God will protect you”. There are mixed reports as to his behaviour during this campaign. Some officers remember him as highly effective and brave. Others describe how in the thick of battle he was mostly bird watching, singing psalms and attending to the wounded. Bradburne himself described his experiences in later poetry:

¹² The DC-3 military transport plane, developed from a commercial airliner for use in World War II (see “DC-3”, *NEB*, 3: 927).

¹³ Bill Towill’s book, *A Chindit’s Chronicle*, written after the Second World War, records his experiences as a Chindit in the Third Battalion of the Ninth Gurkha Rifles. He knew Bradburne personally, and mentions him specifically in the book. Much of the material about Bradburne’s battalion recorded here relies on the details supplied by this book.

They sent me to Burma a "Chindit" to be -
To make war once again on the fierce Japanees!

There, gormless as ever, I followed the band,
Completely oblivious of all which was planned:
We squelched through thick mud, heard the music of shells
On occasions, and also lugubrious yells
With which whimsical gibbons saluted the morn:
And fair o'er those hills were the sunset and dawn -

Far away in Eastern Burma
We did hear the watchmen calling-
Whooping cries and high crescendoes
Midst the forest, at the dawning;
'Twas a strange rhapsodic clamour,
Charming half yet half appalling!
Haunting chorus – still I hear it
Fading into mists of morning... (from "Ut Unum Sint"; BRAD0876)

Being thus haunted I did seek the Church
Of Life Divine, who found me in my search...
(*"To the Warworn School"*, ll. 84-85; O&E.21)

In August 1944 Bradburne and the surviving members of his battalion were flown back to India for rest and treatment. In October they returned once more to fight in Burma and continued to do so until April 1945.

Upon returning to India for the last time, Bradburne wrote home on 22 April, telling his parents nothing of the campaign, but focusing instead on his good health and an exciting opportunity to sing baritone in the Dehra Dun Church Choir. He also intimated that poetry writing was forming a large part of his life:

I can write freely in English, and poetry at times flows as fast as I can write it...
All this is the Lord's doing and all the thanks are to Him... A first class in English is by no means beyond my capacity. (Quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 59)

In September 1945 he was demobilised. He set sail for England and reached Cawston in October.

Bradburne arrived home a few days before his parents' departure from Norfolk. His father, having recently celebrated his seventieth birthday, had decided to retire to West Hill, Devon. Bradburne's family were shocked at Bradburne's thinness and concerned by his staring eyes, but no amount of persuasion could induce him to relate anything of his war experiences to them. At some stage in October he was admitted to the military hospital in Dumfries, Scotland, but the nature of his illness is not known.

On his return, Bradburne found that his new religious ideas clashed badly with those of his father. Not only had he been influenced by Eastern mysticism, but he was

actively wrestling with whether or not to convert to Roman Catholicism, a move which his father strongly opposed. Over the next few years his father wrote him several letters trying to dissuade him from this move. Thomas Bradburne was also disappointed by his son's lack of enthusiasm to read English at Oxford as he had previously planned to do. Instead, Bradburne became preoccupied with his dilemma over conversion, and retreated into solitude, renting a house near West Hill in the village of Sidbury.

The Hardwicke family were among the people in the neighbourhood whom he befriended. Bradburne became a daily visitor at the home of Mrs Cecil¹⁴ Hardwicke and her three grown-up children. Before long he fell in love with her daughter Anne. He proposed to Anne the following year, and she accepted him, to the delight of her family. It was to be a turbulent and short-lived engagement, however. Although neither explained the reasons for breaking it off, they were both wrestling with religious questions at the time, and Bradburne, for one, needed to clear his mind.

In an attempt to do just this, he visited his birthplace in Skirwith in the winter of 1946. Of this his sister Mary wrote:

It was not an altogether happy return visit. John had been wounded spiritually as well as physically by his war experiences. He had been thrown off-balance. He went to Skirwith to re-establish the roots of his origin – but it often happens that a return to the enchanted places in later life is met with a rather shattering disillusion. The conflicting emotions of John's pending conversion were on him – and he bore them in silence. . . . He fitted even less well into any conventional groove than he had done in his youth. He was always reaching out; it was now that he became subject to frequent fits of depression. (Quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 67)

In order “to clear the cobwebs of war from his mind” (Dove 32), Bradburne found a job later that year with the Forestry Commission in Quantock Forest, Somerset, alongside several other ex-servicemen. “He loved the hills and the trees and the clean air. He could think here and pray a little” (*loc. cit.*). Soon he began spending weekends in Taunton, taking instruction in the Roman Catholic faith from a local priest. He left the Forestry Commission in 1947, and for a while tried several odd jobs in Sidbury, including one as a cleaner at Devon County Hospital. None of the jobs suited him, and so he took a sailing holiday in April 1947 on the Norfolk Broads with his old friend Stephen King, to whom he confided his spiritual quandary.

In the summer of 1947 he made a decisive move to Buckfastleigh in Devon to take instruction in the Roman Catholic faith at Buckfast Abbey. There he met Dom Raphael Stones OSB, a World War I veteran who had served as a chaplain in Burma in World War II. Stones took him in, and for a while Bradburne helped in the monastery

¹⁴ She was known as “Cecil”, possibly a shortening of the feminine form of the name, “Cecile”.

garden and cemetery whilst Stones offered him spiritual direction. In order to earn his living Bradburne later found a job as a labourer on a building site in Buckfastleigh. On the Feast of Christ the King (26 October 1947), in Buckfast Abbey, he was received into the Roman Catholic Church. Dove was delighted, Bradburne's father dismayed. When asked, many years later, why he had converted, Bradburne replied:

I wanted to be sure of salvation. I came to the conclusion that there could not be more than one true Church that Christ had founded, and by the Grace of God I got there. There was in me a great desire to belong to a society which could embrace a maximum, and not an exclusive minimum of people on their way to Heaven. The influence of India and four and a half years in the East stirred my mind a good deal. I was deeply influenced by a friend of mine¹⁵ with me in the army out there... .

(*JBMS Newsletter*, Summer 2004, 6)

Bradburne's new Roman Catholic godfather, Hugh Symons, recalls Bradburne telling him, very seriously, after his conversion "that deep down within himself he hoped that his end on earth would be a martyr's" (NELM MS 2005.66 72).

Bradburne decided to enter the Benedictine monastery at Buckfast Abbey. His superiors did not discern a vocation to the Benedictine life in him, but, when he insisted, he was provisionally accepted as a postulant. Since "it was customary to wait for two years after one's conversion to Rome before entering religious life" (Dove 41), Bradburne was forced to find work elsewhere before he could be considered.

He drifted around the country for six months, but, in the spring of 1948, took up a post as a junior teacher at Gaveney House, a small preparatory school in Exmouth, Devon. He taught general subjects to the eight- to ten-year-olds, and soon became a popular member of staff. During this time he began writing poetry more seriously, a task which he later described as "an integral part of [his] vocation" (*JBMS Newsletter*, Summer 2004, 5) (see p. 48). He began to see his writing as a talent to be used for the glory of God. He also expressed his desire to use it as a vehicle with which to convey his ideas memorably.

At Gaveney House Bradburne befriended a fellow teacher, Margaret Smith, who was sixteen years his senior. Both being musical, they went to concerts together, and also shared many meals. As the friendship grew, Bradburne fell in love with Margaret and she with him. He began to rely on her more and more – as an older woman she sensed that she was able to boost his self-confidence and help him come to terms with life.¹⁶ Because of the great difference in their ages – he was in his late twenties, she was in her early

¹⁵ John Dove.

¹⁶ This material has been taken from an interview with Margaret Smith, conducted by Judith Listowel in 1980. See NELM MS 2005.66 76-79.

forties – she regarded marriage as out of the question and felt she should end the relationship.

Towards the end of the summer term in 1949 (Bradburne's fifth at the school), one of the boys drowned during a school outing to the sea. A week later, in this tense atmosphere, Bradburne once more made declarations of his love, and proposed to Margaret during the last cricket match of the season. Embarrassed that the boys might overhear their conversation and gossip, she urged him to be quiet. When he paid no attention she lost her temper and told him to stop it. He leapt up, walked away, and did not stop walking until he reached Buckfast Abbey, twenty-three miles away. Meanwhile, worried about what had become of him, she told the headmaster of the incident. When Bradburne phoned the school the next morning to say he would return shortly, the headmaster advised him to save himself the trouble as there were only two days left of the school term; his belongings would be sent to him. He never returned and Margaret never saw him again. She had no idea what had become of him until thirty years later when she heard Judith, Countess of Listowel, reporting the events surrounding his death in Rhodesia on BBC radio.

At Buckfast Abbey his old spiritual director, Dom Raphael Stones, advised him to return to Sidbury and find a new job. Bradburne wrote to John Dove to tell him of recent events. Dove wrote back suggesting that they make a pilgrimage to Lourdes together to pray. Lourdes, in south-west France, became one of the most popular Marian shrines in the world after Bernadette Soubirous's visions there of the Virgin Mary in 1858. In August 1949 Dove and Bradburne travelled by train and boat to Lourdes, where they joined a pilgrim group led by a Benedictine monk. Although Bradburne had taken to saying the rosary regularly, he was not familiar with the Roman Catholic devotion to Mary. "Recent convert that he was, he found so much ceremony in her honour rather overbearing" (Dove 50) and decided to seek advice from the group leader. The Benedictine Father instructed him to "Allow her to show herself to [him] in her way" (*loc. cit.*). He did so "and it later led to a close and extraordinary bond" (*loc. cit.*).

Back in England, Bradburne bade farewell to Dove, who had decided to enter the Society of Jesus, and returned to Sidbury. Cecil Hardwicke's son Adrian suggested that he and Bradburne go trawling together. After hitchhiking to Fleetwood, Lancashire, they found work as stokers on separate trawlers – at that stage unaware of what such a job would entail. It was a horrible experience. Bradburne found himself shovelling coal into the furnace in the boiler room for twelve hours a day, while the boat lurched about in gale-force winds. It was too much for him and he soon quit.

Upon returning home he decided to join another religious order as a monk – this time he chose the Carthusians. Thus, in February 1950, he made his way to St Hugh's Charterhouse in Parkminster, Sussex. The monks accepted him as a working layman, and appointed him as their doorkeeper. They also allowed him to sing in the choir, which delighted him. The Sub-Prior, Dom Andrew Gray, gave him spiritual direction. The Carthusian Order, an exceedingly austere contemplative order, was founded by St Bruno of Cologne in the eleventh century. The monks live in almost complete solitude, meeting only three times a day in the chapel, and once a week for recreation. For the rest of the time they recite the Office, pray, read, study and work alone.¹⁷

Bradburne adapted to the lifestyle of the monks. Although he struggled initially to cope with the broken sleep, he rose in the middle of the night for the sung Divine Office (Matins and Lauds), and again early in the morning for Prime and Mass in the chapel. He grew accustomed to having only one or two meals a day, but suffered chilblains from the cold at the gatepost and in the unheated church. He began to believe with increasing conviction that his vocation lay rather with the conversion of the Jews in the newly formed state of Israel. His superiors gave him their blessing, and Mr Dunkels, a wealthy Jewish diamond merchant and recent convert to Roman Catholicism, whom Bradburne had befriended in Parkminster, offered to pay for his fare to join a British pilgrimage to Rome.

In Devon, Bradburne's father was becoming increasingly frustrated by the way Bradburne was apparently unable to bring to completion any task he undertook. Bradburne, on the other hand, was too caught up in spiritual concerns to worry about material matters. He departed in late September on a pilgrimage which he hoped would eventually lead him to the Holy Land. In his diary he recorded the overwhelming splendour of St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City, and his excitement of seeing the Pope¹⁸ on two occasions.

From Rome he wandered on, pennilessly, relying on donations from those he met along the way. He travelled very lightly, with all his possessions in a shopping bag. Aside from a few items of clothing, his toothbrush, shaving tackle and a tin of odds and ends, he had only his Roman Missal, English Hymnal and a copy of the Psalms. He journeyed to Naples, from where he set sail for Cyprus, via Sicily and Greece, where he saw the Parthenon. In Cyprus, with the help of a Franciscan priest, he managed to secure a passage aboard a boat headed for Israel. Franciscans, particularly, had shaped and aided his journey, a fact that seemed to him to be very significant. He felt that he was being

¹⁷ See "Carthusians", *NCE*, 3: 162-67.

¹⁸ Pope Pius XII.

well looked after by St Francis of Assisi and decided to follow the Franciscan way more closely as a layman, a member of the Third Order of St Francis. The Third Order “was devised by St Francis as a sort of middle state between the cloister and the world” (“Franciscan Order”, *CE*, par. 5) for “those living in the world who wished to adopt his ideals as far as was compatible with a normal mode of life” (“Francis of Assisi, St.”, *ODCC*, 530). (Bradburne officially entered the Third Order in 1952, although the exact place and date is unknown: see NELM MS 2005.66 110.)

He landed in Haifa in mid-October and headed straight for Nazareth, already in love with the Holy Land. He wrote in his journal,

How wonderful it was to be driving through the twilight, up and up, beyond the fertile...plains, to Nazareth, where the Word was made Flesh, and spent nearly 30 years in His visible life on Earth... . (Quoted in Dove 75-76)

He was continually struck by this privilege, writing later on

I was walking in NAZARETH, where the King of Kings so often walked, where He ran and played as a boy. (*op. cit.* 76)

From Nazareth he wandered on, hitching lifts where he could to Cana, Tiberias and Tel Aviv. Finally, towards the end of October, roughly three years after his conversion, he arrived at his hoped for destination, Jerusalem.

The journey was amazing and people were wonderfully kind. The day before leaving Rome I possessed in the world about £5. The next day and thereafter my purse became a sort of widow’s ‘cruse’¹⁹ sometimes down to two shillings or less. Helpers of one kind and another seemed to be posted along the way, and to have got here for this Feast of the King,²⁰ my third anniversary, is a joy indeed. (*op. cit.* 100)

Once in Jerusalem he sought help from the nearest religious community he could find. He was misdirected to a monastery known as the House of Ratisbonne. It was part of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Sion, an order founded with the purpose of striving for the conversion of the Jews. The monks invited him to stay with them, which he did for seven weeks, helping out with odd jobs. He thus abandoned his previous idea of stationing himself on the Mount of Olives as a personal apostolate for Jewish conversion. He wrote of his spiritual struggle to Dove in October:

My soul’s a desert just now, and I had today a fearful go of black depression and doubt. But I am learning to recognise these attacks not as signs of failure but of victory and progress. (*loc. cit.*)

¹⁹ Cf. 1 Kings 17.12-16.

²⁰ See p. 14.

When the monks asked him to join their order he readily agreed. This would mean seven years training at their novitiate in Louvain, Belgium, so Bradburne set sail, yet again, full of hope that he had at last found his vocation. He wrote to Dove from the House of Ratisbonne, Louvain, on 28 December 1950,

All the odd pieces of my jig-saw are falling into place, I wonder whether I will see the full picture on earth; not that it matters – the present moment being a Sacrament full of God. ...one is made somewhat solitary through not knowing much French. But I love solitude – too much, I fear. And thus, I am very happy, very certain that this is where I must be and stay... I feel as if I'd come to port after a long stormy time at sea. Now my ship can be repaired and fitted well for more 'voyaging'. I speak only in a spiritual sense of course. My vagabondage is done, and I'm under orders as you are. (Quoted in Dove 104)

A source of great joy and comfort for Bradburne, during this time at Louvain, came in the form of a letter from his elderly father. The misunderstanding and tension between them as a result of Bradburne's conversion had been made worse by Thomas Bradburne's frustration with his son's years of seemingly aimless wandering. In response to a letter from his son, Thomas Bradburne wrote:

I hardly know what to say or how to thank you for your generosity in thanking me for anything which I may have been the means under God, of doing for you... And do remember that whatever stresses and strains between us there may have been in the past – as were almost inevitably bound to arise in this our present state of imperfection – there cannot now or ever be any question of mutual forgiveness. Any shadow of that across our lives shall, please God, be banished for ever. Otherwise dear lad we could not approach our respective altars which would mean the outer darkness for one or other of us. (*op. cit.* 104-5)

Bradburne remained at Louvain for the next eighteen months (spending twelve months as a postulant and six as a novice), a time which he described as "spiritually essential" and "highly profitable" (*op. cit.* 109). It was a period of social difficulties and various personal trials (not least of all his ongoing digestion problems, which had plagued him for years and would continue to do so for years more), but Bradburne viewed all these as "trials allowed by the Lord" (*op. cit.* 107). In a revealing, philosophical letter to his friend Stephen King, he wrote:

I travelled via the Carthusians to Rome and Jerusalem and Louvain, because...I believe in following my dreams... I follow the Holy Spirit to whose Church I belong. My course has been erratic and zig-zag, but that has been the fault of no one but myself... As to my part with [women] it has been a crazy course, of which I accuse myself of much sin and sadness, but in which I thank God for much blessedness and happiness. How he saved them from me, and me for Himself, only He knows. Certainly I am unfit for marriage (even if I'd been 'successful' as you put it). But there is a positive way of seeing it, viz. it is God's will because I am fit for something else. His love only. And He is All and in all... .

(Quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 95)

In July 1952, he decided to follow what he described as “a clear and irresistible call of God my King to be His tramp and set my steps towards Jerusalem” (quoted in Dove 108). His Superior General at Ratisbonne sent him on his way with a letter of recommendation, stating:

John Bradburne is a convert from Protestantism who aspires to the life of a perfect Christian. Different attempts have led him to the conclusion that he is not suited to the sedentary religious life; rather he feels himself drawn to imitate the example of a Saint Benedict (Joseph) Labre²¹ or a Père de Foucauld.²² It is in order to follow this way, of his own free will, that he has left our House in Louvain where he has spent a year and where he has left only happy memories. (*loc. cit.*)

Upon leaving, Bradburne wrote to Dove, explaining how he viewed himself:

Please always consider me as a Monk, a monk of Our Lady and a vagabond of God. Saint Francis Bernadone (Francis of Assisi) is my spiritual master – but no imitation. Let us imitate the KING, so shall we be true originals. O pray, pray that I may follow Him well and fulfil my odd role in this short Earthly Play and sojourn.
(Quoted in Dove 111-12)

Leaving Louvain on foot, he hitchhiked across France and Italy, sleeping in fields and eating what bread and grapes he could beg off people, with the occasional bottle of wine. He hoped to reach Naples and work his passage back to Israel, but discovered upon arrival that jobs for foreigners were hard to come by. In September, after walking up the Apennines, he reached the mountain village of Palma, in Campania, where he called on the local parish priest for help. The priest, Don Francesco Picchiocchi, took him on as sacristan, allowing him to sleep in the organ loft in return for odd jobs. Up in the loft he wrote his poems sitting on the floor using the organ bench as a table. He enjoyed the solitude and being able to play the organ in the middle of the night when he woke up. In a letter to Dove later that year he explained the peace and joy that he felt with his present change of plan:

I am deeply convinced...that for a time, maybe for a long time, maybe till the end, my role is here, nowhere else – and here no less than if it were in Israel.
(*op. cit.* 115)

The local residents were puzzled by his eccentric behaviour and love of poverty, and were equally surprised when he volunteered to collect the town rubbish. He was eventually promoted to Assistant Dustman and earned enough to pay for his food. ‘

²¹ Saint Benedict Joseph Labre (1748-1783) lived a life of poverty and pilgrimage, after being found to be unsuitable for life in various religious orders. Having tried to join the Carthusians and the Benedictines, amongst others, he finally became a member of the Third Order of St Francis (“Labre, Benedict Joseph, St.”, *NCE*, 8: 302).

²² Blessed Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916), also known as Père de Foucauld, left his aristocratic life to live in poverty and establish a hermitage in Algeria (“Foucauld, Charles Eugène de”, *NCE*, 5: 1040).

A key event in Bradburne's life took place in Palma on 2 February 1953. He described it as his "marriage" to the Virgin Mary.

Drawn by my Belle I'll call myself her bow
And not without a touch of vanity;
At Candlemas, at half-past-six or so,
I married her in Nineteen Fifty Three... ("A Ballad at a Venture", ll. 1-4; 75.112)

His devotion to Mary had increased steadily since his conversion and would continue to do so till his death.

At Christmas time in 1952, he received one last letter from his sickly father, which he treasured, along with the one received in Louvain. It was among the very few letters that he kept with him for the rest of his life. His father wrote:

It was a great joy for me to get your letter today and to know of your happiness and welfare with your feet safely set upon the way which in my old age I am coming to see more and more clearly is God's way for you, dear boy. Thank you so very much. So in any of your thoughts of me or of yourself in relationship to me as your father, you must never think or feel that there is any need either to explain, still less to apologise... I like to think of you in your organ loft. But I do hope you get your proper and sufficient share of sleep and rest – for we are not out of Brother Ass the body yet. (Quoted in Dove 116-17)

He added, in a postscript, "As a link between us henceforth I will say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary in the holy tongue"²³ (*op. cit.* 117). In May 1953 he received a telegram informing him of his father's death. The news disturbed him deeply, but, as he could not afford an air ticket, he did not return to England for the funeral. His siblings, Mary and Michael, helped his mother through the funeral, but had to return to their respective families and jobs shortly afterwards. Bradburne remained where he was. Eventually his brother Philip, working in Libya at the time, wrote to him to persuade him that it was his duty to go home and care for their mother, as he was the only one of the five siblings who was in a position to spend time with her. Bradburne agreed to return, but still had insufficient money for a ticket home. His mother paid his fare and he returned to Devon in September 1953.

After some happy weeks spent with his mother, Bradburne longed for solitude once more. When he discovered a wooden hut in nearby Ottery St Mary, in the garden of Adam and Pamela Curle – whom he had met through Cecil Hardwicke – he requested their permission to use it as a hermitage. He did so for the following year, living on brown bread, apples and cider. According to Adam Curle "he had been a pretty heavy drinker, but now said he would not touch alcohol until the Mass was said in the Ottery

²³ Latin.

Church” (quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 107). This resolve he later broke, but he kept to a rigid monastic timetable and wrote reams of poetry.

In his spare time, Bradburne was often to be found on street corners playing his recorder in aid of the Parish Church’s Restoration Fund. This unusual behaviour won him a place in the local newspapers. A reporter who interviewed him wrote:

The young man, with his closely-cropped hair and cultured accent, talks with the evangelistic zeal of an early apostle, lives a frugal life...and calls himself ‘the Jester of Christ the King’... . From the wooden recorder, expertly played, dangled dozens of coloured ribbons... . I listened as old English airs floated out over the Cathedral Close and then asked him what the coloured ribbons were in aid of. He gave me a friendly smile, and replied, ‘Just to give the air of gaiety an Elizabethan jester ought to have; for we are Elizabethans, you know!’... . He told me he was a poet whom nobody had yet recognised. (‘They probably will do in another 60 years’). ‘Don’t you have any permanent sort of occupation?’ I asked. His eyes twinkled as he replied, ‘Nothing is permanent in this life’. (Quoted in Dove 122-23)

During 1954, his friend Geza Vermes, who had studied with him at Louvain, paid him a visit. Bradburne introduced him to Adam and Pamela Curle, and, to his distress, Geza and Pamela fell in love. The two eventually married in 1958. In his autobiography,²⁴ Vermes writes “After bringing Pam and me together, and even more because of it, John Bradburne bowed out of our lives... . He blamed himself for what happened to us” (quoted in *JBMS Newsletter*, Winter 2000, 3).

In November 1954, Bradburne moved out of the Curles’s garden into an old house belonging to the nuns of Ottery St Mary, while offering his services at a nearby hostel for homeless men. As the house was vacant, he obtained permission to live there, despite rumours that it was haunted. He nicknamed the ghosts the “teddy bears”, as they usually took the shape of small animals, but they soon began to bother him. Dove described how Bradburne reported lying awake at night fingering his rosary, while listening to the sound of claws scraping on his door (Dove 124). The ghosts disturbed him so much that he moved again, this time into Cecil Hardwicke’s garden cottage, where he lived in a similar style to that he had adopted at the Curles’. The only difference was that the ghosts appeared to follow him. Philip Hardwicke reported seeing disappearing animals frequently, as did his mother, Cecil, who disliked the “teddy bears” intensely and was very relieved when they vanished for good in the spring of 1955, at the same time as Bradburne left for London.

For a while Bradburne played his recorder and begged for a living in London, making the occasional speech at Marble Arch and Tower Hill. He then had another brief

²⁴ *Providential Accidents: An Autobiography*. London: SCM Press, 1998.

interlude at Buckfast Abbey, where his old confidant, Dom Raphael Stones, had given him work as Assistant Gravedigger. When Bradburne refused to contribute to the National Health Insurance, believing it would be an act of distrust in Divine Providence, this job fell through, and he returned to London as a street musician for the next few months.

Dove then recommended to him that he test his vocation again, this time with the Benedictines. So, in November 1955, he headed for Prinknash Abbey to try to live the life of a monk once more. To his delight Prinknash Abbey in Gloucestershire accepted him as postulant. He wrote to his mother “Never before in my life have I known such true happiness...as I have here” (quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 112). Although he was content at first, he slipped away quietly on the evening of Good Friday 1956, after only four months. The monks were living temporarily in an old manor house while their new abbey was being built, and Bradburne was required to share a room with the novices. The lack of solitude proved to be too much for him. He also felt prompted to leave by a latent desire to return to Jerusalem in order to work for the conversion of the Jews. The Benedictines were to be the last religious order Bradburne ever tried to join.

He returned to Ottery St Mary where he found work on a farm. In exchange for odd jobs, such as chopping wood, he was given board and lodging. He lived in what he called his “monastery”, a loft above a stable, his “cloister walls” being “the two hills on either flank of the Otter Valley” (Dove 128). Once more he followed the way of a Franciscan Tertiary. He prayed or sang the *Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary* daily, dividing his day up according to the canonical hours of Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline. He kept this simple Rule to the end of his life.

Towards the end of 1956 he returned to London where he earned his keep again as a street musician for two months, managing to live with friends for the most part. An account of his eccentric behaviour made its way into the *Evening Star*, which reported him as an “‘Elizabethan’ piper piping madrigals in the streets of London” (quoted in Dove 131). His brother Philip persuaded him to look for a job in London, which he did, as a domestic at St Mary Abbott’s Hospital. The long hours and type of work did not suit him, however, and he left to take up work at a bookshop of the British publishing house Burns & Oates, situated near Westminster Cathedral (Roman Catholic).

Bradburne spent much time at his devotions in this cathedral, where he enjoyed listening to the choir. In January 1957, to his great joy, he was appointed fifth sacristan at Westminster. His tasks involved cleaning and preparing the cathedral for the every-day services. In his spare time he raised money for charity by playing Marian hymn-tunes on

the flute and recorder outside St Paul's Cathedral (Anglican). During this time he rented a tiny room nearby, and lived almost entirely off bread, baked beans and beer. While in London he appears to have had another romantic interest in a girl named Anne, but few details have been found to verify this.

Towards the end of his year at Westminster, Bradburne was approached by Cardinal William Godfrey, who had heard of Bradburne's desire for a life of solitude. The writer and Roman Catholic convert, Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson (1871-1914), had bequeathed Hare Street House, in Hertfordshire, to the Church for the use of the Cardinals of Westminster. Godfrey proposed to Bradburne that he become the caretaker of Hare Street, which was then unoccupied. Bradburne accepted with alacrity and moved in during January 1958.

He welcomed the solitude of this beautiful Elizabethan house and remained at Hare Street for the next four years. To his mother he wrote: "It is Heaven to be alone with God – Heaven albeit with a heavy cross – that of being alone with oneself" (quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 124). He spent his days working in the garden, reading, praying, listening to the radio, writing poetry, singing the *Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary* in Latin and playing the harmonium in the chapel. He was given a weekly wage for his duties and free food from the local grocer. Despite this added income he still chose to live off baked beans, bread and cider.

During this time, he was enthralled by the writings of Benson, particularly of his books *Come Rack, Come Rope* and *The Necromancers*. During Christmas 1958, he wrote home saying "It is good to be here with Hugh Benson's spirit near, that spirit which longed for the unity of Christendom and did so much towards it" (*loc. cit.*). Bradburne took to singing the psalms in the morning and evening in English. To his great delight he was able to attend John Dove's ordination to the priesthood, in the Jesuit Order, in July 1958. Bradburne firmly believed that Dove would become a Cardinal, and possibly even Pope. In January 1961, he bade farewell to Dove, who had been posted by the Jesuits to the missions in Africa.

Two primary vexations terminated Bradburne's sojourn at Hare Street. The first was the Cardinal's occasional visits to the house, which disrupted Bradburne's routine and his solitude. The second, which eventually motivated him to leave altogether, was the renovations of the house, authorised by the Cardinal. In his weekly letters to his mother he complained bitterly about the architects and builders, who, in the process of renovation, removed and modified many of the old Elizabethan features of the house that he loved. He could not bear to witness these alterations, nor could he endure the levels of

noise. Apart from this, his chief concern was the diminishing birdlife in the garden as a result of all the activity. He always had a great love of birds, and while living at Hare Street wrote “they preach to me from the rooftops by their various comings and goings, etc. If it were not for the Ministry of Birds, I would not stay here” (quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 127). His letters to his mother show that his indignation became increasingly acute. During Easter 1961, he wrote: “The sheer wicked wanton bestial folly going on here beggars all description. I had a great deal to say; by God’s grace I held my tongue. The swallows were driven off, then the owls” (*loc. cit.*). By October 1961, he could bear it no longer – he gave notice and left early one morning while the Cardinal was in residence, taking refuge at Cecil Hardwicke’s house in Devon for a few days.

With his plans at a loose end again, he decided to return once more to the place of his birth, to re-establish his roots. This trip to Skirwith proved to be intensely nostalgic and joyful. He was invited by the Vicar to spend a night in the vicarage, which he found very moving. Climbing Cross Fell, the mountain overlooking Skirwith, was a highlight. He wrote:

Whether Crossfell and its environs is my destiny, or whether the denial of such a destiny is the biggest cross which has fallen to me yet, I do not know... . The panorama of hills and towns, rolling away into Westmorland, is unforgettable... . Golly the pull of the Fells – I kept looking back – and back, wrenching myself away. But the curlews’ call still fills my soul, who knows but that it may be God’s? We shall see. (Quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 132)

This was to be his last trip to Skirwith, but he left feeling rejuvenated.

However, the problem of what to do with his life remained. Determined not to rely on his mother for his keep, he turned to an old dream of his – namely to publish his poems and live off the proceeds. In November 1961, he sent a long series of verses to Cecil Hardwicke with an accompanying letter:

If ever you look at the verses and edit them, comb them remorselessly: let nothing but gold go forth for glory. The first £300 are for you! Or if it is only 3/- have a drink, or if it is nothing (which is more likely) drink to our further success... .
(*op. cit.* 134)

Her opinion, which she did not express to him at the time was “Poor darling. But maybe the psalms of David in their day sounded pretty dotty to most people other than himself. John’s is definitely not poetry. But they were to him” (*loc. cit.*). In the hope of getting them published Bradburne also sent a series of poems to a friend, Geoff Hunt, in London, but had no success. He continued trying to find a publisher and prayed earnestly about it. In April 1962, he entered a competition in the *Church Times*, but had no success there either. He was dejected by yet another failure and seldom spoke of it. On one occasion he

reportedly cried out in frustration: “After my death, my poems will come into their own. They are not understood now – they are too close for editors or publishers to understand” (quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 135). In July 1962, he received one positive response from his Jewish friend Victor Gollancz, who had his own publishing company in London, but still nothing went to print.

In the meantime Bradburne moved from place to place, seeking solitude. He tried to set up a hermitage for himself in a cave on the edge of Dartmoor, but had no food to sustain himself. From November 1961 to March 1962 he lived in an unused cottage belonging to Cecil Hardwicke in Talaton, Devon, until it was sold. From here he went to Cobham in Surrey, to stay with Esmé Bradburne, his brother Philip’s first wife, who ran a market garden. He helped in her garden in return for board and lodging. Esmé remembered him as “a lot of fun” as well as “quite infuriating at times”. She wrote:

One respected his intense religious feeling, but his dogmatic insistence that the Bible was literally true in every detail and his assertion that the Catholic Church was always right led to frantic arguments for a while – until we realised that it was no good, and reverted to more mundane things. (*op. cit.* 136)

Knowing he could not stay there indefinitely, Bradburne poured his heart out in a letter to John Dove, now serving at a Jesuit mission station in Rhodesia. At the end of his letter he asked, “Isn’t there a cave for me somewhere in Africa?” (*op. cit.* 138). Dove, who had been appointed secretary to the Archbishop of Salisbury (Harare), realised the difficulties of having as impractical a person as Bradburne on a mission station, and was unsure what to suggest. He approached the Franciscans in Rhodesia, and explained Bradburne’s position as member of their Third Order. They eventually agreed to have him at Mount-Saint-Mary’s Mission station in Wedza, drew up a contract for him to work as a lay mission helper, and paid for his flight.

Rhodesia, under British colonial rule since 1890, was in the last days of its membership of the Central African Federation (1953-1963) when Bradburne arrived in August 1962. By the time of the Federation’s dissolution, the right wing Rhodesian Front had been voted into power by white Rhodesians, fearful that the country was being pushed on the path to black majority rule. The Rhodesian Front, under the leadership of Ian Smith, signed the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain in 1965, ensuring that racially skewed policies would continue. African nationalist organisations, opposed to these policies, had been banned since 1959. Despite their suppression, they began to initiate low-level resistance from the late 1960s, which would lead to the eventual outbreak of full-scale guerrilla war by 1973. Bradburne arrived in a country that

was already extremely tense, with an atmosphere of latent violence and a sense that war was coming between black and white. (See Beach 171-195 and Verrier 71-226.)

A few days after arrival at Salisbury airport, Bradburne was ready to take up his post at the Franciscan Mission station at Wedza, roughly one hundred miles south-east of Salisbury. The Irish missionaries running the very busy mission station at Wedza, soon realised just how infuriatingly impractical Bradburne was, although they liked him very much. He did not have a valid driver's licence, he was no help as a handyman, and the noise and constant activity of the station disturbed him. Although he loved the expansive African landscape with its clear night sky, the wildlife and especially the many birds, he still longed for solitude. He was asked to learn Shona, a local language, but soon lost interest. He later picked it up, but in the meantime, without this essential language skill he was even harder to employ.

After two months at Wedza, Bradburne was relocated to another Franciscan mission in Enkeldoorn, eighty-five miles south of Salisbury, to assist Father Sean Gildea. Here he obtained his driver's licence, but had numerous minor accidents and thus was not called upon to drive very often. Bradburne struck up a close friendship with Gildea, and remained at Enkeldoorn until Gildea was relocated to another mission station in the middle of 1963.

Bradburne then moved further west to join the new St Anthony's mission station in Gandachibvuva, run by Father Pascal Slevin. Bradburne lived with the other Franciscans in the newly built mission house for a while, and tried to help out where he could, but his impracticality caused problems. Because of this and the growing tension between him and the assistant priest, Bradburne decided it would be best if he moved out of the house. Slevin, recognising Bradburne's yearning for a life of solitude and prayer, allowed him to establish his own hermitage in a small brick shed on a nearby hilltop.

Bradburne was delighted with this arrangement and made a bed out of a sheet of asbestos roofing, which he mounted on bricks and covered with some blankets. A chest and box sufficed as a table and chair on which he was able to write his poems. Writing was his chief occupation apart from his daily prayer routine. He helped on the mission here and there by gathering firewood and administering medicine at the clinic. He was also entrusted with the care of the mission chickens, which took up residence with him on the hill. The two cocks, which he named the Earl of Ganda and Duke of Chibvuva, soon found their way into his poetry. He loved the view from his shed and was enchanted by the sound of the nearby waterfalls. "The place beggars description" (quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 149), he wrote to his mother. The chickens and surrounding wildlife,

including birds and baboons, became his companions. Here he felt closer to God. In an attempt to live closer to the manner of the indigenous people of Rhodesia, he asked one of the kitchen staff at Gandachibvuva to teach him how to make *sadza* and cabbage. *Sadza*, a stiff, white porridge made from maize meal, is the staple diet of the country. It constituted Bradburne's single meal of the day, which he took with tea.

Despite his vow of celibacy, Bradburne remained fond of women all his life. He wrote to his mother from Rhodesia: "Black women are the last word in sheer allure and but for Our Lady I would be a lost man" (quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 152). Through his "marriage" to Mary in Palma and his ongoing devotion to her, Bradburne managed to sublimate his natural attraction to women. As his poetry reveals, Mary fulfilled the roles of both mother and wife for him. Over the years he accumulated several pictures of women, to whom he ascribed different names, all beginning with "Our Lady of...", such as "Our Lady of Spain" (a Spanish Flamenco dancer). The one that caused the greatest sensation amongst his visitors, some of whom considered it irreverent, was a picture of a seductive-looking young woman whom Bradburne named "Our Lady of Paris". He kept her picture dangling from a piece of string in his hut in the 1970s and wrote about her in several poems.

At Gandachibvuva he continued trying to find a publisher. He wrote of his hopes to his mother:

I am working hard multiplying the talents of music and writing which God has given me (they are both united in writing verse where the ear is important). St. Anthony, patron of this little mission, I believe will find me success in publishing.
(*op. cit.* 150)

He sent more poems to Victor Gollancz, but was again unsuccessful. Bitterly disappointed, he wrote home again:

I am reconciled now to my verse being quite unrecognized whilst I am on earth. But as I have already said, through it the name of Bradburne will ring down future centuries and that for the good. Meanwhile my life is totally obscure, but through God's grace I am happy and well, and will continue to write verses, verses that rhyme and have music in their words. Untortured, untwisted, unmodish verses... I do not really hate the human race, but have only verses to offer it and it has been hitherto highly scornful and treated me with the lowest contempt. To blaze with it until it comes to its senses in Heaven! ...I continue to write, confident never to see my work published in this life. Never mind. Posterity and Immortality are the things. (*op. cit.* 150-51)

After he found someone to type some of his poems, which were at this stage all handwritten, he wrote:

A very kind soul has offered to type for me anything I wish to send off in hopes of publication, and I shall very soon be trying the door, heart and mind of Victor Gollancz – by post I mean. This life of mine will have been such an utter failure if nothing comes of this talent God has given me, setting aside the matter of personal salvation, which Heaven's mercy may arrange. An artist's joy consists in seeing his joy passed on and communicated to many people. Otherwise production becomes mere frustration. (*op. cit.* 151)

At this time he also wrote to his mother, telling her of his initial reaction to the African people whom he met:

For the African it is essential to be loved, led and commanded. I aspire with signal failure only to the former. Saints are needed here and already there are not a few. What one needs to give them is compassion and firmness by God's grace – no ersatz sentimentality about 'the lonely simple Africa' is any good. (*loc. cit.*)

When St Anthony's Mission expanded in the beginning of 1964, it was decided that Bradburne's shed should be demolished in order to make way for other projects. Bradburne, who had long since refused any payment since he did no real work, was politely asked to leave. In view of the contract he had signed with the Franciscans when he initially moved to Rhodesia, they were obliged to offer him a one-way ticket to any part of the world he should choose. After careful consideration and consultation with Dove, Bradburne decided to move to a Tibetan monastery. These plans fell through, however, when he was unable to secure a visa for India, which required proof that he had a return ticket, which he himself could not afford.

Instead he moved to M'bebi, a farm in the Mazoe (Mazowe) Valley, about thirty miles north of Salisbury. The owners had recently donated the church and house on the farm to the Jesuits. At Dove's suggestion the Jesuits asked Bradburne to be their caretaker while they made arrangements to move there later in the year. Bradburne, happy to live alone once more, found companionship in a farm cat. He continued in his life of prayer and poetry writing, and began composing music. He wrote to his mother:

Life becomes for me more and more of a definable pattern of change and change, and I am in no way daunted by the apparent failure of it and waste of education it may seem – being deeply confident that I have already written at least a hundred lines for posterity. (Quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 154)

During the year he struck up a close friendship with Heather Benoy, a fellow musician and recent convert to Roman Catholicism. The two shared their compositions and spent time singing and playing music together, as they would continue to do for many years. They even composed an entire mass together, but never committed it to paper.

After being introduced to many of Dove's friends in Salisbury, Bradburne became a popular guest at many parties, where he entertained people with his wit and mimicry of leading personalities. In July 1964, television producers in Salisbury heard about him and invited him to audition for a position as a presenter. He was successful and made his debut on television at the end of August, chairing a discussion on Genesis and Evolution. Initially he was enthusiastic about it and appeared once a month from then on. He soon began to feel strained by the performances, though, and was thankful to be relieved of the position in March 1965.

While in Salisbury, he occasionally watched plays and films, which he thoroughly enjoyed. He also attended poetry readings in Salisbury, in which he read some of his own verse. It was through the contacts that he made in these readings that a few of his poems were published during his lifetime.

In the meantime tension was rising in the country. Bradburne, although never very interested in politics, had by now realised what the stakes were, and gathered with fellow Christians for an all night prayer vigil in November 1964. Never having mentioned the political situation in the country to his mother before, he now alluded to it. "I thoroughly enjoy life, however near the paternal eye of Communist China²⁵ may be getting" (*op. cit.* 159), he wrote. In the ensuing letters, however, he mentioned nothing of Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence or other key political events.

By December 1964 plans had been finalised to move the Jesuit Novitiate, then based at Silveira House outside Salisbury, to M'bebi house. This meant that Bradburne had to move to Silveira House, where Dove was in charge. As a branch of Catholic Action, the mission station was to be used as an educational centre for leadership and social development. Bradburne remained here for the next four years. Both he and Dove revelled in the opportunity of being together again. His routine still centred on his sung office and he continued his solitary life in one of the rooms at the centre. His duties were never defined, but Dove relied on him, especially while he was away, as a general caretaker. He also acted as sacristan in the chapel and as doorkeeper for any visitors. When, in 1967, one of the Jesuit priests at Silveira House procured a harmonium for the chapel, Bradburne stayed up late into the night playing and singing to God. Soon he had attracted a small African choral group, whom he taught to sing Bach, and from whom he learnt Shona hymns. He later took to setting Shona words to well-known hymn tunes.

When the centre needed a secretary in 1967 Bradburne learnt how to type, a skill which greatly increased his output of poems. This was when many of his friends realised

²⁵ The African nationalists sent guerrillas for training in China as well as other Communist states.

just how seriously he considered his poetry writing. They experienced his wrath if they happened to interrupt him when “the Muse” (Dove 204) was upon him, as he used to say.

In his spare time Bradburne volunteered to help the Samaritans organisation in Salisbury who provided care for people in distress. During 1966 he was called upon to help a suicidal man called Reuben. Together with a fellow volunteer, known as Joan, he coaxed Reuben out of his depression. During this time, in which they shared accommodation with Reuben for some days, Bradburne and Joan became very close. Though he had confided none of his war experiences to his family, Bradburne suddenly told Joan the entire story. He related to her all the fear, anger and trauma of his ordeal in Malaya, his escape with Captain Hart, his recovery in hospital when he had gone out of his mind, even imitating his crazy antics in hospital for her. He told her of his vision of Mary and his belief that he possessed a sixth sense. In their discussions about different religions, Bradburne was able to talk to her about the influence Eastern mysticism had had on him. Twenty-one years since his departure from India, he was still intrigued by it. It was Joan who lent him her copy of the Bhagavad Gita, which he read in her garden. After this brief, intense meeting, they parted ways, never to meet again, although they exchanged letters twice.

Soon other missionary helpers appeared at Silveira House. They were skilled in mechanics and could help with the driving, shopping and general maintenance. Bradburne felt useless by comparison and withdrew more, to the extent that in 1966 he moved out of the mission buildings into a makeshift shack beside the hen house. Dove eventually persuaded him to move back into the house proper, into a small end room where he would be less likely to be disturbed.

In March 1967, Bradburne took part in a Passion play in Salisbury, playing the role of Christ. (Since the time of his growing a beard many people had commented on his Christ-like appearance.) The play was a great success, and at first Bradburne enjoyed the part, but he soon found it too draining and confided to Dove how burdensome it was.

Dove treated Bradburne to a free holiday at the sea later in the year. He spent it alone in Beira, Mozambique, with great hopes of finding a ship to take him to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where he wanted to visit his younger sister, Audrey, and her husband. This did not materialise, and so he spent the rest of his time enjoying the sea and the wine. He was delighted to discover that if he ordered enough wine, food was provided free.

In June 1967, two of Bradburne’s poems were finally accepted by *Two Tone*, a quarterly of Rhodesian poetry, and published. They appeared under the name of “John

Blackburne”, a misspelling that was probably an editorial error. Bradburne’s reaction is not recorded, but he would no doubt have been delighted by the pseudonym. He often played around with the spelling of his name, sometimes signing himself “John Bee (drone)”, “John Bardburn” or even “John Bonehead”. Another poem appeared in the same quarterly in February 1969 and one more in December 1971.

Political events in Israel and Rhodesia attracted his attention in 1967. He followed the Six-Day War in Israel closely on the radio, and was elated at Israel’s victory. He even wanted to offer his services to the Jewish armies, writing to his mother “Israel is my Cause” (quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 165). In July, he wrote his first overtly political letter about the situation in Rhodesia to his mother:

A fresh piece of proposed legislation here in this unenlightened petty state is to segregate the dwelling places of the coloured population in Salisbury, which is very large – Afro-Europeans, Afro-Asians, etc; this is in order to keep the Aryan Herrenvolk of the Puppet State in splendid isolation beside their swimming baths (they nearly all have a private one!). The Blacks (Africans) have always been apart(heid) in their Townships round and about Salisbury. I think an insistence on the nature of Incarnate God with His decidedly coloured skin would be a timely and sublime objection. (*op. cit.* 166)

As the war progressed, increasing numbers of people affected by the violence sought help from Silveira House and further disturbed Bradburne’s solitude. The Jesuits’ sympathetic attitude towards, and their support for the cause of the African nationalists brought suspicion from the government, leading policemen to the Mission to find out about its activities. Bradburne supported neither the Rhodesian Front’s cause nor that of the African nationalists. He believed that the actual war was a battle between spiritual forces, with both good and evil on both sides. As hinted at in his earlier letter to his mother, he came to believe that the African nationalist “freedom fighters”²⁶ were pawns in the hands of communist powers.

In the same year Bradburne became preoccupied with bees. He had kept a hive of bees outside his room in 1965 after their owners had tried to find a new home for them, but they had eventually flown away. Now he started receiving daily visits from a small number of wild bees. Initially when they came into his room, attracted by the leftover prune juice from his breakfast, he shooed them away. When he realised that they did not sting him, however, he began to try luring them in with fruit juice. By July 1967 he wrote to his mother telling her of his delight at being surrounded by at least fifty bees while he typed. He had hopes of attracting a whole swarm to take up residence with him in his room, but by Christmas the bees had left. Two years later he revived his hope of

²⁶ A name used to refer to the guerrilla forces.

attracting a swarm of bees and prayed for their arrival. This time he smeared syrup on a little beehive that he had, and placed it under the table in his room. Soon a wild swarm arrived and took up residence with him. They effectively safeguarded his solitude, since most people were too afraid to venture close to bees. Bradburne was able to type his poetry at the table undisturbed.

While at Silveira House, Bradburne also kept a tame Batteleur eagle for a time. It was given to him by a friend for safe-keeping and became Bradburne's crowning joy until one day it escaped from its perch. It was later found dead in a nearby tree, hanging by the weighted line which had been attached to its feet, and had become entangled in the branches. Bradburne's grief was intense. The eagle was the last bird he ever kept.

Sensing that Bradburne needed a holiday, Dove arranged for them both to visit England in the following year. The two arrived in London in April 1968, and Bradburne proceeded to Devon to spend a three-week holiday with his mother. After he left her, he visited some other friends, including Cecil Hardwicke and his Roman Catholic godfather, Hugh Symons, who drove him to Buckfast Abbey to see Dom Raphael Stones. Back in London, he met up with Dove to say farewell since he had decided to return to Israel once more – his objective the same as before: the conversion of the Jews, particularly those in Jerusalem.

After crossing the channel from England to Belgium, Bradburne travelled to Italy by train. From Venice he proceeded to Haifa by ship, and then to Jerusalem by bus, via Tel Aviv. He arrived in June, and took up residence in a youth hostel. Over the course of five days he paid visits to the Wailing Wall, where seven times he sang the Lamentations of Jeremiah by Francois Couperin (1668-1733), which he had memorised. He also recited the *Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary* three times. After this act of devotion, he looked for work. Finding none, and having spent nearly all his money, he decided to visit Libya where his brother Philip was employed by Mobil Oil.

He sailed to Malta, but the only passage he could secure from there to Libya was aboard a cattle boat. He arrived in Tripoli at the end of June 1968 and stayed there until September, resting, visiting the Franciscans and socialising with Philip's friends. The dinner parties, a great novelty to start with, soon irritated him until one day he suddenly lost his temper and vehemently refused to accept any more invitations.

In the meantime he had devised a plan to return to Israel. In view of the employment difficulties in Israel he decided to throw away his passport and somehow slip back into Israel unnoticed. Philip was horrified at this idea, and strongly advised him against such a venture. After some correspondence with Dove and his mother, Bradburne

then decided to return to Salisbury. Dove arranged a flight for him from Rome, and Bradburne bid farewell to his brother for the last time.

Back at Silveira House Bradburne resumed his former activities, again living in the end room of the main building. He might have remained there but for an event that took place in March 1969. His friend Heather Benoy had heard of a leper camp for black people in Mutemwa,²⁷ eighty-seven miles north-east of Salisbury, and invited him to join her in seeing first-hand whether the conditions were as bad as they were rumoured to be. Mutemwa, roughly translated as “You are cut off”, had been a huge leper camp in the 1920s, with nearly two thousand inhabitants. With the introduction of modern medicine, especially drugs, such as Dapsone, the number of lepers in the settlement had decreased significantly. Most “live” cases had been transferred to a leprosarium near Fort Victoria. In 1959 the government decided to repatriate the “burnt out” cases – those who were no longer contagious – and thus most patients from Mutemwa returned to their villages. There were still some two hundred patients, however, who because of their deformities were either unable to or unwilling to return home. These remained in Mutemwa where they suffered gross neglect, with neither washing facilities nor toilets. All of them were disabled, many severely so, such that they could not care for themselves. Some had neither legs nor arms; many were blind and had no lips or noses. They had been left at the mercy of untrained, dishonest orderlies who gave them short rations and sold whatever donations of blankets and clothing were received. In 1969, there were fewer than one hundred patients left, many having died of neglect in the absence of regular medical attention. When Bradburne and Benoy arrived they found a woman crawling through mud, eating with her face in her plate, her head under a sack in an effort to deter dogs from stealing her food. They were both profoundly shocked by this, and disturbed by the squalor and poverty in which the inhabitants lived. Bradburne decided instantly that it was his duty to stay and look after the lepers. He refused to return to Silveira House with Benoy, flipping a coin, as was his practice when making decisions. It came up heads – a clear sign to him that this was his calling. He was eventually persuaded to return with Benoy, but only because he wanted to collect his belongings, especially his typewriter. Back at Silveira House he told Dove of his determination to care for the lepers and called on him to make enquiries into the matter. It was not until August that Bradburne would return to the camp. In a poem dated 17 March 1969 he expressed his feelings about the task in store for him:

²⁷ Bradburne occasionally referred to Mutemwa as Mootemwa, M'temwa or Mtemwa.

In that I've always loved to be alone
 I've treated human beings much as lepers,
 For this poetic justice may atone
 My way with God's, whose ways are always helpers;
 I did not ever dream that I might go
 And dwell amidst a flock of eighty such
 Nor did I scheme towards it ever, No
 The prospect looms not to my liking much... . (ll. 1-8; 69.13)

He nevertheless prayed for strength, and remained utterly convinced that he was called by God to care for the lepers.

Unbeknown to Bradburne, a young policeman in 1964, serving in the town of Mtoko (Mutoko), near Mutemwa, had been called to the leper camp when one of the patients had died. The man was appalled by what he saw and reported it to the authorities. Very little happened until early in 1966 when Philip Dighton, a retired farmer in the Salisbury area, heard of the lepers' plight. His subsequent shock upon visiting the settlement moved him to seek action immediately. He eventually enlisted the help of the Jesuits, particularly that of Father Edward Ennis. Together Dighton and Ennis worked out an agreement with the Department of Labour and Social Welfare, whose responsibility the camp was. The Archdiocese of Salisbury, working in collaboration with the Jesuits, offered to restore Mutemwa with the money provided by the government, sharing any additional costs that might ensue. Thus, a committee, who later called themselves the Friends of Mutemwa, was established and met regularly. With the money they raised they purchased mattresses, blankets and other necessities for the lepers of Mutemwa.

When, in 1969, Dove made enquiries from Ennis on Bradburne's behalf, the committee were desperately looking for a suitable caretaker. After meeting Dighton, who was very impressed by him, Bradburne was appointed Camp Superintendent of Mutemwa and given a nominal salary. His tasks would include administrative duties such as keeping accounts and directing orderlies – tasks that he loathed but agreed to do in order to be allowed to care for the patients. He wanted to live like the lepers in one of their vacant huts, secretly hoping to catch leprosy, until he learnt that if this happened he would be transferred to a European leprosarium. Instead, the committee found a disused butcher-shop near the settlement, which they transformed into suitable accommodation for Bradburne. Once all the necessary changes had been made, Bradburne moved to Mutemwa on 1 August 1969. He was to remain there until his death.

He made it his business to learn the names of the seventy-eight patients, who lived in individual huts close to him. He also introduced himself to Dr Luisa Guidotti and the Sisters stationed at the Roman Catholic "All Souls Mission", eleven miles north of

Mutemwa, who were in charge of the lepers' medical needs. Guidotti and some of the Sisters visited Mutemwa regularly.

Still apprehensive about the task before him, Bradburne wrote to his mother after two weeks at the settlement. Having just "drunk a triple brandy...after a day of stress" (quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 201), he asked her to pray hard "that drink NOT my consolation be" (*loc. cit.*). Although caring for the lepers for the next ten years would not prove easy, he remained devoted to them until the end of his life.

The next four years were happy ones. Bradburne lived in the old butchery, which he turned into a place of private devotion. He built what he called his "Ark of the Covenant". Shaped like a pyramid, it consisted of boxes, tins and containers, set on a low table, over which he draped scarves and blankets. Onto these he pinned symbolic pictures, ornaments, rosaries, shells, cards, ribbons, crosses and pieces of paper with his poetry written on them. This multicoloured structure, which was modified on a continuous basis, was the central feature of his room. It was symbolic both of the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the stone tablets of God's law, and of the Virgin Mary, who had contained the Living Word of God (Jesus) in her womb.²⁸ Bradburne stored his Bible at the bottom of the Ark.

He continued to structure his days around the sung office, with other duties interspersed between his devotions. The saying of the rosary was still a central part of his day. He exercised by running early in the mornings and often climbed Chigona Hill, a whaleback, granite hill that overlooked the camp. He ate and slept as little as possible, mortifying his body, "Brother Ass" as he called it, so as not to delay the "progress of the soul" ("Of Mortification", *BA* 6, l. 2). In his spare time he composed poetry filled with anecdotes about almost all the lepers.

In his daily routine he distributed food rations and medicine to the lepers, as directed by Dr Guidotti. He dressed and bandaged their wounds and sores, and saw to whatever other needs they had. He shopped for them in Mtoko, using a wheelbarrow to transport the goods back to the leper colony. He bathed those that needed assistance, carried those that could not walk or crawl, gathered firewood, built fires and collected rubbish that lay around so as to decrease the number of leg and foot stump wounds. He was also in charge of the orderlies and the two women who cooked meals for those lepers who could not do so for themselves. A great joy to him was to be able to feed those on whom he had initially taken such pity. He wrote:

²⁸ See "Of the Ark (on every side)" (*BA* 28).

There is an old lady (called Marchareeda or Matilda) who has no eyes and no hands, and has until this month been feeding herself with her face in her plate much as an animal might. She cannot use a spoon. Of the food she was given, dogs and hens used to steal at least half, and a further quarter would be either spilled or smeared over her face and dress. So now I either feed her myself with a spoon, slowly, or if I am too busy with medical matters I get one of the orderlies to do it. It is great fun feeding her and she thoroughly enjoys it.

(Quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 207)

When lepers were sick, he kept long vigils with them, praying and reading Scripture.

When they died he dug their graves and buried them.

Friends and various people who heard about his work with the lepers sent him donations of all kinds. His friend Heather Benoy, then teaching at Blakiston Primary School, Salisbury, inspired her pupils to raise money for a donkey cart so that he could distribute food rations more easily between the lepers' huts, which were spread out over some distance. Others donated money, clothes, medicine or food for the lepers, and also kept him well stocked on brandy, which he frequently added to his morning tea or coffee.

Bradburne held daily services for the lepers in the old derelict chapel. Roman Catholic lepers comprised about a third of the compound. A priest came at first monthly and then weekly to say Mass on Sundays. Later Bradburne was given a special dispensation to administer Holy Communion to the lepers. In 1970, his wish for a new chapel to be built was fulfilled. In consultation with Bradburne, his friend Arthur Law designed a rondavel chapel with a thatched roof. Ennis approved the plans and it was built in the settlement, where it became Bradburne's pride and joy. Friends provided a table to serve as an altar and embroidered an altar cloth for it. They also donated a chalice and an ambry²⁹ for the Blessed Sacrament. Bradburne put a donated harmonium into the chapel, where he spent many hours singing. He now accompanied the lepers at the daily services as they sang Shona words to well-known hymn tunes; Bradburne even taught them some Gregorian plainchant in Shona.

During this time he kept contact with his many friends by correspondence. He also made several new friends during his time at Mutemwa. One of them was Shirley James, a committee member of the Friends of Mutemwa, who paid him regular visits. He confided in her his suspicions of possessing a sixth sense and told her of his experiences in Malaya.

While at Mutemwa, Bradburne also befriended Father David Harold-Barry, who joined the mission staff at Silveira House in 1973. Bradburne shared much of his poetry with Harold-Barry, who wrote:

²⁹ A wall-safe.

Only two weeks before he was killed, John wrote to me to say: 'Perhaps I shall put a match to my nonsensical writings before the Portmanteau arrives.' (We were having a bookshelf made for all his writings). He had an ambivalent attitude towards his writings, often saying they were nonsense and that he would destroy them but also knowing that he had indeed written some good things. (Dove 223)

Upon giving poetry to Harold-Barry to read, Bradburne once requested that if there was anything that did not accord with Church doctrine Harold-Barry was to destroy it. The comment was made informally over coffee, and Harold-Barry never took it seriously. In his quarterly visits to Silveira House Bradburne would often enlist the help of the secretary, Sister Angelina, who made duplicates of his poems for him with the stencils³⁰ he provided.

Another friend, whom he met in January 1973, was Pauline Hutchings. Pauline and her husband Tony were farming in the vicinity at the time, so when Pauline decided to convert to Roman Catholicism, Dove put her under Bradburne's instruction in Mutemwa. At their weekly meetings he refused to use the conventional catechism since he believed that "Religion true is rather caught than taught" ("Of Religion", *BA* 37, l. 1). Instead he taught by his example of poverty and devotion to God, and responded to whatever questions she had. They soon became very close friends and she stood by him through the difficult years that lay ahead.

Since his appointment as Camp Superintendent of Mutemwa in 1969, many changes had taken place within the Friends of Mutemwa, including the election of several new committee-members. In 1970, the committee's work was deemed so effective by the Secretary for Health that they were asked to take over leprosy care throughout Rhodesia. Since most of the members agreed, they accepted the task, and changed their name to the Rhodesian Leprosy Association (R.L.A.). A new member joined, Wing Commander Bill Ellis, whose views began to clash frequently with those of Bradburne. Ellis, who wanted Bradburne to supply alphabetical lists of the lepers, had ideas of institutionalising Mutemwa. He suggested that each leper be assigned a number, which should then be imprinted on a metal disc and worn around the lepers' neck. Bradburne was horrified. He expressed his contempt in May 1974, in one of two surviving poems on Ellis:

EL is the Name of God, but Ellis is
 Name of a man commands wing'd heresies
 Only to find that, flying in his face,
 Are all the fays³¹ that serve the Queen of grace... .
 ("Escape from the Dock", *ll.* 7-10; 74.228)

³⁰ Bradburne typed as much of his poetry as he could onto waxed tissue paper, known as "stencils". Copies of his poems were then printed using a mimeograph machine.

³¹ Fairies.

Ellis opposed Bradburne's requests for increased rations for the lepers and was unimpressed with the decrease in the number of deaths in the camp since Bradburne's appointment, since he wanted to close down the camp as soon as possible. Shirley James, still on the committee at this stage, warned Bradburne that both he and she would be dismissed sooner or later, but Bradburne paid little attention. The increased medical bills from Bradburne's diligence over reporting sick lepers caused certain committee members to resent him. Father Ennis had resigned, which left fewer members sympathetic to Bradburne and his ideas. Shirley James was soon replaced by Mrs P. Beecroft, who became very hostile to Bradburne. The committee began to believe that Bradburne was careless with money – a belief which he did little to counter since he loathed and neglected administrative duties such as bookkeeping.

Bradburne's views on what was best for the lepers also conflicted with the medical authorities who wished to provide the lepers with birth control measures, which he vehemently opposed. He also opposed cataract operations for the lepers, holding the view that such a procedure interfered with God's will. Until the end of his life, he too was reluctant to wear glasses when his sight deteriorated. Although he infuriated the medical personnel on such matters, they appreciated his dedication and admired the dignity he had restored to the lepers.

A number of heated disagreements ensued between Bradburne and Ellis, now Vice-Chairman of the committee. Finally, when Bradburne adamantly opposed the committee's proposal of cutting the lepers' rations for economic reasons, at a committee meeting on 12 April 1973, Ellis had him dismissed. Bradburne was accused of carelessness with the lepers' rations and bad administration, especially bookkeeping. He was given until 1 May to move out of his little house. Despite the loud protests of his friends and sympathisers, their best efforts to have him reinstated failed. He was replaced by one of the orderlies, Philo Runganga.

Loath to leave his beloved lepers, Bradburne set up camp two thirds of the way up Chigona Hill so that he could still watch over the settlement. Friends brought him a tent, bedding and supplies to see him through. There were no latrine facilities, but he obtained drinking and bathing water from a natural pool on the top of the hill. Twenty-four of the lepers who could either walk or crawl visited him on the hill, some four hundred and fifty feet high. He, in turn, visited them daily, monitoring their health and treatment under the new warden. After some five months on Chigona Hill, the lepers, afraid that he might fall prey to a leopard in the area, persuaded him to come down. He moved into a disused hut in the leper camp for a short time and continued to care for them as much as he could.

At first Bradburne was pleased with Runganga, but soon realised that he was dishonest. The lepers' rations were cut down, mealies and fruit from their crops began to disappear and the lepers' needs were neglected. In addition, a rift developed between Runganga and Dr Guidotti's medical team from All Souls Mission, who demanded his dismissal. When the committee refused to dismiss him, Dr Guidotti's team withdrew their support of Mutemwa, leaving the lepers without any proper medical care. Bradburne confronted Runganga and made his grievances known in no uncertain terms. The committee responded by defending Runganga and presenting Bradburne with a Court Order, which forbade him access to the settlement. It required the intervention of the Archbishop of Salisbury for him to be granted permission to enter the chapel, in order to administer the Eucharist to Roman Catholic patients.

Bradburne once more had nowhere to live. Donald Purdon, a farmer and the Chairman of the South Mtoko Rural Council, whom Bradburne had befriended in a pub in Mtoko in 1969, obtained permission to erect a pre-fabricated, single-roomed hut for him, outside the settlement. It was made from galvanised iron, with eighteen wall sections, two glassless windows and space for a door. With no shade from the sun and no insulation from the cold, the temperature inside the hut fluctuated dramatically. He still had no ablution facilities and continued using the pool on top of Chigona Hill for his baths, when there was water in it. Occasionally he had baths at his friends' houses. Without furniture, he slept on a grass mat on the concrete floor, covered by a blanket. Despite the harsh conditions, Bradburne set up his beloved Ark in the room, stuck his poems and pictures all over the walls, and settled in, naming the hut "Piper's Vale". He particularly enjoyed the acoustics, as he continued to sing his office every day. His daily routine remained much the same as before, but without the care of the lepers. He devoted more time to writing poetry in his hut, where he lived until his death. He was later able, with some donations, to erect two guest huts alongside his one, to be used for new lepers waiting to be admitted to the camp, or for those evicted by the new warden and forced to return home. His life of poverty perplexed many members of the neighbouring villages, who deemed him mad.

Many lepers found themselves out of favour with the new administration and had to disguise their loyalty to Bradburne in order to secure the help they needed from Runganga. The years that followed were harsh. In January 1974, unbeknown to him, the Rhodesian Leprosy Association (R.L.A.) turned down an offer of renewed financial support from the Beit Trustees. They stated that since they had "\$5,000³² in reserve",

³² Rhodesian Dollars.

which would “enable the present operations and commitments for this Association to continue for a period in excess of twelve months”, they would “refrain from asking aid for the year 1974-1975” (quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 249). Had Bradburne known this at the time he would have been outraged and baffled, since his dismissal less than a year prior to this had ostensibly been related to the need for economy. He had by now formed the following opinion of the R.L.A.: “It is the most ineffective body that ever jerked itself to the assumption of a title. It shuffles along on one little meeting per month and cares not a rap for stricken people but only for papers in triplicate” (*op. cit.* 270).

Meanwhile, Bradburne’s friends continued to support him, and the press were involved, but to no avail. The committee ignored all his complaints. When he took Runganga to court over physically abusing two lepers (an incident which he witnessed in part) in March 1974, Runganga was found “Not Guilty”.

With the lack of medical treatment in the absence of Dr Guidotti’s medical team, there was a rapid deterioration in the lepers’ health. Bradburne, deeply concerned about this, eventually resorted to illegal methods of acquiring the necessary drugs so that he could himself administer them. However, without a doctor’s prescription and with no money himself, he was unable to obtain the drugs in Rhodesia. In 1975, he enlisted the help of his brother Michael in Canada and his friend Stephen King in England, who raised money and sent him supplies of medicine, such as antibiotics, anti-malaria tablets and painkillers. Some of his friends knew about this and disapproved of his actions, but the authorities never discovered his activities and so he continued doing this as long as he remained at Mutemwa.

In the light of these recent events, Bradburne had thoughts of returning to Jerusalem once more, but, frustrated and discouraged as he was, he decided to stay on. He wrote to Shirley James in June 1974:

I have every intention of staying on my border and shall do whatever good I can or may. Hamstrung somewhat by the hatred that came from Bill. However, Man proposes, God disposes, and the Chinese may soon come up the road from the East with their hopeful ‘Freedom Fighters’ who will thus bind themselves in the chains of a real Tyrant. (*op. cit.* 253-54)

He was acutely aware of the ongoing conflict in his surroundings. Sustained guerrilla war had been underway, particularly in the north of Rhodesia, since the end of 1972,³³ and conflict in Bradburne’s immediate area was growing in intensity. In another letter to Shirley James in August 1974, he wrote: “Can hear machineguns firing quite nearby now. Helicopters over all day long. But shall probably die of hiccups only” (*op. cit.* 253).

³³ See Beach 181.

Although 1976 brought further hardship, it also brought great joy to Mutemwa. Alister Guthrie, a friend of Bradburne's, was appointed onto the R.L.A. Bill Ellis, along with some other hostile members, had resigned. Guthrie managed to persuade the remaining committee members to reinstate Bradburne and henceforth acted as a mediator between the R.L.A. and Bradburne. Bradburne was allowed back into the camp to care for the lepers, but was not asked to resume any formal duties. Relations between Bradburne and Runganga had since eased slightly, and Runganga continued in his administrative duties.

In 1975, Mozambique gained its independence from Portugal. The new black Mozambican government supported the African nationalists in neighbouring Rhodesia, and allowed guerrillas to set up bases within their territory from which to launch more intense attacks from the east. The year 1976 marked a turning point as the war spread rapidly over the country. Bradburne became more and more isolated in Mutemwa due to the fuel rations and increased conflict. Few friends were able to visit, although Pauline Hutchings managed to bring him sandwiches once a week and Father David Gibbs, stationed at All Souls Mission, still managed to see him regularly.

The neighbouring villages, long since caught between the guerrillas and the Rhodesian Security Forces, both of which groups demanded loyalty and punished those who opposed them, suffered immensely. Some of Bradburne's idealistic counterparts in Salisbury thought him naïve about the war in general. Bradburne, however, was more pragmatic, and although he understood the cause for the war, he refused to excuse any atrocities committed by either the Rhodesian Forces or the guerrillas for any ideal. Situated as he was, he witnessed the suffering of the rural people first-hand and was particularly appalled by the brutality of the guerrillas towards the villagers. In a letter to his sister, Mary, he wrote:

The plot political that seems so thick
Is clear enough to make you nearly sick
On hearing communistic lies supported
Even in England: may the Reds be thwarted!
The 'freedom-fighter' pawns are being used
Right from the start by Russia, unenthused
By any greater god than from the heart
Of Hell impels her with the devil's art.

The devil's art is clever: it suggests
Great love for ridding Africa of guests
That uninvited came and will not go
Away from where they reap what they did sow
And, though the crop grew not unmixed with tares,

Russia wants farms ten times the size and dares
 With hell's own cheek to vow that her desire
 Is sweet equality... WITHOUT A SPIRE!

Without a spire, without the help of knaves
 From far-off isles who sing of One who saves
 Both from the lust for money and from death
 And, when such 'knaves' are at their best, their breath
 Is halitosis to the hypocrites
 Who order hacking infants into bits:
 The Holy Innocents are not without
 Their innocent successors in this Rout. (78.335)

In February 1977, three Jesuit fathers and four Dominican nuns were shot at St Paul's Mission, Musami, between Salisbury and Mutemwa. Bradburne was deeply shocked by these murders. While it was unclear to many who was responsible for their deaths, Bradburne was convinced that it was the guerrillas. He wrote:

The whole aim of the Communist driven 'Boys' of Shona race is to perpetrate deaths of whites which are so mysterious as to look the work of white missionary-haters. I am profoundly convinced that our hell-motivated enemy is Marxism and not the Selous Scouts³⁴ or any other odd faction... The enemy is Evil powers using Communist flesh and blood to do their work. The propaganda of Russia/Mozambique radio which took up the Musami tale the morning after, was exceedingly clever and has been unbelievably successful.

(Quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 265-66)

These views separated him from those missionaries sympathetic to the guerrillas, who adamantly believed they would never be betrayed by the very people they sought to help.

Amidst the violence and political turbulence, 1977 ended on a happy note for Bradburne. His old friend from Enkeldoorn, Father Sean Gildea, gave Dove a Franciscan habit in which to clothe Bradburne. It marked twenty-five years of service in the Third Order of St Francis. From then on Bradburne wore it everywhere he went, along with a red band around his head, which he used to hold back his long hair.

As a result of Alister Guthrie's advice to Philip Dighton, Runganga was finally dismissed in 1978. Another former orderly of Bradburne's, Phinias Mwendo, replaced him. Although Bradburne was relieved and satisfied at first, Mwendo was not to be the best choice. He had several relations in nearby villages, with whom Bradburne had been repeatedly in conflict over the years. Bradburne often had fierce arguments with neighbouring villagers who grazed their cattle on the lepers' plots. He impounded their cattle and sometimes even fined them. After an old man who used to attend his services

³⁴ A specialist branch of the Rhodesian Security Forces.

in Mutemwa was killed by local *mujibhas* (young guerrilla informants), Bradburne violently condemned the murderers. Since he was such an outspoken critic of the guerrillas, and in increasing danger through his isolation in Mutemwa, his friends worried greatly about his safety.

By now Bradburne was very isolated and quite lonely. Although he yearned for solitude all his life, when this need was fulfilled he had a great desire for company. In his spiritual life he focused more and more on mystic contemplation, heavily influenced by the fourteenth century classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing*.³⁵ In the words of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, from whom the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* drew his inspiration, Bradburne's intent was to

leave behind the senses and the operations of the intellect, and all things that the senses or the intellect can perceive, and all things which are not and things which are, and strain upwards in unknowing, as far as may be, towards the union with Him Who is above all things and knowledge. For by unceasing and absolute withdrawal from thyself and all things in purity, abandoning all and set free from all, thou shalt be borne up to the ray of divine darkness that surpasseth all being.

(Quoted in Johnston 17-18)

Bradburne continued repeating short, simple prayers hundreds of times a day, in the "Om"-style he had learnt from Indian mystics. He wrote "The name of Jesus alone is a tremendous prayer if thought or said with love", adding: "The East knows much more about the passive role of the soul than the West does" (quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 271). He found great value in the "Jesus Prayer", which varies in length from "Lord have mercy" to "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner", inspired by the publican's prayer in Luke 18.13. Towards the end of his life Bradburne read less and less apart from the Bible, *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *The Way of the Pilgrim*.³⁶ Previously he had dipped into poetry, Shakespeare and an occasional book which his friends had lent to him. Now he focused almost exclusively on his spiritual journey.

He was still trying to publish a volume of his poetry, albeit despondently. The few poems that had appeared in the Rhodesian quarterly, *Two Tone*, were little compensation. When he could he continued to distribute poems to his friends. In a dejected state, he wrote to Stephen King:

Herewith some more nonsense in verse, since you are appreciative of my stuff. I often long to burn all 1,000 pages and their duplicates, but still they remain. I have found in the past that destroying everything for the sake of simplicity leads inevitably to building up twice as much clobber again as soon as possible.

(*op. cit.* 272)

³⁵ The author of this mystic text is unknown, although Bradburne believed it to have been Walter Hilton.

³⁶ The author of this nineteenth century Russian work is not known. Bradburne used the English translation by R.M. French.

In June 1978, Bradburne fell ill with what he thought was just a sore throat. By July it was worse, and his teeth and jaw began to ache. He had a tooth pulled in Mtoko Hospital, but nothing improved. By 15 August, when Dr Guidotti visited him, he was in alarmingly poor health with part of his face semi-paralysed. She rushed him to St Anne's hospital in Salisbury, where he was diagnosed with encephalitis. His condition deteriorated, even under medical care. The doctors, observing that parts of his brain had been damaged, thought he was about to die. When his lungs began to fail they transferred him to the intensive care unit of the Andrew Fleming Hospital. Here he gradually recovered. His facial muscles and limbs, which had been paralysed, began to work again and in September he was eventually discharged. Bradburne spent some time recuperating at Silveira House. Against his doctors' advice, he returned to Mutemwa in November, but he never fully regained his strength.

After negotiations involving the Rhodesian Front, the U.S. State Department (1976), Britain (1976-79) and the Rhodesian African nationalists, Bishop Abel Muzorewa was sworn in as prime minister of the newly named Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in May 1979. Muzorewa was an acceptable candidate to white Rhodesians because, in comparison to other African nationalist leaders, he was seen as a moderate. Despite this, peace was not an immediate prospect. The other African nationalist factions (ZANU³⁷ and ZAPU³⁸ particularly), supported by U.S. President Jimmy Carter's administration, by the Organisation of African Unity, and powerful international lobby groups, such as the Catholic Institute for International Relations and the World Council of Churches, rejected Zimbabwe-Rhodesia as an inadequate compromise. These factions sought nothing less than "total liquidation of colonialism in Zimbabwe" (Godwin 260). These political changes were noted by Bradburne, who was singularly unimpressed by the new government, writing: "The present new Government is probably as two-faced as anything that ever flirted with Russia, that abominable Showman-Bear" (quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 281).

Tragedy struck when Dr Guidotti was killed on 6 July 1979. She was shot, ostensibly by accident, by Rhodesian Security Forces at a road block. Bradburne, who felt her absence acutely, deeply mourned her death. Despite his friends' best efforts to dissuade him from remaining in Mutemwa after this incident, he flatly refused to leave.

On the night of 3 September 1979, he was abducted from his hut in Mutemwa, seemingly clothed only in his underpants. Early in the morning on 5 September, he was found by Father David Gibbs, lying dead on the Mtoko-Nyamapanda road. His lower

³⁷ Zimbabwe African National Union.

³⁸ Zimbabwe African People's Union.

back and legs were riddled with bullets from an AK47 rifle, and he was still clothed in his underpants.

There has been much speculation about who was responsible for his death and what the killers' motivation might have been. Owing to the political situation of the time, in which villagers were frequently called upon as informants for both sides of the war, it is difficult to know whether the surviving accounts are accurate or whether they were fabricated to suit what was perceived as the information desired by the investigating parties. People were very nervous to give information to strangers after Bradburne's death, for fear of his killers.

One of his close friends in the leper camp, a woman called Coletta, described the last few days of Bradburne's life in the following way:

The last days of his life were not good days. He could not stay in his hut – he was unsettled. He came up to the Camp many times – he called me and asked me to come with him to the chapel and pray... I could see he was very worried. He then went for a walk on Chigona, the rock opposite, I went with him everywhere. He invited the others (the leprosy patients) to come too, but the Camp was divided – only a few came. This made John sad – very sad – but he did not say it in words. John was worried and upset because the community would not pray with him.

(*op. cit.* 289)

She also said that on Sunday 2 September

he went to his [hut], and gradually brought out all his possessions and gave them away. All he kept was his record player and his radio. I asked him why he was doing this – giving away everything – but he would not tell me. When the *mujibhas* came to fetch him – it was very late... The hut was empty except for the Ark of the Covenant, and volumes of poems. The black box, the box in which he kept his secrets – some poems he wanted Father Dove to read and then destroy, he destroyed that last afternoon. (*op. cit.* 290)

The most probable case is that the killers were *mujibhas* from the neighbouring villages with whom Bradburne had had so many disagreements. Bradburne's defence of the lepers' property and rights had made him many enemies in the area. At a time when resources were greatly stretched, it is possible that some neighbouring villagers resented the supplies provided for the lepers, some of whom were labelled "foreigners" since they originated in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia or other parts of Rhodesia.

Some members of the leper camp later alleged that a meeting was held on 1 September in a neighbouring village by people hostile to Bradburne. There appear to have been lepers who were either present at this meeting, or who knew of the plot to murder Bradburne. This may have been why some refused to pray with him prior to his death. After he was abducted he was apparently taken to a nearby village where he was

kept hidden for a day, and subsequently taken to guerrillas further away, in the hope that they would kill him. The guerrilla leaders allegedly released Bradburne, who was then killed by the *mujibhas* escorting him as he was walking back to Mutemwa. Whether they were acting on orders to kill him, or whether they did it of their own accord, is unclear.

Bradburne's funeral took place in the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Salisbury on 10 September, five days after the murder. As Dove was then on leave in Ireland, David Harold-Barry made the necessary arrangements and preached the funeral oration. During the Communion three lilies were placed on the coffin on behalf of one of Bradburne's friends, accompanied by a card with the words "Three-in-one" written on it. While the Archbishop was speaking one of the priests present, Father Michael O'Halloran, reported seeing what appeared to be blood on the floor underneath the coffin. He discretely covered it up with a chalice purificator. Several other people present reported seeing drops of blood falling from the bottom of the casket. It appears that no one reported seeing more than three drops. When the undertaker, Mr C.W. Hamer-Nel, saw the blood stain he was afraid it had come from Bradburne's body and was seeping through the casket. He took the coffin back to the funeral parlour where it was opened in the presence of Father Victor Riederer, who had been present at the funeral. The body, including the wounds, was completely dry. To their surprise there was no discoloration or decomposition. His complexion appeared quite natural and healthy, as can be seen in a photograph that was taken of him in the coffin on 12 September. Sister Margaret Murphy, who cared for Bradburne while in St Anne's Hospital, was brought to the funeral parlour on the afternoon of the funeral to view the body. When she saw that Bradburne was clothed in a calico robe she requested that he be re clothed in his Franciscan habit, as had been his wish. On 12 September, Dr Joan Lamplough was called in to take a blood sample from Bradburne's body in order to test it against the blood on the purificator. She managed to obtain a sample with some difficulty. The sample was then sent to Dr G. Barclay, but the results were inconclusive. He wrote of the stain on the cloth: "It was not possible to be unequivocal in the assertion that the blood was of human origin" (*op. cit.* 295). The intention had been to bury Bradburne's body in Mutemwa, but after receiving threats that if he was buried there his grave would be desecrated by his enemies, he was buried instead in the Jesuit cemetery at Chishawasha on 12 September.

Since Bradburne's death, the Roman Catholic Church has been investigating a cause for his beatification and eventual canonization. Many people believe he was martyred for the sake of the lepers. There have been several reports of spiritual signs in the form of bees and eagles, and of miraculous healings, which people have attributed to

Bradburne's intercession. The John Bradburne Memorial Society was established in 1995 in Leominster, Herefordshire, as a charity organisation for the aid of the lepers of Mutemwa. Most of Bradburne's belongings are currently preserved by them, and they oversee his cause for canonisation.³⁹

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

On the question as to why John Bradburne wrote poetry, and so much of it, Professor David Crystal commented that "Bradburne breathed poetry. It came out of him like water from a tap – and the tap was always on" ("Preface", *Songs of the Vagabond*, vii). This observation provides a key to understanding Bradburne's poetry, because for him the creation of poetry was almost instinctual. Judging solely by the sheer volume of poetry that he composed, it is clear that "the tap" was indeed "always on". His extant corpus totals over five thousand titled pieces, most of which were composed during the last ten years of his life. "Keeping the tap on" became a way of life for him, to the extent that he developed a virtual inability to write in prose. This is demonstrated in a letter he wrote to his mother on 20 April 1969. He begins:

Dearest Mother, many thanks for your three last letters: of the 9th, of the 12th and the 15th. Writing in anything other than verse is to me a sterile, fruitless and abortive pain, so I am sure you will allow me the pleasure of replying in verse and in verse of giving you what news and Paschal tidings I may have. In saying that writing in anything other than verse is to me heaviness, I do not refer to what I receive but to what I send.

He then continues his letter in nearly one hundred lines of rhyming verse, opening with:

It makes me happy and augments my glees
To read about the pleasure which you had
In Paschal greetings on Masasa trees
The sight of which in Spring makes many glad;
Bless-ed be God that Alleluias leapt
To Easter sunshine best of twenty years,
Receded winter cold, no longer slept
The daffodils but trumpeted their cheers!
Hurrah for Mary gladdened in the way
With Auriol on Easter holiday. (69.153)

³⁹ For a longer narrative on reported events prior to and since Bradburne's death, see Dove's biography, *Strange Vagabond of God* and the biannual newsletters of the John Bradburne Memorial Society.

From around this time, all his letters to his family and friends, even those to his potential publishers, were written predominantly in rhyming verse.

For Bradburne, composing poetry was not merely a process of creative self-expression, as one might expect from other poets. It was rather, for him, intimately linked with his faith, his prayer-life and with his belief that he was acting under divine compulsion. In an interview in 1965 with *Shield Magazine*, he commented:

I would say, as a vehicle of putting my message across I do consider poetry an integral part of my vocation because I find that I can say what I want to say most clearly and memorably in verse. (*Shield Magazine* 9)

He not only felt this distinct calling from God to write, but was also convinced that God had equipped him with the necessary talent wherewith to pursue that calling. In a letter to his mother from Rhodesia he wrote: “I am working hard multiplying the talents of music and writing which God has given me (they are both united in writing verse where the ear is important)” (NELM MS 2005.66 150) (see p. 27).

Heeding the lesson in Christ’s parable of the talents (see Matt. 25.14-30), Bradburne put his talent to work furiously as a good and faithful steward of the gifts given him, writing thousands of pages of poetry, often dozens in a single day. It was his sincere wish that, to use another parable, his light would so shine before men that they would see his good works and glorify God (see Matt. 5.16) – hence his intense frustration at failing to find a publisher and, thereby, an audience with whom he could share what he believed were God-given insights. Despite this failure, in “Beedom Attained” (dated 14 August 1973), he expresses his belief that God himself *will* one day bring his verses into the public domain:

I am contented that my verse should stay
Unread, unlooked at, unrespected, dumb
Until the time when that same King shall say
‘Now let the world with these unfurled go hum!’
Then shall all this, all these, my verse entire
Or only partly, hear God’s ‘Go up higher’. (*ll.* 9-14; 73.43)

Another key to comprehending Bradburne’s poetic mind lies in trying to understand his motivation for writing so prolifically. When, in the same interview in 1965, he was asked *when* he started writing poetry, he replied “During my first Spring in the Church, which was in 1948; that is except for one quatrain written at school under compulsion” (*Shield Magazine* 10). This is in fact not accurate, since in a letter to his parents on 22 April 1945 he described what he termed a “miracle”: “I can write freely in English, and poetry at times flows as fast as I can write it... All this is the Lord’s doing

and all the thanks are to Him” (quoted in NELM MS 2005.66 59) (see p. 12). Despite the inaccuracy of the statement that he began poetry-writing in 1948, it is highly significant that Bradburne *claimed* only to have begun writing poetry after his conversion to Roman Catholicism, thus dismissing all compositions prior to this date (perhaps because he thought them profane and therefore invalid expressions of the divine inspiration he claimed for his Roman Catholic poetry). Also, significantly, he added: “I...believe that anyone who has a talent however small or great, once he is a Catholic should use it for the sake of the Kingdom” (*Shield Magazine* 10). This statement reveals how closely related poetry-writing and his conversion were for him. It also provides an insight into the single-mindedness of his poetry. As Crystal has observed,

[Bradburne] has only one theme, and it is the most profound of themes: the nature of the triune God, as manifested in Jesus, as born of Mary. From this theme come all others – God’s plan in human history, salvation, love... .

(“Preface”, *Songs of the Vagabond*, x)

Bradburne’s claim that he began writing poetry only after his conversion is also of particular significance because in his new-found faith he developed an intimate spiritual relationship with the Virgin Mary, which culminated in what he described as his “marriage” to her in Italy, 1953 (see p. 20). He soon came to see Mary as his Muse. “Nine the muses are, but mine is Queen!” he writes in “In Vino Veritas” (*l.* 58; 74.496), and frequently describes his poetry-writing as taking place “when the Muse is upon him”. Mary was more than just a key source of inspiration for him, though. He goes so far as to claim that it is she who gives him the words to write. The acrostic in “Of Benevolence” (*BA* 40): “MARY TOLD ME THIS” is no arbitrary, hasty statement. In “Petens petitus sum”, he writes:

And what I’ll endeavour to do in the lines
That follow a-page as my Mistress designs
Is to type in a total abandonment sure
As to what to say next that the text may be pure. (*ll.* 7-10; 74.365)

Jesus too, imaged as Pan, inspires him with his piping:

Thus pipes He helpfully: Think not henceforth
Of what you’ve got to say, stay in a trance
Typing My poetry... . (“Monday Morning”, *ll.* 10-12; 74.143)

George Herbert expresses a similar idea in “Jordon (II)”: “There is in love a sweetness ready penned:/Copy out only that, and save expense” (*ll.* 17-18). Like Herbert, and other religious poets, Bradburne saw himself as a tool being used by God.

His sense that he was being compelled to write as directed by Mary may help to explain Bradburne's uncritical stance to much of his poetry. His attitude might be interpreted as springing from a trusting conviction that God would eventually work his purpose out in and also through him – all he needed to do was keep himself constantly available.

It has been the striving of mystics in various religions to be perpetually open to the influence of the Divine, and in this Bradburne was no different. Drawing on his experience of Eastern spirituality, he made a practice of repeating brief, simple prayers in an almost mantric fashion. The saying of the "Jesus Prayer", which became second nature to him, was not about *his* prayer effort, but about becoming a vessel through which the *Holy Spirit* could pray.⁴⁰ What Crystal described as the open tap of poetry may be read in the same light: it was part of Bradburne's being "available".

Bradburne's view of his role as a mystic poet is revealed through the imagery he uses with which to describe himself. A recurring image in his poetry is of himself as an ass, in need of direction by his Muse, as in "Armour" (dated 19 April 1972):

Then, bridle me, my Muse, and sit bareback
 Upon my wit and let my bit be light,
 Ride me with reins like silk and softly stack
 Me up with themes and dreams by day and night;
 Being preoccupied with thy command
 The eloquence of silence I shall hear
 And see my themes conducted by thy wand
 Until to me and others they are clear... (ll. 19-25; 72.5)

As intimated here, Bradburne wished to assume an almost passive role in his poetry-writing. He indeed wanted to "breathe poetry", not of his own inspiration, though, but that which was divinely inspired – "breathed" by God.

He deeply desired that *God* should speak through his writing, but when it came to assessing the *clarity* of the divine message contained in his poetry, Bradburne was well aware of how inadequate a vessel he was. For example, he often compares his writing to the unintelligible "braying" of an ass:

My own is an interminable brook
 which babbles freely on, which no one binds:
 It never finds a publisher! 'alas!'
 I do not say...Goes braying on the ass.⁴¹ (Extract from a letter to Frau Ima; 79.115)

His imperfections did not trouble him much, though, as he realised that "[His] Muse won't refuse to use mistakes" ("Of Better Sighting", l. 28; 71.67). This gives further

⁴⁰ See p. 43.

⁴¹ The ellipsis here does not indicate missing words. The quotation is complete.

insight into his uncritical attitude towards his poetry. He appears to have been untroubled by seeming “mistakes”, since the perfection of his gift was less important than God’s grace, which he believed would pervade his poetry, regardless of his inadequacies.

As an instrument in God’s hands, he wished to be played daily. His poem “Talisman”, dated 5 March 1969, is revealing in its imagery, as he likens his poetry-writing to the impulsive, daily⁴² singing of a bird:

Birds that spontaneously sing
Ask not reward or anything
Of man’s appreciation, they
Being but God’s make songs each day
Especially at morn and eve:
In giving thanks they thanks receive.

Lord, I would ask it now this morn,
No other task but, unforlorn
From lack of mortal praise of what
I need to write for lucre⁴³ not,
I may continue, morn and eve
Songs that Our Lady may receive.

Indeed no other task I wish,
Neither to hunt or shoot or fish
For pleasure, all my pleasure is
In offering these oddities
To God’s good Mother; Second Eve,
Adamant I, my songs receive!

Though I might go and wonders work
Amongst the sick, this would I shirk
Openly only that I may
Make songs of beauty each new day:
Sweet Mistress mine, but make-believe
Were occupation else, I cleave.

“This day I make you this reply,
Leave all to me for you can fly
Quite like a swallow, skim with words
The deeps and shallows; bards are birds
And here and now these lines believe
Leaders to readers will receive”. (69.77)

It is therefore accurate to say that Bradburne was motivated to write poems by his belief that God had not only directed him towards such a vocation, but also given him the talent and, more importantly, the words to say.

⁴² Cf. Milton’s invocation of his heavenly Muse in *Paradise Lost*, Book III, whom he describes himself revisiting nightly (see ll. 13-31).

⁴³ “Gain, profit, pecuniary advantage” (*OED* “lucre” n. 1).



By its very nature, this method of composition, and the passive attitude that accompanied it, is fraught with dangers, chief of which is that Bradburne's critical faculty is not brought to bear upon his writing. Instead he relies uncritically on inspiration, which often leads to deficient poetic expression. While another poet might return to poems and hone their expression, there is very little evidence of Bradburne revising, reworking or correcting the majority of his poems. He appears to have been less interested in what he had thought the previous day, or in what God had previously inspired him to write, as he was in his latest apprehensions. This being so, he lacked any strong motivation for returning to earlier work and attempting to perfect his expression.

Instead, and unusually, Bradburne uses his poetry as a type of spiritual diary. In his poetry, he jots down his thoughts; records current events, specifically those that affect his relationship with God; and charts his spiritual progress from day to day, sometimes from hour to hour.

As in a diary, Bradburne's writing often flows without interruption for pages on end, with no corrections or revisions. As Crystal has noted, sometimes the only reason Bradburne ends a poem is because he has arrived at the end of a page or book (see *JBMS Newsletter*, "Winter 2004", 6). Indeed, the mere physical restrictions imposed by limited space often dictate the length of a poem. This is particularly apparent in the short two- or three-lined poems which Bradburne frequently squeezes onto a spare inch of paper at the bottom of a page.

This in itself points to another distinguishing feature of Bradburne's poems: he often wrote spontaneously, without any careful prior planning of the poem's ultimate content, structure, form or length. His poetry may be described, in the words of William Wordsworth, as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" ("Preface to *Lyrical Ballades* (1802)" 611), but unlike Wordsworth's model for poetry writing, Bradburne's emotions were seldom "recollected in tranquillity" (*loc. cit.*) before being translated into verse form. In fact, many of his poems were composed at an extraordinarily rapid rate. The sheer extent of his poetic output is surprising in itself, but the swiftness of the process of composition is proved by the occasions where he noted the time of composition alongside the date. For example, "To Paddy Bidwell" (71.257), dated 10 August 1971 at 03h55, is followed by "Mattins" (71.180), dated on the same day at 04h45, which means that this thirty-four line poem was written within fifty minutes.

All these factors militate against consistent high quality expression. The resulting corpus is one in which the quality inevitably varies greatly. Bradburne's best poems succeed in conveying profound spiritual insights in limpid lines with startlingly fresh

imagery. His worst are almost banal and syntactically barely comprehensible.

Bradburne's Assays contain neither his very best, nor his very worst poems. Instead, most of them are mixed in quality. "De Voce Patris" (BA 30), for example, contains profound and interesting ideas, but the expression is not as lucid as in a poem like "Of Education" (BA 10), the content of which is less challenging. Bradburne's more successful poems in this edition are poems like "Of Philanthropy" (BA 41) and "Of Friendship" (BA 39), where his language has not been distorted. "Of Death" (BA 7) and "Of Erudition" (BA 5) are, by contrast, two of his less successful poems, due to their contorted syntax, aimed at maintaining the chosen acrostic. Notably, neither "Of Philanthropy" nor "Of Friendship" uses an acrostic.

What makes the poems in this edition so interesting a topic for study is that, at some time after their completion, they were deliberately assembled by Bradburne himself into an integral collection under a common title. There is evidence that at least some of them were revised, although the extent to which this took place cannot be gauged, since Bradburne's first drafts have not survived. It appears that few, if any, underwent substantial revision or correction.

Bradburne's Assays is not the only titled sequence of poems in his corpus, but it is unlike the others in many respects. Bradburne wrote several *short* sequences of poems on a common theme, some with titles, some without, but he does not appear to have assembled any of these sequences as a collection. On the other hand, there are a few *longer* sequences of poems, such as *A Fumbly Alphabet* and *A Jumbly Alphabet*, which have a common theme and were definitely intended as collections, but which include too few or too many poems to warrant an academic study of this nature. More significantly, *Bradburne's Assays* is especially interesting because of the variety of topics it approaches, nearly all within the rigorous confines of the sonnet form. None of the other collections is bound by a common poetic form or title-formula.

Bradburne's Assays is a conscious imitation of the collection of formal essays first published by the influential English philosopher Francis Bacon (1561-1626) in 1597. Following the publication of the *Essais* of the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) in 1580, Bacon "inaugurated the English use of the term in his own *Essays*, most of [which] are short commentaries on [various] subjects" (Abrams, "Essay", 59).

Bradburne's opinion of Bacon's *Essays* is expressed in his poem "On Bacon's Essays", dated 3 April 1968. He begins:

The best of Bacon's being is enshrined
Amidst that neat quintessence of his thought
Entitled 'Essays', deeply there's combined

Prudence with craft, to wisdom paying court;
 His brilliance in these vies with the sun
 Which penetrates dense forests by its rays
 And pierces into thickest plots, yet none
 Reading him will be warmed by Bacon's blaze... . (ll. 1-8; 68.59)

While noting their brilliant artistry, Bradburne dislikes Bacon's *Essays* because, he claims, they lack divine perspective. He criticises them for approaching matters like truth and deformity without an understanding of God's nature and purposes. He thus accuses Bacon of having a "cold and calculating eye/Which, seeing all, is like the Maker's not" (ll. 33-34; 68.59).

It is therefore likely that in writing his *Assays* Bradburne's intention was to approach similar subjects to those in Bacon's *Essays*, but from a Christian perspective, and in concentrated verse form rather than in Tacitean-style prose. Bradburne deliberately imitates the common title "Of..." used by Bacon, and even composes six poems with *exactly* the same title as Bacon's *Essays*, namely: "Of Truth" (BA 3), "Of Gardens" (BA 4), "Of Death" (BA 7), "Of Envy" (BA 14), "Of Ambition" (BA 18) and "Of Friendship" (BA 39).⁴⁴ Like Bacon's *Essays* many of Bradburne's *Assays* are also concerned with matters of public morality. The variety of subject matter that Bradburne approaches in his *Assays*, too, is similar to that of Bacon's *Essays*.

The deliberate choice of *Assays*, rather than *Essays*, in the title, is an indication that Bradburne was here testing – "assaying" – certain ordinary concepts in the light of his religious experience, thereby parodying Bacon's secular approach. It may also be that Bradburne intended "Assay" as a pun on "ass", a name he commonly assigned to himself, often specifically to his body, which he referred to as "Brother Ass" (see note on 3 "brother ass's" in "Of Mortification" (BA 6)), thus echoing the words of St Francis of Assisi. The title reveals Bradburne's attitude to the poems that follow and may in part excuse their imperfections. They are not a serious attempt to rewrite Bacon's *Essays*, but rather a playful parody of some of them. His title may be understood to denote the essays of an ass, whose chief desire is to bray for God's greater glory.

There is no definite underlying logic to the overall ordering of the poems in *Bradburne's Assays*. Like Bacon, he moves from one topic to another without necessarily linking them. There are, however, certain thematic connections or patterns of association between some pairs or groups of poems. For instance, Bradburne's chief expositions on the Trinity are found in the consecutive poems "De Voce Patris" (BA 30)

⁴⁴ Although these six poems share their titles with Bacon's *Essays*, their content does not bear much comparison. Bradburne, who almost certainly did not have access to Bacon's *Essays* when he wrote the *Assays*, does not attempt to reply to specific points made by Bacon in his corresponding *Essays*.

and “Of Heat and Light and Sound” (BA 31). “Of Familiarity” (BA 38), “Of Friendship” (BA 39), “Of Benevolence” (BA 40) and “Of Philanthropy” (BA 41) share similar social concerns. The subjects of poems, such as “Of Deicide” (BA 44) and “Of Suicide” (BA 45), are directly related. Pairs like “Of Philanthropy” (BA 41) and “Of Misanthropy” (BA 42), and “Of a District” (BA 21) and “Of a District Commissioner” (BA 22), although very different in content, are associated with each other by virtue of their titles.

Bradburne does not seem to have planned to write on specific topics prior to beginning his *Assays*. Instead, his subject matter is influenced by experiences and daily events, as in “Of a Sunday in Lent” (BA 27), which appears to have been inspired by an influx of bees at the morning service in Mutemwa. All the poems in this collection were written fairly soon after he arrived at Mutemwa,⁴⁵ while he was living in the old butcher-shop.

By contrast with Bacon, Bradburne deliberately chooses to write in verse. This gives him access to the full range of conventional poetic devices, which include choices of verse form, vocabulary and syntactic devices, musical and rhythmical effects and imagery. He employs all of these with greater or lesser effectiveness in his attempts to realise his intention and vocation.

Most of the poems in the collection under discussion are sonnets. The brevity and conciseness of the chosen form imposes certain restrictions, most of which Bradburne tries strenuously to observe. Nearly all his sonnets have the standard fourteen ten-syllable lines, the rhythm throughout is iambic and the rhyme schemes are usually conventional (mostly Shakespearean).

The choice of sonnet form imposes a tension between normal speech patterns and strict iambic rhythm. In order to fit the metrical demands of the form, Bradburne often transposes words, thereby contorting normal English syntax, sometimes in quite extreme ways, as in “Of Election” (BA 25):

...pilose be
Even as Esau if your Mother free
Is Mary, than Rebecca fairer far
O rarer too! (ll. 6-9)

Instead of writing “aid and abet” in “Of Angels and of Birds” (BA 12), Bradburne transposes the phrase to fit the iambic pentameter of the line: “Even abet and aid they in such sport” (l. 4); similarly in “Of earthworms” (BA 32), where “So far as either one distinguish may” (l. 2) would normally read “So far as one may distinguish either”.

⁴⁵ He moved to Mutemwa on 1 August 1969. The first poem in this collection is dated 19 February 1970.

Generally, though, Bradburne succeeds in compressing his sometimes fairly complex thoughts and perceptions, thereby achieving the concentration expected of the form. Where the Petrarchan sonnet form usually offers a duality, and the Shakespearean form three illustrative quatrains and a final clinching couplet, *Bradburne's Assays* often ignore both these rhetorical patterns. In some cases Bradburne hybridises the two forms. The poem "Of a District" (BA 21) utilises the Shakespearean form of three quatrains and a couplet, but has a hybridised rhyme scheme of abbaeddeffegg. "De Voce Patris" (BA 30), on the other hand, has the internal form of a Petrarchan sonnet, with a definite volta after the octave, but conforms to the conventional Shakespearean rhyme scheme. Regardless of the particular form, however, a single thematic progression is often evident from the first to the final line.

Occasionally, Bradburne's choice of words is also dictated by the rhythm: in cases, such as "oft" (BA 40, l. 14), "e'en" (BA 8, l. 11), "o'er" (BA 39, l. 14), "gainst" (BA 14, l. 9), "mongst" (BA 27, l. 8) and "sans" (BA 7, l. 8), he uses shorter words, contractions or archaisms in order to fit the rhythm. In a similar way, his wish to rhyme also occasionally determines word choices and word order. In "Of a Sunday in Lent" (BA 27) he chooses the word "lays" (l. 4) in preference to a word like "songs", in order to rhyme with "praise" (l. 2); similarly in "Of Deicide" (BA 44) where "always" (l. 8), instead of "always" is used, in order to rhyme with "away" (l. 6). In "Of Erudition" (BA 5) he transposes the final line from "lives as men live them" to "lives as live them men" (l. 14) in order to rhyme "men" with "pen" (l. 13). Bradburne also coins neologisms when the need arises, such as "greensleeved" (BA 4, l. 1). He sometimes uses one part of speech as another, such as "Alack" (BA 6, l. 11), used as a noun instead of an interjection, and "goaled" (BA 39, l. 10), where he has created a new verb derived from a noun. He sometimes uses idiosyncratic or obscure meanings – or forces meanings onto words – in order to maintain the rhyme or rhythm. For example, he uses "finds" (BA 5, l. 4), meaning "considers", in order to rhyme with "minds"; and "alloy", roughly meaning "adulteration" (BA 11, l. 14), to rhyme with "joy".

In order to meet the requirements of the metre and of the rhyme scheme, he also adopts simple rhymes and often repeats them. He usually chooses monosyllabic words, a characteristic which helps to maintain the iambic pentameter by providing a stressed final syllable for each line. A typical rhyme scheme consists of words such as the following, taken from "Of a Sunday in Lent" (BA 27): stiff, praise, tiff, lays, yet, dwells, set, cells, worker-kind, call, find, all, hymn, whim. On several occasions where Bradburne uses longer words, the rhyme is forced, such as his rhyming of "contemptible" (l. 2) with

“crucible” (l. 4) in “Of Familiarity” (BA 38) and “indicated” (l. 13) with “pre-mated” (l. 14) in “Of Intuition” (BA 13). Another technique Bradburne adopts, in order to keep within the pre-set patterns of rhythm and rhyme, is to pad out lines with expletives, such as “for sure” (BA 3, l. 5), “for the nones” (BA 4, l. 9), the repeated “[she] should” (BA 8, l. 12), “no whim” (BA 27, l. 14) and “(Cana, shine!)” (BA 34, l. 4). Despite this, his lines are by no means all end-stopped, which allows the natural speech rhythm to run on to the following line in poems, such as “Of Heat and Light and Sound” (BA 31):

She has full knowledge of the Voice who bore
The Word, which all the world had not contained
Completely thitherto because, before
Christ, the whole Bible’s content was not gained... (ll. 1-4)

Bradburne often further complicates the sonnet forms by using acrostics, which impose their own restrictions and make additional demands on his linguistic ingenuity. Sometimes the acrostic is simply a repetition of the title, as in “Of Cocks and Hens” (BA 24): OF COCKS AND HENS. In other cases, the meaning of the poem is interpreted by the acrostic, such as in “Of Shaving” (BA 26): A WASTE OF TIM(WG)E, or reinforced, as in “Of the Ark (on every side)”: BARQUE OF PETROS, or, in the case of “Of Sex-Appeal”, an extension of the meaning given by the title: FAIREST MIRACLES. In order to maintain the acrostic, Bradburne often distorts the syntax. In “Of Erudition” (BA 5), “beguile/Eruditely his every moment may/A mortal man” (ll. 8-10) would normally read “A mortal man may beguile his every moment eruditely”, but has been distorted for the sake of the acrostic, as well as to fit the metre and the rhyme scheme. By contrast, a poem like “Of Education” (BA 10) is notably lucid in the absence of an acrostic.

Bradburne’s word choice in his *Assays* demonstrates his preference for dated English. He frequently uses archaisms and poeticisms, such as “Rapt” (BA 2, l. 11), “wights” (BA 5, l. 5), “Viand” (BA 7, l. 2), “physic” (BA 11 l. 2), “Naught” (BA 13, l. 13), “straightway” (BA 17, l. 11), “whilom” (BA 20, l. 1), “orisons” (BA 26, l. 3), “Meseems” (BA 27, l. 6), “thitherto” (BA 31, l. 3), “thence” (BA 39, l. 14) and “Whereat” (BA 45, l. 11). Such word choices lend his poetry a certain old-world flavour.

He often uses Biblical or ecclesiastical terms and names, such as “trisagion” (BA 12, l. 12), “Sacrosanctae” (BA 17, l. 6), “Ichabod” (BA 20, l. 13), “cenobites” (BA 27, l. 5), “Bezaleel” (BA 28, l. 9), “Paraclete” (BA 31, l. 6), “Melchisedech” (BA 33, l. 13) “Salem”, “Shalom” (BA 33, l. 1), “Tenebrae” (BA 43, l. 4), “Haceldama” (BA 45, l. 2) and “tiara” (BA 46, l. 5), which, while familiar to him, the son of an Anglican minister and a devoted Roman Catholic convert, are not as well known among average readers. His poetry thus needs substantial commentary in places. In addition, Bradburne

occasionally refers to hymns and uses Biblical and ecclesiastical allusions, with adaptations to suit his purposes. Examples include “a fatted cow” (BA 15, l. 1), “pinnacles of temples” (BA 18, l. 10), “cloud of witnesses” (BA 27, l. 11), “the Way, the Truth, life’s Light” (BA 43, l. 30), “world without an end” (BA 32, l. 13), “brother ass” (BA 43, l. 5), “sic transit mundi gloria” (BA 45, l. 13), “For it is seemly so to do” (BA 47, l. 5) and “Nigra sed Formosa sum” (BA 47, l. 14). He thereby associates himself with the language of classic Christian texts, such as the Authorised Version of the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and the Roman Catholic Missal. This affords his work a sense of continuity and timelessness, as well as an air of authority based on centuries of tradition. He does not maintain an air of superiority, though, and often uses allusions, such as these in an unexpectedly playful manner.

Bradburne is also inconsistent in his preference for dated English and Biblical language, as his constantly changing registers reveal. He shifts, often within a single poem, between a poetic or archaic register and common slang. Within “Of Envy” (BA 14), for example, he shifts from phrases like “The envy of your neighbour’s goods is so/Senseless as has compelled to fence them in” (ll. 5-6) to “What hast thou, man, or what hath any other” (l. 13).

Although Bradburne has much in common with other English religious poets, and was influenced by several other writers, many of whom he alludes to in his corpus, he does not appear to imitate any single writer.⁴⁶ Especially towards the end of his life, his reading was very limited, with the Bible⁴⁷ and a few other religious texts as his main literary sources of inspiration. Nevertheless, he was fond of quoting or alluding to other writers, often in a playful way. Since he did not keep poetry books in Mutemwa, his literary allusions for most of his poetry are reliant on his memory of the relevant text. For a time, however, he did keep a copy of Shakespeare’s plays, which he loved. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of his literary allusions in the *Assays* are to Shakespeare, particularly to *Romeo and Juliet* (“Romeos with Juliets” (BA 13, l. 12) and “What’s in a name?” (BA 45, l. 9)), *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice* (“In such a night as this” (BA 34, l. 19)) and *The Tempest* (“the dark backward and abysm of time” (BA 1, l. 14)). In this collection, he also makes passing references to Milton’s *Paradise Regained* (see BA 29, l. 14) and to Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (the slough of “despond” (BA 16, l. 6)).

⁴⁶ Certain aspects of his poetry, such as his religious devotion, his delight in the natural world, and his dense, compact writing-style, are reminiscent of poetry by Gerard Manley Hopkins.

⁴⁷ Bradburne used the Authorised Version of the Bible, and annotated his copy, which is currently stored in Leominster, Herefordshire, by the John Bradburne Memorial Society.

Playfulness is also a central feature in Bradburne's choice and arrangement of words. For instance, he seldom passes up the opportunity to pun, regardless of whether or not it detracts from his central meaning. Some examples are "in such a Knight as this" (*BA* 7, *l.* 13), "fence" and "defenceless" (*BA* 14, *ll.* 6-7), "whined" for "wind" (*BA* 15, *l.* 14), "Lord" and "laudable" (*BA* 18, *l.* 7), "wind a mere" (*BA* 21, *l.* 2) for "Windermere", "her suited" (*BA* 25, *l.* 1) for "hirsute" and "Au lait" (*BA* 36, *l.* 10) for "Olé". This playfulness is also evident in the names Bradburne assigns to himself, such as "the Jester of Christ the King" (Dove 122), as well as in his use of idiomatic phrases. His compulsive punning reveals the light-hearted attitude he often adopts towards both himself and his poems.

Bradburne's musicality is another governing factor in his choice and arrangement of words. Assonance, alliteration and internal- or end-rhyme feature in all the poems in his *Assays*. "Of Ambition" (*BA* 18) is an example of one poem that relies heavily on alliteration:

Unless to climb the mount of life as light
Of lust as love allows may make more glad... (*ll.* 11-12)

In this instance, the alliteration is not merely playful, but largely determines the tone of the lines. In "De Spiritu Domini" (*BA* 29), he uses assonance similarly – "a mighty fire in ire" (*l.* 7) – as well as in "Of a District" (*BA* 21):

On becks and lakes alike and light as charm
On Eden, reaching Appleby with ease... (*ll.* 3-4)

In addition to the seven full rhymes expected at the line ends in "Of nothing" (*BA* 20), Bradburne makes extensive use of carefully balanced pairs of internal rhymes: "morning" (*l.* 1) – "yawning" (*l.* 2), "Naught" – "sport" (*l.* 3), "marriage" – "carriage" (*l.* 4), "maker" – "breaker" (*l.* 5), "debt" – "let" (*l.* 7), "paid" – "made" (*l.* 7), "not" – "plot" (*l.* 8), "net" – "set", "get" – "pet" (*l.* 12).

These examples serve to illustrate Bradburne's love of sound for its own sake. They serve no overtly rational purpose, but establish brief musical patterns which bind ideas and images together. Bradburne frequently ties three or four words together with a sound pattern. A typical example occurs in "Of Possession" (*BA* 8): "many men might like" (*l.* 4). Each pair of words is connected through a common sound: the first pair by virtue of the "me" sound, the second pair by the "m" sound and the last pair by the "ai" diphthong. Each pair is connected to the adjacent pair through a word which uses both sounds: "might" acts as a connector between "men" and "like" since it has both the "m" and the "ai". Another example may be seen in "Of Angels and of Birds" (*BA* 12): "oft,

aloft amongst" (l. 9), where "aloft" connects "oft" and "amongst" since it contains both the "oft" and the "ə" sound.

Apart from using internal- and end-rhyme, acrostics, assonance, alliteration and musical phrases with which to pattern his poetry, Bradburne occasionally makes use of parallelisms. He uses parallel phrases within a single line, such as in "Of Intuition" (BA 13): "Naught may be said while all is indicated" (l. 13), contrasting "Naught" with "all" and "said" with "indicated". In "Of No Thing" (BA 9), on the other hand, he uses parallel phrasing between adjacent lines:

He is a gladness and he is a good
He is a sadness if he's not our God. (ll. 1-2)

Although Bradburne wrote thousands of pages of poetry in the manner of a spiritual diary, each of these poems does not represent a unique theme. It appears that instead of revising a particular poem, he would write a completely new poem on a virtually identical theme, sometimes using much the same vocabulary, but always to a slightly different effect. Similar themes and theological ideas recur in a large variety of verse forms, proof that Bradburne was constantly seeking new ways of expressing his perceptions. This indicates just how important he considered his insights and his gifts to be. It also helps in explaining why Bradburne was so prolific. His corpus does not contain thousands of poems which each have unique ideas, imagery or themes. Rather it consists of sometimes hundreds of poems on a single idea, image or theme. One such example is Bradburne's image of the Trinity as Thought, Word and Voice, which recurs numerous times in his oeuvre. The following two extracts exemplify the way Bradburne composes different poems on this common theme:

What is the Father's Voice and how defined?
The Father's Thought is what He thinks, His Word
Is Christ His Thought expressed and so combined
With Him as makes division quite absurd;
God spake His thought and what He said was Light
Of Light which is Himself, and what He used
To say it was His Voice - is it not right
To call that Voice the Spirit He infused?
Wherefore we have the Thought, the Word, the Voice... .
(*"De Voce Patris"*, BA 30, ll. 1-9)

The Thought of God is written in the air,
Weather and wind express Him with His Word,
Behold the hills so high above low care
And hark to Yahweh's Voice in larksong heard;
The Thought of God is God The Father good,
The Word of God expresses what God thinks,
The Voice of God wings vibrant in the wood

Singing, or in our hearts with silence links;
 These Three are Love Begetting, Love Begotten
 And Love Proceeding as The Voice of both...

(“Spring is in the air”, *ll.* 1-10; 78.360)

Both poems approach the Trinity using the image of Thought, Word and Voice, but each in a distinctive way.

Bradburne makes extensive use of imagery drawn from a variety of sources. One recurring image in *Bradburne's Assays* is that of Christ as the god Pan, who gives inspiration with his piping. In “Of Deicide” (*BA* 44) Christ is pictured as “Great Pan,/Who softly pipes” (*ll.* 3-4); in “Of Glory” (*BA* 47) he is “the Prince/Of Peace who pipes as Pan He ever was” (*ll.* 7-8); while in “Of Purgatory” (*BA* 16) “Great Pan especially delights to pipe/Amongst His own peculiars” (*ll.* 10-11). Although in every case Bradburne is drawing on the idea of Christ as Pan, each instance of this image has its own nuances which make it unique.

Another favourite source of imagery is the world of mediaeval chivalry. For example, he depicts Christ as his “Liege” (*BA* 14, *l.* 12), “Troubadour” (*BA* 7, *l.* 11) and “Knight” (*BA* 7, *l.* 13). He depicts himself as both Christ’s “knav[e]” (*BA* 26, *l.* 11), and as the Virgin Mary’s champion, who “fling[s] [his] gage aground” (*BA* 9, *l.* 13) in defence of his Lady. By contrast, he uses the occasional metaphor from mathematics (“ruling his line” (*BA* 5, *l.* 11), “zenith” (*BA* 11, *l.* 9) and “to the Nth” (*BA* 23, *l.* 6)) or science (“fuse” (*BA* 3, *l.* 12) “rocket” (*BA* 18, *l.* 4), “insulated” (*BA* 23, *l.* 2) and “crucible” (*BA* 38, *l.* 4)).

As a musician and composer himself, it is not surprising that Bradburne drew heavily on music for his imagery. In “De Voce Patris” (*BA* 30), Jesus is depicted as a “song”, while the Holy Spirit is described as “so/Musical as no dissonance will show” (*ll.* 13-14). He uses musical terminology, such as “counterpoint” (*BA* 4, *l.* 2) and “well-tempered” (*BA* 38, *l.* 8) and musical images, such as histories that “strike a note” (*BA* 3, *l.* 1). He alludes to natural sources of music, such as the humming of bees (*BA* 16, 27), and refers to the singing of hymns (*BA* 27, 36, 39) and Gregorian chant (*BA* 46). He mentions numerous musical instruments (trombones, trumpets, pan-pipes, drums, cellos, double-basses) and composers, such as Palestrina and Victoria (*BA* 46). In “Of Heat and Light and Sound” (*BA* 31), he even introduces Mary as a barmaid singing of Christ her King.

Some of Bradburne’s images are densely compacted, such as in “Of Intuition” (*BA* 13) where in the first eight lines alone there are images of “walls within the wheels of time” (*l.* 2), of time as “a gearing down/of Love’s eternal lightning nature” (*ll.* 5-6), and of humankind as being “tested till the crown/Of lasting life is won through strife

below" (ll. 7-8). In other poems, such as "Of Popularity" (BA 15), he builds the entire poem on a single sustained metaphor: in this case, that of a bloated cow.

Bradburne's reason for repeatedly using Old Testament stories and images in his *Assays* and elsewhere may be found in a statement he made in his interview in 1965 with *Shield Magazine*. He said: "I'd like to know that Jews are reading my verse" (*Shield Magazine* 10). Given Bradburne's frustrated desire to work in Jerusalem for the conversion of the Jews, it appears that he gave expression to this urge in his poetry-writing. He thus uses Biblical typology to explain the role of the Church, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and Mary.⁴⁸ He deliberately chooses imagery that is familiar to both Christianity and Judaism, namely that found in the Old Testament.

In "Of the Ark (on every side)" (BA 28), after referring to various Old Testament arks, Bradburne concludes the poem with an image of the Christian Church as the present ark of God. The poem is structured in this way so as to indicate the natural progression in history from the chosen people of God in the Old Testament to the Church in the New Testament. Bradburne deliberately draws on the Old Testament as a background to the appearance of Jesus, as if to explain that he *is* the long awaited Messiah of the Jews. He structures "Of Wine" (BA 34) similarly to "Of the Ark (on every side)", citing various historical instances of wine-drinking until the couplet, where he introduces the imagery of wine used by Jesus at the Last Supper. This internal structure implies that the use of wine culminates in Jesus and is perfected by him. A similar structure and conclusion is seen in "Of Melchisedek" (BA 33), where Melchizedek, the mysterious priest and king who blessed Abram and brought him bread and wine, is seen as a precursor of Jesus. In "De Spiritu Domini" (BA 29), Bradburne associates New Testament imagery of the Transfiguration with Old Testament imagery of the Spirit of God, again beginning his poem with references to the Old Testament as a grounding for later events. In "Of Election" (BA 25), the Old Testament figure of Rebecca prefigures the Virgin Mary.

Although this discussion is limited to Bradburne's use of verse form, vocabulary and syntactic devices, musical and rhythmical effects and imagery as found in his *Assays*, in his oeuvre as a whole there is a far greater variety present, as is to be expected from someone with so fertile an imagination. As a poet, Bradburne drew on all his experiences, sometimes even the most humdrum or bizarre ones, to help him capture in words his perceptions of the spiritual and material world. The many idiosyncrasies and eccentricities of his poetry stem from his individuality as a poet and a mystic. His particular approach to life and to his writing is the fount of his distinctive poetry, which

⁴⁸ Cf. Herbert's comparison between events and figures in the Old and New Testaments. See, for example, his use of Biblical typology in "The Bunch of Grapes" and "Aaron".

contains some profound and moving insights into even such complex theological notions as the Trinity. Yet his unconventionality also leads to inconsistency and obscurity in his poetry. One such idiosyncratic characteristic of the poetry is his tendency to sacrifice clarity for form, as illustrated above. In *Bradburne's Assays*, he frequently distorts his syntax in order to satisfy the requirements of one or more aspects of the rigid form he has prescribed for himself.

It was Bradburne's sincere wish to "write verses, verses that rhyme and have music in their words. Untortured, untwisted, unmodish verses" (NELM MS 2005.66 150-51) (see p. 27). There is much verbal music in his verse, great freshness in his imagery and deep insight underpinning his writing, but his poetry does not always succeed in being "untortured" and "untwisted".

In this regard it is worth reiterating the lesser known fact about Bradburne's attitude towards his poetry, as expressed to Cecil Hardwicke in November 1961, where he gave instructions about his poems: "If ever you look at the verses and edit them, comb them remorselessly: let nothing but gold go forth for glory" (NELM MS 2005.66 134) (see p. 24). Contrary to what one might have expected from such a wilful individual, Bradburne here expresses a desire for his poetry to be vigorously edited so that nothing but the very best of his talent should remain. Cecil Hardwicke did not edit his poems. Nor is there any record of anyone else ever having done so in his lifetime. The result was that Bradburne continued uncritically composing reams of poetry in relative obscurity, though he repeatedly expressed his frustration at this lack of an audience. He once wrote:

An artist's joy consists in seeing his joy passed on and communicated to many people. Otherwise production becomes mere frustration. (*op. cit.* 151)⁴⁹

It is likely that, in the absence of a critical readership and of positive feedback, some of his writing did in fact become "mere frustration", and that as a result his poetic genius was stunted. This is regrettable, since Bradburne's poetry would have benefited greatly from careful editorial intervention. Had he developed a working relationship with someone who had recognised his talent and was prepared to help him hone it properly, it is possible that he would have developed a more consistent, more powerful and more lucid poetic voice.

Nevertheless, in his most successful poems he achieves his mystic goal of self-effacement, in such a way that his apprehensions of the divine are conveyed clearly and directly. Where he succeeds in matching his ideas to his chosen words and forms, the result is poetry of a beauty and profundity peculiarly his own.

⁴⁹ See p. 28.

TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

The Manuscript

The collection of forty-seven poems examined in this edition bears the unifying title *Bradburne's Assays*, and was assembled by Bradburne himself. This collection forms part of a larger corpus of poetry, currently stored in Holyhead, Wales, by Professor David Crystal.⁵⁰

The manuscript of *Bradburne's Assays* consists of twelve, unnumbered, loose pages, measuring 33cm x 20,5cm. All the poems appear to have been typed on Bradburne's typewriter on plain off-white pages. There are three manuscript corrections in blue ink in Bradburne's hand: one in the second line of the "Foreword" (BA 1), where parentheses have been added, and two others in the sixth stanza of "Of The Lord's Prayer" (BA 43), where Bradburne corrects the spelling of "Tyrannical" and replaces "here's" with "seems". All other corrections are in black typescript. In the space to the right of each poem there are catalogue numbers, each followed by a tick, handwritten in pencil by Crystal. Above each of these, Crystal has typexed out previous catalogue numbers by an unknown party. At the bottom of page [11],⁵¹ above Bradburne's typeface, "(Lady Day 1970)", Crystal has written, also in pencil, "[25 March]". At the bottom of page [12], below Bradburne's typeface, "(Good Friday 1970)", Crystal has also written in pencil "27 March". The pages have been hole-punched, but are not bound in any way. Page [10] appears to have been inserted after the other pages were assembled.⁵² Although the manuscript was consulted during a visit to Holyhead in January 2004, research towards this thesis has been conducted from scanned electronic copies of the twelve pages, as supplied by Crystal.

Bradburne presented the poems in this collection chronologically, with two exceptions: "Of Religion" (BA 37) – dated 9 April 1970, and "Of Misanthropy" (BA 42) – dated 3 May 1970. Aside from these two poems, the sequence consists of forty poems dated from 19-23 February 1970 and five poems dated from 25-27 March 1970.

Evidence suggests that the manuscript of *Bradburne's Assays* was typed by Bradburne some time after the poems were composed. The date given beside each poem

⁵⁰ See discussion on "Provenance" below for further information.

⁵¹ These page numbers do not appear on the manuscript itself, but have been assigned here to aid the discussion. See the copies of the original manuscript found in the appendix.

⁵² See discussion below.

seems to refer to the date of composition rather than to the date on which the poem was typed. This is evidenced by the fact that in several instances the date has a direct bearing on the subject matter of the poem. For example, "Of a Sunday in Lent" (BA 27) is dated 22 February 1970 – the second Sunday in Lent that year. "Of Deicide" (BA 44), concerning the death of Jesus, and "Of Suicide" (BA 45), concerning Judas' betrayal of Jesus, are both dated "Good Friday 1970".

The resulting manuscript constitutes a rare attempt by Bradburne to produce a titled collection of his poems. Although there are several indications that he retyped some of his poetry, there are very few comparable collections of this nature in the known corpus.

It also appears that the poems in *Bradburne's Assays* were typed within a short space of time. One revealing piece of evidence with which to verify this conjecture is the density of the print on the manuscript. The density of the typed characters on all the pages except page [10] is identical. Had all the poems been typed on the dates given, the print produced by the inked-ribbon typewriter Bradburne used would surely have become progressively lighter between February, March, April and May, as a result of three months' use, in which the ribbon would inevitably have grown drier. Alternatively, if an old ribbon in the typewriter had been replaced by a fresh one during these months, the print would have become darker. In fact, it is likely that Bradburne did change the ribbon some time during or soon after the end of April 1970, since all poems dated during the beginning of May – and which fall outside the parameters established for this study, with the exception of "Of Misanthropy" (BA 42) – have a darker print than those typed in April.

The infrequency of corrections in the manuscript, along with the type of errors which Bradburne corrects, also suggests that the text being examined is not a first draft. Most of the poems have no corrections at all, and those that do have very few. In addition, most of the typed corrections appear to be copying errors rather than poetic changes. Two of Bradburne's hand-written emendations, on the other hand, signify creative changes. The following are typical typing errors which Bradburne corrects:

- "rememeers" to "remembers" in "Of Gardens" (BA 4)
- "sttod" to "stood" in "Of Gardens" (BA 4)
- "won" to "own" in "Of Possession" (BA 8)
- "thorough" to "through" in "Of Intuition" (BA 13)
- "int" to "in the" in "De Verbo Dei" (BA 17)
- "Tne" to "Tenebrae" in "Of The Lord's Prayer" (BA 43)

A few typed alterations on the manuscript do appear to be poetic modifications, such as in “Of Purgatory” (BA 16). Here Bradburne replaces “despa” (l. 6) (probably the beginning of “despair”) with “despond”, changing the phrase from “wide heaven spreads/Beyond despair” to “wide heaven spreads/Beyond despond”, which has a more musical ring owing to the assonance of the last two words. In a case such as this, it seems that while Bradburne was copying from an earlier manuscript he decided to change this word. The same may be true of “Of Sex-Appeal” (BA 19) where Bradburne changes “He” (l. 2) to “Three”, modifying the phrase from “fount of sex-appeal is He” to “fount of sex-appeal is Three/In One”.

Based on this evidence, the conclusion may be reached that, apart from page [10], Bradburne typed all the pages of the present manuscript some time between the last week of March and the start of April. By 9 April 1970, the date given for “Of Religion” (BA 37), he had composed all the poems in these eleven pages. It seems likely that as he was retyping the sequence he discovered on page [9] that, owing to the length of “Of Wine” (BA 34), he did not have enough space for a full sonnet after “Of Woman” (BA 36). He probably continued typing “Of Familiarity” (BA 38) on a new page, leaving some space at the bottom of page [9]. On or after 9 April, he probably returned to this page and either composed “Of Religion” (BA 37) in what space he had, or retyped this poem which he had already composed. The alignment of “Of Religion” supports this latter conjecture. While all the other poems on this page are aligned to the left of the page in a perfectly straight vertical line, the alignment of “Of Religion” is slightly off-set to the right. This is likely to have happened if Bradburne removed page [9] from his typewriter and later reinserted it.

During early May 1970, Bradburne appears to have revisited the sequence and added page [10]. This is evidenced by certain features which are unique to this page in the sequence. For instance, page [10] has a darker print than any of the other pages, which suggests that it was typed after Bradburne had changed the ribbon on his typewriter. The density of its typeface matches other poems in the database which are dated in early May. Another distinguishing feature of this page is Bradburne’s dating style, which takes the form of “(23 February 1970)” instead of “(23rd February 1970)”, as on the previous page. In addition, this is the only page in the sequence in which Bradburne does *not* type any lines after the poems. After the last line of most poems in this edition Bradburne has used repeated equals signs (= = =) to rule a double, broken line, but not here.

These changes (of date format and absence of lines between the poems), signifying no more than that Bradburne had perhaps forgotten his previous convention, support the supposition that this page was typed during May, some weeks after the typing of the other pages. It is thus likely that on or after 3 May 1970, the date given for “Of Misanthropy” (BA 42), Bradburne typed page [10] and either composed “Of Misanthropy” in what left-over space he had at the bottom of the page, or retyped this poem which he had already composed. Considering that all four sonnets above “Of Misanthropy” are dated 23 February 1970, the same date as those on page [9], it is possible that during the initial retyping he mislaid or forgot to include the poems presented on this page. In the final analysis, however, Bradburne’s reasons for inserting page [10] at a later date remain a matter of speculation.

Nature and Extent of *Bradburne’s Assays*

The poems in this edition of *Bradburne’s Assays* have all been transcribed from scanned electronic copies of the manuscript stored in Holyhead. No other manuscripts are known to contain any of the poems represented here. This collection consists of the following poems:

	Page (in this edition):
[1] Foreword	80
[2] Des Histoires	81
[3] Of Truth	82
[4] Of Gardens	83
[5] Of Erudition	84
[6] Of Mortification	85
[7] Of Death	86
[8] Of Possession	87
[9] Of No Thing	88
[10] Of Education	89
[11] Of Solitude	90
[12] Of Angels and of Birds	91
[13] Of Intuition	92
[14] Of Envy	93
[15] Of Popularity	94
[16] Of Purgatory	95
[17] De Verbo Dei	96
[18] Of Ambition	97
[19] Of Sex-Appeal	98
[20] Of nothing	99
[21] Of a District	100
[22] Of a District Commissioner	101
[23] Of Position	102
[24] Of Cocks and Hens	103

[25] Of Election	104
[26] Of Shaving	105
[27] Of a Sunday in Lent	106
[28] Of the Ark (on every side)	107
[29] De Spiritu Domini	108
[30] De Voce Patris	109
[31] Of Heat and Light and Sound	110
[32] Of earthworms	111
[33] Of Melchisedech	112
[34] Of Wine	113
[35] Of Dignity	114
[36] Of Woman	115
[37] Of Religion	116
[38] Of Familiarity	117
[39] Of Friendship	118
[40] Of Benevolence	119
[41] Of Philanthropy	120
[42] Of Misanthropy	121
[43] Of The Lord's Prayer	122
[44] Of Deicide	124
[45] Of Suicide	125
[46] Of Pomp and Circumstance	126
[47] Of Glory	127

Bradburne's rigorous dating of nearly every poem means that, with the exception of pages [5] and [6], which could be interchanged, there is only one way the pages may be ordered chronologically, as appears to have been Bradburne's intention. There are two pieces of evidence which suggest that the ordering of pages [5] and [6] chosen in this edition is correct. Firstly, the changes of date formats between pages [4], [5] and [6] appear to be progressive. The last poem on page [4] ("Of Purgatory" (*BA* 16)) is dated "(21/2/70)" in exactly the same style as all the previous poems. Bradburne then dates the first poem on page [5] ("De Verbo Dei" (*BA* 17)) "(21st February 70)", thus changing the format of the day and month, but maintaining the abbreviation of 1970 for the year. The date of the next poem ("Of Ambition" (*BA* 18)) is expanded fully to "(21st February 1970)", a dating style which Bradburne maintains for the next four pages. Secondly, the last poem on page [6], "Of Election" (*BA* 25), and the first poem on page [7], "Of Shaving" (*BA* 26), are thematically linked: the subject matter in "Of Shaving" follows from Bradburne's contemplation of Esau's hairiness in "Of Election".

The fact that the sequence comprises twelve, unnumbered, loose sheets of paper means that, theoretically at least, there could also be pages missing. It is unlikely, however, that there are any leaves missing from the first ten pages, since they mark an almost regular output of poems per day, with seven poems composed each day between 19 and 23 February, excepting one day (21 February) during which Bradburne composed

twelve poems. Although it is possible that there are missing pages after this, it is equally likely that Bradburne's major creative spurt for this collection occurred during these five days, with only seven poems added from other days.

While the beginning of the sequence of poems is clearly indicated by Bradburne's title ("BRADBURNE'S ASSAYS"), in capital letters on the first page, as well as by the introductory poem, "Foreword" (BA 1), the exact place where the sequence ends is not as clear. Bradburne does not provide obvious external clues, such as an index or physical binding of the poems to aid in this (and internal clues within the poems themselves are ambiguous). Although the pages have been hole-punched by someone, along with the rest of the poems of 1970, it is unlikely that Bradburne himself bound all the poems of this particular year. Whatever the case, any material that might once have been used to bind these sheets has since been lost.

In order to ascertain where *Bradburne's Assays* ends, it is necessary to establish what the common, formal elements are that connect the poems in the sequence. Three such key elements are (1) the sonnet structure, (2) the dating of the poems and (3) the title formula: "Of...". In addition, all the poems share theological themes and a similarly contemplative approach and style.

(1) *Sonnet Structure*

The majority of poems in the sequence are in sonnet form. Those that are *not* fourteen-line sonnets (Shakespearean, Petrarchan or hybrids) conform to most or certain aspects of conventional sonnet forms. While "Of No Thing" (BA 9), "Of Sex-Appeal" (BA 19) and "De Verbo Dei" (BA 17) are slightly longer than the others (which is not exceptional in sonnet-writing), their rhyme schemes closely resemble those of Shakespearean sonnets, and they maintain Bradburne's ten-syllable line as well as the style of the other *Assays*. In "Of Wine" (BA 34), Bradburne adds a six-line postscript to the conventional Shakespearean-style sonnet, a feature which varies the form, but without departing much from the essential sonnet structure. The only other poems that deviate from the norm are "Of a District Commissioner" (BA 22), "Of Election" (BA 25), "Of Religion" (BA 37) and "Of Misanthropy" (BA 42). Even these, which deviate the most in terms of form, have elements in common with the other sonnets.

The first quatrain in "Of a District Commissioner" closely resembles that of a Shakespearean sonnet, with a ten-syllabic line and a rhyme scheme of abab, but after this single quatrain, Bradburne concludes with a rhyming couplet. "Of Election", typed on the same page, begins similarly, this time with a Petrarchan-type quatrain, rhyming abba, but

also ends prematurely. Neither poem is dated. “Of Religion” and “Of Misanthropy” appear to have been inserted to fill empty space at the bottom of their respective pages. The opening quatrain in “Of Religion” also utilises a Petrarchan rhyme scheme, whereafter Bradburne concludes with two successive rhyming couplets, again leaving the poem with an unfinished feel. The form of “Of Misanthropy” deviates the most. Unlike the rhyme scheme in all the others, this one is not recognisably adapted from that of a sonnet. It also breaks with Bradburne’s consistent use of ten-syllable lines. (Only very occasionally does he use eleven or nine syllables.)

The first major deviation from the sonnet form occurs in “Of The Lord’s Prayer” (BA 43). If sonnet form alone was used as the criterion for including or excluding poems from the sequence, then it would be possible to argue that it ends before “Of The Lord’s Prayer”. This is problematic, however, as it would exclude four poems which conform perfectly to the fourteen-line sonnet form, and which bear the common title-formula: “Of Deicide” (BA 44), “Of Suicide” (BA 45), “Of Pomp and Circumstance” (BA 46) and “Of Glory” (BA 47). Even “Of The Lord’s Prayer”, although not in sonnet form, maintains the title-formula. In addition, the style of theological contemplation that is evident in all five of these poems also relates to that of the other *Assays*.

(2) *Dating*

Forty of the forty-seven poems in this edition are dated between 19 and 23 February 1970. There are seven dated outside this time frame. Five of these are: “Of Deicide” (BA 44), “Of Suicide” (BA 45), “Of Pomp and Circumstance” (BA 46) and “Of Glory” (BA 47) (all of which conform to the sonnet form and title-formula, as discussed above) and “Of The Lord’s Prayer” (BA 43) (which conforms to the title-formula). The remaining two, “Of Misanthropy” (BA 42) and “Of Religion” (BA 37), occur on the same pages as ones dated in February, a strong indication that they were intended to be read alongside the earlier ones. “Of Misanthropy” (BA 42), for example, is clearly intended as a companion-piece to “Of Philanthropy” (BA 41), which directly precedes it.

(3) *Title-formula*

The majority of the poems conform to the title-formula for the *Assays*. The exceptions are: “Foreword” (BA 1), “Des Histoires” (BA 2), “De Verbo Dei” (BA 17), “De Spiritu Domini” (BA 29), “De Voce Patris” (BA 30), all of which are clearly intended to be included, since all but the first of these titles may be translated as “Of...”, in keeping with the title-formula, and all are sonnets.

All three above-mentioned criteria have been used simultaneously to establish that the sequence ends with “Of Glory” (BA 47) at the bottom of page [12]. The subsequent poems begin to lose formal parallelism after this, as the sonnet form, title-formula, dating and style fall away one by one. The poem directly after “Of Glory” on the next page, dated 3 April 1970, is only associated with the previous ones by virtue of its title-formula. It is fifty-six lines long and is a disjointed, nostalgic narrative on cheese and on Bradburne’s memories of the Mediterranean rather than a theological contemplation. The poem thereafter, consisting of six lines, roughly maintains the title-formula and theological nature of the other *Assays*, but deviates from the sonnet form. After this the poems deviate entirely from the sonnet-form, title-formula and poetic nature of the *Assays*. Although the two poems encountered immediately after “Of Glory” might be included more easily than those that follow them, they have been excluded from this edition. Because the three criteria used for selection here do not disappear simultaneously, it has been difficult to make this decision, but the policy of this edition has rather been to *include* poems for which there is a very strong case than to wait until all three criteria can be met and exclude those thereafter. It is believed that the strongest case for *inclusion* can be made from the “Foreword” to “Of Glory”. With “Of Glory” as the final poem of *Bradburne’s Assays*, the sequence culminates with a song of praise on Good Friday that looks forward to Easter Sunday, a fitting conclusion to a sequence composed predominantly during Lent 1970.

Provenance

After Bradburne’s death in 1979, all the poems stored in his hut in Mutemwa were taken to Silveira House, outside Salisbury. Several of Bradburne’s friends in Rhodesia who possessed either original typescripts or copies of his poems gave them to Father John Dove to add to the main collection at Silveira House. The task of collecting all known manuscripts was not done exhaustively, as there were at least a dozen copies of many of his poems, often distributed amongst a wide circle of friends. It is thus likely that many poems or copies remain undocumented.

Once the available manuscripts had been gathered at Silveira House, unknown persons were given the task of sorting through them. As they did so, duplicates and certain originals were removed and discarded. Included amongst the originals were some poems of a political nature – this process was not carried out consistently, however, as a few examples of political verse still remain in the corpus. What was destroyed more

successfully, were some apparently amusing, denigrating diatribes on certain members of the Rhodesian Leprosy Association, particularly Bill Ellis and Mrs P. Beecroft, with whom Bradburne clashed vehemently while trying to defend the rights of the lepers (see pp. 37-38). Two references to Ellis remain in the current corpus, but none to Beecroft.

The manuscripts were then stored in a suitcase in the vaults of a branch of Barclays Bank in Salisbury, under the care of the manager, David Paynter. Dove then devoted himself to the writing of Bradburne's biography, the first edition of which was published in 1983 by Ward River Press, Dublin, under the title *Strange Vagabond of God*.⁵³

Michael McMahon, an English teacher at Gresham's, Norfolk (Bradburne's secondary school), read the biography the following year and was impressed by the extracts of Bradburne's poetry quoted in it. On 26 February 1985, McMahon wrote to Dove, praising the poetry and requesting more to read, with a view to publishing it. After some further correspondence, Dove agreed to send McMahon all the surviving manuscripts so that he could work with them. They arrived in England shortly afterwards, but McMahon did not manage to read through all of them until the end of 1986. In response to anxious letters as to the progress of the project, McMahon wrote to Dove, stating that he had finally finished reading the poems, and believed there to be a number of gems (amidst a considerable amount of doggerel). However, McMahon was disturbed by the presence, in certain poems, of what he considered to be a very strange mixture of religious and sexual imagery relating to the Virgin Mary. In his reply on 16 January 1987, Dove explained to McMahon that there had been more poetry of this nature, but that Bradburne had destroyed his favourite poems to Mary shortly before his death.⁵⁴ By now, however, McMahon's interest in Bradburne's poetry had dwindled, and he lost the impetus to seek publication for Bradburne's verse.⁵⁵

In 1991, Bradburne's elder sister, Mary Comber, having discovered that the manuscripts were still in Norfolk, wrote to McMahon, requesting that he send all the poems to her daughter, Celia Brigstocke. Brigstocke was interested in reading the presentable poetry which McMahon had found, with a view to incorporating it into a television documentary that was being made about Bradburne's life. McMahon sent all the manuscripts to Brigstocke later that year.

⁵³ A second edition was published later and is referred to below in the "Publication History".

⁵⁴ Possibly the poetry Coletta describes Bradburne destroying just before he was murdered – see p. 45.

⁵⁵ This information was provided by Michael McMahon through e-mail correspondence between 9-18 December 2005.

In October 1994, Bradburne's poetry caught the attention of Professor David Crystal, then working as a freelance writer and editor based at his home in Holyhead, Wales. He was introduced to Bradburne's poetry by Kevin Jones, a friend who had met Bradburne in the 1960s. Jones showed Crystal an old airmail letter from Bradburne, written entirely in verse. It was so unusual that Crystal became curious to see more. Jones put him in touch with Brigstocke, who had all the manuscripts in her possession. In 1995, after some correspondence, Brigstocke, who was eager for someone to evaluate the verse, sent Crystal all the manuscripts, including more than five thousand poems. Piled one on top of each other, the manuscripts stood about a metre high off the floor. After reading some of the poems, Crystal suggested that a selection be published. The newly formed John Bradburne Memorial Society (JBMS), of which Brigstocke and her husband were secretary and chairperson respectively, agreed. Crystal proceeded to read through all the manuscripts he had received in order to make his selection of sixty-three poems for the first volume of Bradburne's poetry: *Songs of the Vagabond*, published the following year, 1996.

Reading through all the poems convinced Crystal that they should be digitised, a task which he subsequently volunteered to undertake himself. His primary goals were to make Bradburne's poetry more accessible and to facilitate further research on it by means of advanced electronic search mechanisms. Since receiving these and subsequent manuscripts from various sources, Crystal and his wife, Hilary, along with one of their employees and another volunteer, have transcribed all Bradburne poems at their disposal, and have entered them into an electronic database using the programme Inmagic DBTextWorks, version 7.01.

Additional information about each poem and the manuscript on which it appears has also been recorded in the database. This includes the date and place of composition of each poem (where supplied by Bradburne) as well as its length, structure, rhyme-scheme, general theme and its relation to other poems (where appropriate). Crystal notes editorial changes,⁵⁶ along with the unique catalogue number Crystal assigns to each poem. He supplies a description of each manuscript, recording the paper size, ink colour, additional markings and the type of manuscript on which the poem is presented (for example, whether it is handwritten, an original typescript, a carbon copy or a photostatic copy).

This electronic database, currently stored on a computer in Crystal's Holyhead offices, is due to be made publicly accessible during 2006 via the web site

⁵⁶ Although some changes made to the present text of *Bradburne's Assays* coincide with those made by Crystal for the purposes of his database, all editorial intervention in this edition has been done independently of Crystal.

www.johnbradburnepoems.com. The manuscripts themselves, the majority of which consist of unbound, separate sheets of paper, are currently stored in chronological order in a filing cabinet at Crystal's offices. The manuscript books and notebooks are in plastic containers. All manuscripts in the database are the property of the JBMS, which is based in Leominster, Herefordshire, England.

Index numbers written on some of the manuscripts have led Crystal to believe that at least two people tried to sort and catalogue the poems before him, although it is not known who these people may have been. Crystal deleted all earlier numbering and page ordering and re-ordered the poems, as far as possible, on the basis of stated date or similarity in typeface or page quality. He retained all the duplicates found in the collection of manuscripts. Most of these were mimeographed or photostatic copies. All spelling errors and inconsistencies by Bradburne have been corrected by Crystal, in order to facilitate online searching facilities, but all original forms are recorded in the database. In addition, Crystal standardised spaces around punctuation marks and used single rather than double inverted commas.

The task of establishing exactly how many poems there are in the corpus is considerably complicated by Bradburne's inconsistency in terms of dating and entitling individual poems. Whereas Bradburne meticulously titles and dates poems in his *Assays*, he does not always do so elsewhere. For example, one manuscript book called "Ut Unum Sint" (BRAD0876) consists of three hundred and fifty lined foolscap pages filled with poetry in a type of stream-of-consciousness style. The verse structure changes frequently and there are occasional breaks between bodies of text, but no obvious divisions. In Crystal's database, each such manuscript is treated as one poem, although each might be considered as a collection of numerous untitled, shorter poems. The database currently consists of about five thousand *titled* pieces.

Publication History

Bradburne tried repeatedly to have his poems published by several different publishers. Between 1961 and 1962 he even had hopes that he might be able to support himself on the proceeds of their sale (see p. 24). His poems dated before 1967 are mostly hand-written, apart from a few which he either had typed for him or retyped at a later stage. Prior to his learning to type at Silveira House in 1967, he had included many of his poems, hand-written, in his letters to friends and relatives. During his time in Rhodesia, however, his output increased substantially, as did the distribution of his poems in

mimeograph form. When he was able to obtain the necessary material, he typed his poems onto stencils and asked various friends to print mimeograph copies for him. He requested that at least a dozen copies be made of each poem, as he was convinced they would one day be in demand.⁵⁷ During his time at Mutemwa, he also made a tape recording⁵⁸ of himself reading forty-six of his poems, including two from his *Assays*: “Of Education” (BA 10) and “Of Purgatory” (BA 16).

Bradburne’s publication attempts were almost entirely unfruitful. Available evidence indicates that only five of his poems were ever published during his lifetime. Four of these appeared in three separate numbers of *Two Tone: A Quarterly of Rhodesian Poetry*, printed by Galaxie Press in Salisbury, in only one of which is Bradburne’s name spelt correctly. In June 1967 “Sentience” and “Fudza-Hwai” appear under the name of “John Blackburne”; “Gemitus Mortis” is attributed to “John Bradburn” in February 1969; only “Mtemwa” (December 1971) is shown as being by John Bradburne. The fifth poem, “Steeplejack Gallant”, appeared in the March 1965 edition of *The Shield Magazine*, a monthly magazine of the Roman Catholic Church in Rhodesia.

Since Bradburne’s death, two slim volumes of poetry have been published. The first, *Songs of the Vagabond*, published by Holy Island Press, Holyhead, in 1996, includes sixty-three poems, selected and edited by David Crystal. The second, *John Bradburne’s Mutemwa*, also published by Holy Island Press, Holyhead, in 2000, includes thirty-one poems edited by David and Hilary Crystal. David Crystal also selected 366 extracts from Bradburne’s poetry for a book published in 2004 under the title of *John Bradburne’s Book of Days*. Seven of these extracts are taken from *Bradburne’s Assays*, namely from “Of Gardens” (BA 4), “Of Mortification” (BA 6), “Of Possession” (BA 8), “Of Education” (BA 10), “Of Solitude” (BA 11), “Of Intuition” (BA 13) and “Of Envy” (BA 14). Apart from these extracts, not one of the poems in *Bradburne’s Assays* has been published to date.

The 1997 edition of John Dove’s biography, *Strange Vagabond of God*, published by Gracewing, Leominster, contains one hundred and six extracts or full poems by Bradburne. Dove’s shorter pamphlet, *John R. Bradburne of Mutemwa*, published in 1985, contains two poems, neither of which appears in his longer biography. John Vose’s booklet, *A Magnificent Eccentric* (n.d.), adapted from Dove’s biography, contains three extracts, all published in *Strange Vagabond of God*. Six extracts or full poems, which

⁵⁷ This is according to an email on 6 December 2005 from Pauline Hutchings, a close friend of Bradburne, who frequently made mimeograph copies for him.

⁵⁸ The exact date when this recording took place is not known. The original is currently lodged with the JBMS in Leominster, Herefordshire.

also appear in *Strange Vagabond of God*, are found in Boniface Hanley's biography "The Pilgrim", published in *The Anthonian* in 1982. The John Bradburne Memorial Society (JBMS) have published some of Bradburne's poems in prayer leaflets, church pamphlets and on their web site, www.johnbradburne.com. A total of nineteen poems or extracts have been published in the *JBMS Newsletter*: one in the "Winter 2001" edition, nine in "Winter 2002", two in "Summer 2002", five in "Winter 2004" and two in "Summer 2004". Extracts from two poems appeared in *The Sunday Mail* in Zimbabwe on 6 March 1983 in an article entitled "Bradburne's Fight for Lepers Recalled". Readings of extracts from six of Bradburne's poems occur on the video documentary *On Eagle's Wings: The Life and Death of John R. Bradburne 1921-1979*. One of these readings is taken from the tape recording Bradburne himself made of his poems. The same extract and recording is used in the video *Vagabond of God: The Story of John Bradburne*. A different poem, but taken from the same tape recording, is used in the video *Do Not Let the Dream Die*.

There is no current evidence that any of Bradburne's poems other than these have been published, although they are all due to be released electronically by Crystal shortly, as indicated above.

The Present Text

The policy in preparing this edition has been to provide an accurate reading text of this set of forty-seven poems, with as little editorial intrusion as possible, but not to provide a diplomatic transcription of the text. The most frequent editorial intervention has been the insertion of spaces between words. Five commas have been inserted: one in "Foreword" (BA 1), one in "Of a District" (BA 21), one in "Of Familiarity" (BA 38) and two in "Of Friendship" (BA 39); one colon has been removed from "Of Benevolence" (BA 40) and a comma has been changed to a period point in "Of Death" (BA 7) and in "Of Purgatory" (BA 16). The following misspellings have been corrected: "marr" to "mar" in "Of nothing" (BA 20), "manufacuring" to "manufacturing" in "Of Shaving" (BA 26), "celloes" to "cellos" in "Of Familiarity" (BA 38) and "relinquish" to "relinquish" in "Of The Lord's Prayer" (BA 43). "[A]spurt" has been changed to "a spurt" in "Of Truth" (BA 3). Ellipses in "Of Purgatory" (BA 16) and "De Verbo Dei" (BA 17) have been standardised to three period points each. All emendations made to Bradburne's spelling and punctuation have been carefully assessed and are recorded in the critical apparatus below the relevant poem. The purpose of the changes has been to provide maximum clarity for the reader.

Bradburne also crossed out with an “x”. All such emendations by Bradburne are typed, unless indicated otherwise, as in the following example from the same poem:

36 seems] [here’s *struck through by hand*] [seems *inserted below by hand*]

which records that Bradburne struck through “here’s” by hand and replaced it with “seems”, inserted below by hand.

The second emendation is editorial. Three typical examples may be found in “Of Familiarity” (BA 38):

5 each other’s *ed*: eachother’s

^

11 sweet, denied *ed*: sweet denied

12 cellos *ed*: celloes

The line number where the emendation has been made is recorded first, followed by the emended word or phrase as it appears in the poem above. The italicised “*ed*”, followed by a colon, precedes the original form as it appears in the manuscript.

THE TEXT

[1]

Foreword

Of falsity, of sophistry, of wind
 Drawing (to heaped-up watersheds of pride)
 The random cloudbanks till they weep, I'd find
 E'en less to say than say I may, aim wide [4]
 I shall of these; let be my by and large
 Upon the better things or else the best,
 Then let me leave my writs as in a barge
 Coasting towards oblivion for rest; [8]
 Forests there are and avenues and lawns,
 Flowers abounding, blossom'd orchard-trees
 Bowing with fruitfulness, and there are horns
 Echoing from the mountains to the leas: [12]
 All these I'd make my song till strong's my rhyme
 In "the dark backward and abysm of time".

2 Drawing (to ed: Drawing[, corrected to (by hand]to
 ^
 2 pride)] pride() inserted by hand]
 6 best, ed: best

[2]

Des Histoires

Histories oft are complex twists of mind
 In mines of information on the past,
 This way and that they turn their learning, find
 A flaw for every walker in its cast; [4]
 Haphazard happily they make of plan,
 Intent on muffling truth (where beauty shouts)
 Softly they cover over as they can,
 They deal in treason's reasonable doubts; [8]
 Outlandishly assured of every word
 Then give they forth the titles on the books,
 Rapt are the buyers by their primal looks,
 Into the claptrap lowing goes the herd: [12]
 Exquisite bandits thus are they who write
 Wronging their songs who can no longer fight.

(19/2/70)

6 truth (ed: truth(
^

[3]

Of Truth

Some histories there are that strike a note
 Melodiously true in all they sing
 And four or five of these to get by rote
 Calls for a mind where truth goes echoing; [4]
 "Kings" in the Bible might be such for sure,
 On all the Pentateuch I'd put my shirt,
 Narrowing matters down to that most pure
 Gives to the Gospels precedence a spurt; [8]
 Acts of Apostles is a record bright
 Leading towards that Revelation last
 In which its Eagle soars from light to light
 Led up to fuse the future with the past: [12]
 Entering then new heaven and new earth
 Enquiry's lost in wonder's deeper worth.

(19/2/70)

5 "Kings" in ed: "Kings" in
 ^8 a spurt ed: aspart
 ^

Date 19] [1 over ;]9

[4]

Of Gardens

Gardens are greensleeved thoughts fenced in with grace
 And wildernesses are their counterpoint,
 Readily one remembers each gay trace
 Drawing up gardens which our pasts anoint; [4]
 Earliest was for me in Cumberland
 Now hit by two and forty winters more,
 Sublimely stood the Fells as still they stand
 Giving it background from its Eastward door; [8]
 Another was in Norfolk for the nones,
 Lawngreen and lilac, copper-beech and yew,
 Laburnums gold, summers a-hum with drones
 And one with less than any else to do: [12]
 No further gardens would I cite save that
 Trembling on Eden's haze, God's habitat.

(19/2/70)

3 remembers] remem[b over e]ers

7 stood] st[o over t]od

11 Laburnums] Laburn[u over a]ms

[5]

Of Erudition

Art thou gone out from all those ranks so rude
 That have so much to occupy their minds
 Rightly by living in the rhyme and mood
 Of circumstance's edict? whoso finds [4]
 Fools in his sight those wights that seem to lack
 Highflown preoccupation with a pile
 Yellowed by age, walks as a man in black
 Led by a blinder, heavily! beguile [8]
 Eruditely his every moment may
 A mortal man until that portal looms
 Ruling his line of exit on a day
 Not known, nor shown by any from the tombs: [12]
 Erudite Sir, how mighty is the pen
 Divinely writing lives as live them men!

(19/2/70)

13 Erudite] Erudite[x over ,]

[6]

Of Mortification

Mortification is the art of slaying
 All that delays the progress of the soul,
 Yet, of consoling brother ass's braying
 By playing him with grace towards his goal; [4]
 Entering on the combat, like a Sancho
 Sitting his mount precariously, I
 Trust that the Lord my Light beside will go
 Instead of some Quixotic Might too high; [8]
 Move we a little forth, a little back,
 A trifle to the left or to the right,
 Till we arrive each evening with Alack
 Entire for sins which wins a restful plight: [12]
 Dear Lord, bright Knight in gale of Love, how good
 Of Thee it is to lead us through the Wood!

(19/2/70)

[7]

Of Death

Road easier were any, if we trust?
 Viand it comes, a gleam, beseeming bread
 And this is Jesus risen from the dead.
 Let lack to me the trumpet, drum and bust! [4]
 Dread is befitting but He bids it fly
 Entwining His bright being with mine own
 (Verily deep in black despair at tone
 Empowered unto doom, sans Him so nigh); [8]
 Rapidly shall the agony be o'er,
 Bearing Five Scars that brave triumphant One
 Under the banner of Love's Troubadour
 Mightily shall describe the battle done: [12]
 Ye Lamb-led sheep, in such a Knight as this
 Dispelled is darkness, belled are we to bliss!

(19/2/70)

3 dead. ed: dead,

[8]

Of Possession

Possession is nine-tenths of all the Law
 And what remains but loving God alone?
 That calls for graces, more and more and more
 Perhaps than many men might like to own; [4]
 And more's the pity too that men reject
 The constant invitation of our God
 Enjoining each to be His best elect
 Rapt at the sport of being thought most odd; [8]
 Normality is better set aside
 On this consideration of The Good
 Supremely to be got, - e'en as a bride
 The soul should long to be possessed, she should: [12]
 Enter we in to keeping All for ever
 Readily not, from rot it bids us sever.

(20/2/70)

4 to own] to [xxx over won] own

[9]

Of No Thing

He is a gladness and he is a good,
 He is a sadness if he's not our God,
 Heavily up to Calvary the Wood
 He carried and he parried "Ichabod"; [4]
 His is to empty all he ever was
 Happily into that which men despise,
 Honour was spurned and merit earned because
 He loved the earth enough to leave the skies; [8]
 Hit upon fact at last, ye bitter critics,
 Heave away doubt and be the scouts of hope,
 Hell is an expert upon politics,
 Heaven is what must ever preach the Pope: [12]
 Heyday I sing and fling my gage aground
 Hailing the Lady whence with grace is crowned
 Hilariously man, to nothing bound!

(20/2/70)

[10]

Of Education

Whatever tends to widen gaps between
Men and their fellows is not education,
Whatever makes more generous, less mean,
Takes up a truly educative station; [4]
Someone abounding in the goods of earth
Will scarce resound upon the horns of fame
Unless his exaltation from his birth
Follows beyond the fetters of his name; [8]
The getting of diplomas and degrees
Sets premium on concentrative power,
Under the hoods of academic ease
Rarely the royal heads of lions tower: [12]
On might and main of brain depended not
Divinest right of kingdom bright God got.

(20/2/70)

[11]

Of Solitude

Some solitude is needful to the soul
 As physic is for sickness, soil for food,
 Persons there are that feed on it for dole
 In melancholy, such abuse is rude; [4]
 Entered the night of infant Christendom
 Not otherwise than by those seeming fools
 The fathers of the desert, and the sum
 In all their hidden lives was "Silence rules"; [8]
 At zenith of example in this thing
 Messiah stands alone amidst His mount
 Attacked by wild temptation, being King
 Royally puts He down on every count: [12]
 In sorrow deep and in exceeding joy
 A solitary psalm dispels alloy.

(20/2/70)

13 joy] joy [x over :]xx

[12]

Of Angels and of Birds

Angels are not imaginary things,
Needs must thereon imaginative thought
Go gadding gaily with its playful wings, [4]
Even abet and aid they in such sport!
Lo and behold, those Arches biblical
Standing as Angels principally three
Are Michael, Gabriel and Raphael
Nor may they fail to walk with you and me; [8]
Divine I oft, aloft amongst the birds,
Becalming glimpses of angelic charm,
In owls by moonlight with their hooting words
Read "Holy" thrice, trisagion's their psalm: [12]
Discern the quickness, brightness and precision,
Sight of the birds is bard's delightful vision!

(20/2/70)

[13]

Of Intuition

Love at first sight is intuition, this
 Breaks through the walls within the wheels of time,
 Wildly arrives at that eternal kiss
 Implicit in intensity sublime; [4]
 For clearly time is but a gearing down
 Of Love's eternal lightning nature, so
 That slowly we are tested till the crown
 Of lasting life is won through strife below; [8]
 But generally love between a pair
 Is generated not so very fast
 As then at First Sight happening, thrice rare
 Are Romeos with Juliets re-cast: [12]
 Naught need be said while all is indicated
 Where eyes of man and maid may meet pre-mated.

(20/2/70)

8 through] th[ro over or]ugh

[14]

Of Envy

To envy someone is to criticize
 God's own allotment of the gifts He gave
 A certain man, with but a plan to save
 His soul for ever if he well replies; [4]
 The envy of your neighbour's goods is so
 Senseless as has compelled to fence them in,
 They that defenceless into warfare go
 With nextdoor's jealousy will scarcely win; [8]
 But what is best as fortress gainst this ill
 Which any day may set your soul at siege?
 Having towards both God and man good will
 Makes sight of acres broad but hail their Liege: [12]
 What hast thou, man, or what hath any other
 That has not been received from Christ our Brother?

(20/2/70)

[15]

Of Popularity

This is a puffed up fraud, a fatted cow
 Bursting its flanks for fodder, this is that
 Which battens on a field, no matter how
 Broad, it falls short of wanted habitat; [4]
 Most profitable treatment of this brute
 Is, prick it quickly! quickly will subside
 Its windy bulk and you will simply hoot
 With laughter when you've stripped it of its hide! [8]
 Just look inside, it was not thick of skin
 Though so much flabby blubber swelled it out,
 This beast was vulnerable to a pin
 Pricking its thinness through: truly, a lout [12]
 Which prospers only long enough to find
 All that it sought was fraught with pride and whined.
 (21/2/70)

[16]

Of Purgatory

Purgatory lies less than ninety yards
 Along this avenue on which I dwell.
 It is a place for inspiration, bards
 Associated with it like it well; [4]
 On every side of it wide heaven spreads
 Beyond despond, conned near and on afar,
 Wilderness rolls, rise bosky knolls, sheer heads
 Grave granite hills lift up...there's naught to mar [8]
 In magnitude of panorama; but
 Great Pan especially delights to pipe
 Amongst His own peculiars, each hut
 Of this His leper people keeps He ripe [12]
 In vibrant expectation of His coming
 To lead them forth: grow mealies, bees are humming.
 (21/2/70)

2 dwell. ed: dwell,

6 despond] [xxxxx over despa] despond

8 up...there's ed: up..... there's

[17]

De Verbo Dei

A woman from the crowd cried out, How blest
 The womb that bore Thee, breasts that gave Thee suck!
 Our Lord's rejoinder rather manifests
 Than contradicts that statement, which has stuck [4]
 Fast to the Roman Breviary since
 The "Sacrosanctae" (after Office said)
 Was placed urbanely there, us to convince
 Of Triune Love before we go to bed; [8]
 Our Lady fair gave suck to Him she bore, -
 The Word made flesh, reminded thus of this,
 Referred straightway to Prophets and the Law
 Which, having heard, we ought to keep, nor miss [12]
 This fine combining fact: that Word is bound
 In Bibles whom Our Lady's womb enwound,
 Bore freely...no divisions on a ground
 Inviolate, no rift is in the lute [16]
 Displaying gracefully uplifted Fruit.
 (21st February 70)

15 freely...no ed: freely..... no

16 in] in[x over t]

[18]

Of Ambition

Where once one wanted but to drive a train
 Along a line as straight as railways go
 Or else to navigate an aeroplane,
 Later ambitions rocket into woe; [4]
 Where is the seat of sweet ambition then?
 Whence is it sullied o'er by bitter springs?
 Is it not, Lord, most laudable for men
 To try to breast the tapes that vie with kings? [8]
 With wings one might fly up to such a height
 As pinnacles of temples never had,
 Unless to climb the mount of life as light
 Of lust as love allows may make more glad: [12]
 But what is lust? my keen ambition now
 Is reconciling it with love, but how?

(21st February 1970)

[19]

Of Sex-Appeal

Female and male, Yahweh created them
 And therefore fount of sex-appeal is Three
 In One whose life is Love, above the stem
 Rising created must Creator be; [4]
 Entrancing are the Shembe dances, come,
 See for yourself the Spanish dames aflow,
 There lacks not fair attraction to the Sun,
 Midst beauties beauty's Maker means to glow; [8]
 Indeed than seed's inherent fire there leaps
 Rarely more sweetly in the mortal frame
 Aught, yet the saint of God is one who steeps,
 Counting it deep fulfilment, in a Name: [12]
 Less than the loveliness He made is not
 (Entwined with Miriam's name) her Lamb, forgot
 Surely too long is strong I AM, her Flame!

2 Three] [xx over He] Three

[20]

Of nothing

Lucifer low, that whilom morning star,
 Goes yawning to oblivion at last,
 Naught he can make, his sport is but to mar
 Marriage and carriage light and slow the fast; [4]
 Maker of nothing, breaker he would be
 Of every bond and lien with Our Lord, -
 The debt is paid, no let is made and we
 Are hindered not, but for his plot abroad; [8]
 Empowered only to subtract, distort
 And drive us to distraction from our goal,
 Lying he lies and lengthwise he is caught
 Into the net he set to get pet soul [12]
 Of Christ Our Lady's Lamblord: Ichabod,
 Your glory's gone to hers preferring God.

(21st February 1970)

3 mar ed: marr

[21]

Of a District

Great Gable, Langdale Pikes, Scafell, the Screes
 And Saddleback, and wind a mere sweet balm
 On becks and lakes alike and light as charm
 On Eden, reaching Appleby with ease; [4]
 Fell by an apple Eve and Adam there
 Amidst a garden, whence rose seven streams
 To water all the world and nurture dreams
 Until reality man made them, fair; [8]
 Crossfell rose over up behind the place
 Where I was born to be a parson's son
 Haunted by prayer where never made I one,
 Atop Crossfell stands Mary's Well in grace [12]
 Of granite's crowning concave: looking down
 Sight Skerwith spire, admire her little town.
 (21st February 1970)

6 garden, ed: garden

[22]

Of a District Commissioner

There once was one who always cried "Hats off!"
On sight of any too reluctant black
And straight away the fellow had to doff
His headgear (forelock none to pull, alack);
His district was commissioned everywhere
To raise its hat in praise, both then and there!

[4]

[23]

Of Position

Position which is high is very well
 Provided it is insulated by
 Buffers of less estate, the fiends of hell
 Are insulations to its majesty; [4]
 The man of great estate who rules alone
 Serenely must be humble to the Nth,
 Intent not on applauding of his throne,
 Not a displayer of its breadth and length; [8]
 Being a squire set squarely on a seat
 Extravagantly aced is all right
 Long as their forelocks, whensoever you meet
 Fellows and country bumpkins, pulled on sight [12]
 Rally around, augment your lion's mane:
 Yet it is Christ's example best will reign.
 (21st February 1970)

11 whensoever ed: whenso[' over e]'er

[24]

Of Cocks and Hens

Ordinarily speaking we just cluck
 Friendlily or we chuckle as we scratch,
 Crowing's for such occasions as good luck
 On battling or on rattling for a match; [4]
 Cock stops to cry the time at dawn, at noon
 (Kindly remark, at former stops from sleeping),
 Shouts loudly out at midnight, finds full moon
 A wakeful influence, - try cock-clocks keeping! [8]
 Not to forget the fretful broody hen
 Desperate with anxiety full oft,
 Happy she'll be as, hatched, her chicks in pen
 Enfolded safely feed on meal full soft: [12]
 Never enough mankind recalls which words
 Symbolize Christ's affection for us birds.

(21st February 1970)

[25]

Of Election

Esau, that hairy son, her suited not
 To point of plotting who prefigures well,
 Catholically speaking, La Plus Belle:
 Hierusalem, let never be forgot [4]
 Election blest of Jacob, pillows he
 Dreaming on stone of angels, pilose be
 Even as Esau if your Mother free
 Is Mary, than Rebecca fairer far [8]
 O rarer too! choose you the Morning Star.

1 Esau, that ed: Esau, that
 ^

[26]

Of Shaving

Almost one might insist that shaving is
 Waste of a time when Prime should be observed
 And orisons be made to Yahweh, - His
 So long He's worn as holds the shorn unnerved; [4]
 The steel, the manufacturing, the cost,
 Enter upon a contrast ever sharp
 Of sanity with madness, which is tossed
 Full carelessly aside! I'd hate to carp [8]
 Truculently for long about this thing,
 Indeed I need not, wears a beard my King:
 Messiah then shall say to me His knave
 (When I appear that is and if I fling [12]
 Gaily upon God's highland as I crave),
 "Eternity finds never time to shave!".

(21st February 1970)

5 manufacturing ed: manufacuring

[27]

Of a Sunday in Lent

This morning many bees bore bourdon stiff
 Attendant on the tenor of our praise,
 These great ones did not come to sting, for tiff,
 Indeed their humming much augments our lays; [4]
 I think these bees are cenobites, and yet
 Meseems that each a solitary dwells, -
 Rather as people of Mutemwa, set
 Each in a hut mongst other brother cells; [8]
 These bees are larger than the worker-kind,
 Perhaps to contemplation is their call,
 They come as cloud of witnesses to find
 Whether we praise their Mighty Sun at all: [12]
 We sung for our recessional that hymn
 Which hails Our Lady Queen of Lourdes, no whim.
 (22nd February 1970)

[28]

Of the Ark (on every side)

Better begin with Noah's, that was huge,
 A bulky hulk indeed containing all
 Redeemed alive surviving, subterfuge
 Quelling wide water's onslaught with its wall; [4]
 Unless I too evade an issue, next
 Enters my mind that little barque wherein
 Our patriarchal Moses lay unvest
 For long enough a saving help to win; [8]
 Perhaps he thought thereon while Bezaleel
 Enacted with his hands what God had bid,
 That Ark was beautiful in its appeal,
 Regal, containing Truth on tablets hid: [12]
 Only remains the Church and she is one
 Surely whose Word is God's and her good Son.

(22nd February 1970)

[29]

De Spiritu Domini

The Spirit of the Lord long since has filled
 The whole round world, and they that dwell therein
 Wonder or wander, rage, or else are stilled
 By cleaving to it and by leaving sin; [4]
 The Voice, which breaks the cedars when it storms,
 Which tells the hind where to bring forth her young,
 Beseems a mighty fire in ire but warms
 The hearts of men, makes ready pen my tongue; [8]
 While wondered Peter, James and John as One
 Shined as the Sun with garments white as snow
 Heaven displayed The Father's Voice to show
 (Over Elias, over Moses) Son [12]
 Belov-ed, Sole: the whole wide world contained
 Not, as Christ's Mother, Paradise regained.

(22nd February '70)

Title Spiritu] Spiritu[x over s]

[30]

De Voce Patris

What is the Father's Voice and how defined?
 The Father's Thought is what He thinks, His Word
 Is Christ His Thought expressed and so combined
 With Him as makes division quite absurd; [4]
 God spake His thought and what He said was Light
 Of Light which is Himself, and what He used
 To say it was His Voice - is it not right
 To call that Voice the Spirit He infused? [8]
 Wherefore we have the Thought, the Word, the Voice -
 Our thought should be related to the Father
 So closely as that happy word "Rejoice"
 Is to His apostolic song or, rather, [12]
 May we not say the Father's Voice is so
 Musical as no dissonance will show?

(22nd February 1970)

11 word "Rejoice" ed: word"Rejoice"

^

[31]

Of Heat and Light and Sound.

She has full knowledge of the Voice who bore
 The Word, which all the world had not contained
 Completely thitherto because, before
 Christ, the whole Bible's content was not gained; [4]
 Of Heat I'd like to say that it is He
 Who is the Paraclete, so sweet of breath
 And yet so terrible if needs must be
 Although not His was Inquisition-death; [8]
 Of Light of Light our Father, that is Christ
 Through whom our rays of praise transmitted are
 Acceptable since He is sacrificed
 To see us crowned; of Sound? come, cross the bar [12]
 And all the Maid behind it sings is this:
 "I bring Mine Host the King to you, true bliss!".

(22nd February 1970)

[32]

Of earthworms

It seems they have no end and no beginning
 So far as either one distinguish may,
 It would not be a blasphemy or sinning
 Against the Lord to say His horde are they; [4]
 If someone terms you as a worm, you squirm
 Perhaps a little while and then recover
 If only you recall how very firm
 Birds are, about getting them out, - best lover [8]
 Of worms the bird may be and he's a bard
 That sings in better fettle for a meal;
 And so I'll add it's sad and very hard
 To slay them earlier than bird may feel [12]
 His need appealing: world without an end
 And from beginning, worms themselves can mend.

(22nd February 1970)

8 are, about ed: are, about
 ^

10 meal; ed: meal

[33]

Of Melchisedech

King of Shalom, of Salem so to say,
 Brought bread and wine and ruled three verses deep
 In Genesis, and then he went away
 Leaving mankind to mount and count his sheep; [4]
 Was ever anyone so wound with dream?
 Was ever matter like of any told?
 King of Jerusalem, long ere her theme
 Was clearly David's at his harp of gold; [8]
 "Bless-ed be Abram of the most high God,
 Possessor both of heaven and of earth,
 And blest be He our Maker by whose rod
 The enemies of faith are brought to dearth": [12]
 Melchisedech, with melody today
 We in that Knight in gale of love array.

(22nd February 1970)

[34]

Of Wine

Noah made sacrifice after the Flood
 Whence waters changed through gratitude to wine,
 Drank he so heavily that joy fell thud
 To sorrow on the morrow (Cana, shine!); [4]
 Melchisedech brought wine and bless'd high God
 Of Abram, not then Abraham become
 For whom as one three angels later trod
 To dine in Mambre (trumpet none, no drum); [8]
 Sang David, "If in drinking-cups I should
 Forget thee, Zion, let my blithe right hand
 Made for the harp forget her cunning good!",
 And Zion heard it, glad was Holy Land: [12]
 Jesus took wine and bless'd and drank and said,
 "This is My Blood shall for your bliss be shed".

(Trumpet without,
 Shofa within, [16]
 Gentiles about,
 True Jews will win:
 In such a night as this
 To Judah New comes bliss). [20]

(23rd February 1970)

11 good! ", ed: good [! over "] ",

[35]

Of Dignity

Hear this, ye Shona people crying "Boss"
 And hating him for condescending scorn!
 There was a poet, French, who strolled to toss
 Away his cares, free, to the manner born; [4]
 One eve he strolled there came a cringing shape
 Close up to him accompanied by whines
 For alms, with hand extended - no escape
 But well shall do this bard before he dines; [8]
 Seeing unlame and oh so far more whole
 The body than the soul, straightway the bard
 Struck with his cane that palm, ah, not too hard
 And not too softly to awake the soul: [12]
 That beggar boxed him! ruffled was his plan
 At eventide, but, he had raised a man!

(23rd February 1970)

2 condescending] condesc[end over ion]ing [(condescending) in
 right margin]

9 more] [xxxxxxxxxxx over from whole] more

[36]

Of Woman

I know not any song so well to fit
 The grace of womanhood as melody
 Named of Grenoble, I have cherished it
 Highly as France has loved her minstrelsy; [4]
 Therein is wit and whim and filigree,
 Mercy and winsome wantonness and flame,
 Lilted, tilted, up to the hilt in glee,
 And there is Notre Dame and here's my Dame; [8]
 I would not ask for any brighter joy
 Than hearing her cry gaily out "Au lait!"
 Morning and noon and night, idiot-boy
 And happily I'd be of hers for aye: [12]
 Red, white and blue, for girdle, blouse and skirt
 Yielding tricolor, gallants to alert!

(23rd February 1970)

[37]

Of Religion

Religion true is rather caught than taught,
Thrice happy then is that contagion
By which may truly get religion
Many a soul to whom whole books are fraught [4]
With labour more than with the score of love:
Unhomely tomes, better aside to shove!

On seeking Truth, I begged the Holy Spirit
To shine His light on books where bright with merit. [8]
(9/4/70)

Date 4/70] 4[/ over @] 70

[38]

Of Familiarity

Familiarity will breed contempt
 With the contemptuous or contemptible,
 Otherwise will but mark a mind unkempt
 Wanting refining in life's crucible; [4]
 Some folk are apt to slap each other's backs
 Simply to fill in vapid gaps for thought
 Which never occupies them much, there lacks
 Also well-tempered zest for mellow sport; [8]
 Fellows are fellow-souls not merely fellows
 Where Yahweh's gentle bellows are applied
 By breathing of that Spirit sweet, denied
 Rather to double-basses than to cellos: [12]
 There's a mixed metaphor indeed, trombones
 Hold better over-bold and brassy tones!

(23 February 1970)

5 each other's ed: eachother's

^
 11 sweet, denied ed: sweet denied

12 cellos ed: celloes

[39]

Of Friendship

True friendship is the best in everything
 Willed by the other for the one, without
 Bothering aught on whether it will bring [4]
 To either gain, by being seen about
 With one another publicly, or loss;
 Neither desires deep friendship's true accord
 Ascendancy of one above the other
 Because within itself is its reward [8]
 Linked with the Lord enchanting it, our Brother;
 Acquaintance goaled on gain is only dross,
 Again, its whole reward is in itself,
 Memories pristine not aside twill toss [12]
 For heaviness of fortune, wind or limb:
 It soars o'er sense and thence to heaven's hymn.
 (23 February 1970)

4-5 gain,...publicly, ed: gain...publicly ^ ^

5 one another ed: oneanother ^

[40]

Of Benevolence

Most loveable and most affectionate
 Amongst the men and women on this earth
 Rank not together as of married state
 Yet oft are counted as of equal worth; [4]
 The scales of fortune fail in terms of time
 On hooks eternal hung, that wishing well
 Looking on lowness from its height sublime
 Does not debar itself from springs of hell; [8]
 Many there are who, lacking naught for wealth,
 Entrance themselves by beaming on the crowd
 That, despite smell of sweat and aspect bowed,
 Haply may have more spiritual health [12]
 Indwelling than the man whose outward grin
 So oft goes softly off for secret sin.

(23 February 1970)

13 Indwelling ed: Indwelling:

[41]

Of Philanthropy

Must I then name it, naming it re-name
 For that which maims the mettle meant for God?
 Pathetically ignorant, its claim
 Presses possessions at obsession's nod; [4]
 I've known a mortal in a country-seat,
 Lost in the contemplation of out-giving
 Everyone else, whose temper was not sweet
 Save when her savings upon easy living [8]
 Ousted themselves in ostentatious lists
 Forthtelling charity; she was not bad
 Candidly speaking, she'd put up her fists
 At all hypocrisy in others, clad [12]
 She'd go in pearls and splendour: O she went
 Heavily hence, with sense not to repent.

(23 February 1970)

[42]

Of Misanthropy

Lest, Lord, I should myself embody this
By showing irritation when they come
Shattering solitude and sovereign bliss,
Give me the grace to smile
Even when stricken dumb!

[4]

(3rd May 1970)

[43]

Of The Lord's Prayer

A purple-crested lourie calls to arms
 Upon the goings out of Passiontide,
 Invites us to relinquish earthly charms
 This Wednesday of Tenebrae: bestride [4]
 The season I and ride my brother ass,
 Bridled by grace, to face for Easter Mass.

High time that, after eight and forty years,
 I make a meditation, still and deep, [8]
 Upon the focal point, the stroke that gears
 All worthwhile oraison: I shall not sleep
 This night until that Prayer of the Lord
 I've measured - help me, Spirit, with Thy sword! [12]

Our Father: since Thou Father art of all
 Including me, then all my brothers are
 Or sisters, whatsoever may befall
 Between us, each and each, shines high that Star [16]
 Pointing to One who all can comprehend
 And therefore pardon all and heal and mend.

Who art in heaven: thus, if Thou art here
 Combined with Thy bright Son who here abides, [20]
 Of earth then make a heaven, that is clear
 Of ill, will well Thy presence; times and tides
 Give way to where Thou walkest with Thy Christ
 Ever Emmanuel through Eucharist. [24]

So Hallowed be Thy Name: whether it is
 Only I AM alone or whether that
 Of Him who is Thy thought expressed in His
 Being which is Thy Word, true habitat [28]
 Of all Thy willing manward, shown outright
 By Jesus Blest, the Way, the Truth, life's Light.

Thy kingdom come: Christendom even now
 Is kingdom of Thy Son on earth, though not [32]
 Tyrannical and worldly bidding bow
 To powers subterranean that plot
 To see all Peter's wheat so sifted that
 Christ's kingdom seems a groundless, shifting rat. [36]

Thy will be done on earth as well it is
 In heaven: seven gifts Thy Spirit showers
 Over that growing harvest shall be His
 Whose every living temple He empowers [40]
 That it may stand with praises filled and be
 Part of that lasting City, fair and free!

Give us this day our daily bread: for soul
 No less than for the body that is meant [44]
 To be such help for getting to our goal
 Eternal as immortally is blent,
 Wherefore let brother ass be kept so trim
 That it may carry lightly her or him. [48]

Forgive us too our trespasses as we
 Forgive our debtors for the love of God
 Thy Son, Thy Light shown forth, Truth to make free
 (As lilies gay in Galilee He trod) [52]
 From carefulness regarding what shall pass
 As surely as shall nevermore the Mass.

And lead us not into temptation, Lord,
 Because Thou knowest well we are not strong [56]
 Unless we are equipped with such a sword
 As can divide between the right and wrong
 And show great prowess in Thy cause, but still
 Deliver us from evil by goodwill. [60]

Amen.

(Lady Day 1970)

3 relinquish ed: relinquish

4 Tenebrae] [xxx over Tne] Tenebrae

21 make] make[x over s]

21 heaven, that ed: heaven,that
 ^

22 ill, will ed: ill,will
 ^

22 presence;] presence[; over ,]

24 through] [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx over in Eucharist.] through

26 that] [xx over Hi] that

32 earth,] [, inserted by hand]

33 Tyrannical] Tyran[caret inserted by hand]ical [nn inserted
 by hand in margin]

36 seems] [here's struck through by hand] [seems inserted
 below by hand]

51 Truth] [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx over Thy Truth to free] Truth
 ^

[44]

Of Deicide

Oddly, it is impossible for man,
 God Uncreated cannot be put out,
 Light, like a candle, snuffed - against Great Pan,
 Who softly pipes, prevails no loudest shout; [4]
 But cried they "Crucify!" and that prevailed,
 They mocked Him, scourged Him, carried Him away,
 Christ carrying His Cross, whom they had flailed,
 Was not another than I AM alway; [8]
 Moreover, Christ did die and went right down
 In soul to Limbo, blent there setting free
 Those whom, through merit of His Cross, He'd crown
 For being true to Truth and Truth is He: [12]
 Rather call Jesus "Suicide" than say
 Only Jews slew Him - sinners, we were they.

[45]

Of Suicide

Judas assuredly committed it,
 On Haceldama, on that field of blood,
 Flows never (nor by wisdom nor by wit
 For feeling mercy) Jesu's healing flood; [4]
 Yet style of Juda's stood at summit height,
 Eastward the desert roared, Westward the main
 Mediterranean, - for David's might
 Whose Lion Clan began with plan to reign! [8]
 "What's in a name?", it could be that of John
 Or Baptist or Belov-ed of the Lord
 Whereat we would-be chosen turned upon
 Christ of the Cross, to tryst with dross more broad: [12]
 Ita, sic transit mundi gloria,
 Corruptio optimi pessima.

3 never (nor ed: never (nor

^

[46]

Of Pomp and Circumstance

Amongst the golden tones of Palestrina,
Amidst the shouts of thousands in a throng,
Where, rarefied, accords Vittoria
With angels on the mountain-tops of song; [4]
There goes the Pope in triple might's tiara,
There flows Gregorian from time to time,
There glows the great East Window like a star
Pointing towards the zenith of the climb; [8]
Up, up it goes, ascending on the rungs
Of sheerest acclamation, clearest joy
And then, from out that multitude of tongues,
Cries one, to bung the portals of alloy: [12]
In Latin, thrice, "O Holy Father, thus
Passes the glory of this world and us!".

[47]

Of Glory

Bring to the King of Glory all the band,
 Tuba and horn with trumpet in the lead
 But let the clarinette and every reed
 Be duly set amidst the Saviour's hand; [4]
 For it is seemly so to do because
 Of mockery is rid Our Lord long since,
 He is the King of Glory and the Prince
 Of Peace who pipes as Pan He ever was; [8]
 Bring also up before His throne such girls
 As know the reed dance of the Swazis tall
 And let the Shembe dancers to His call
 Come gracefully: amidst those skirts awhirl [12]
 Hers will be best embroidered who will come
 As Queen with "Nigra sed formosa sum".

(Good Friday 1970)

10 Swazis] Swazi[x over z]s

[1] Foreword

“Foreword” is not dated, but the poems below it on this page are all dated 19 February 1970. It is the introductory poem of the sequence *Bradburne's Assays*, in which Bradburne establishes his overall poetic concerns or “The Argument of His Book” as Robert Herrick entitles *his* introductory poem to *Hesperides*:

I Sing of Brooks, of Blossomes, Birds, and Bowers:
Of April, May, of June, and July-Flowers. (*ll.* 1-2)

Unlike Herrick, Bradburne opens his “Assays” with examples of subjects he wishes to *avoid*, such as “sophistry” (*l.* 1) and “falsity” (*l.* 1), having decided rather to focus on “the better things or else the best” (*l.* 6). He never states explicitly what these “better things” (*l.* 6) are, but the paradisaical images in the third quatrain imply an aspiration to produce works of beauty and perfection. The image of his poems coasting down a river, as in a barge towards the afterlife, suggests an awareness of his poetry “living on” after his own death. He therefore closes by expressing his desire for his rhyme to be strong so that it may indeed survive for generations come.

1 *Of falsity...wind*. Bradburne wishes to steer clear of deceitfulness and self-glorification. Stated positively, he wishes his poetry to be honest, humble and to glorify God. Considering Bradburne’s title-formula, “Of...”, in the *Assays*, “Of falsity, of sophistry, of wind...” is an appropriate opening to this sequence. It not only alludes to the titles of the other poems in the sequence, but outlines qualities Bradburne wishes to avoid in his poems.

1-3 *of wind...weep*. Of wind drawing the random cloudbanks to heaped-up watersheds of pride till they weep. “Wind” in this context is emblematic of “hot air” – pretentious, empty statements (see *OED* “hot air” 2).

1 *sophistry*. “Employment of arguments which are intentionally deceptive” (see *OED* “sophistry” n. 1).

2 *heaped-up...pride*. Bradburne uses an image of banks of clouds being accumulated (heaped-up) as in a watershed to describe the extent of the build up of pride and the end result – weeping.

2 *watersheds*. “The whole gathering ground of a river system” (*OED* “watershed¹” 2b).

5-8 *let...rest*. The distorted syntax obscures the meaning of this phrase. A possible interpretation reads as follows: “On the whole (“by and large”), let my writs be focused upon the better or best things (in life). Then let me leave them as in a barge coasting towards oblivion for rest”. It is unclear whether Bradburne is referring to a metaphorical journey he imagines his poems to take after his death, or whether he pictures himself “coasting towards oblivion”, although the former seems more probable.

5 *by and large*. On the whole; generally.

8 *Coasting*. Drifting.

9-12 *Forests...leas*. In Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King*, King Arthur’s description of the earthly paradise, to which his barge will ferry him, makes for an interesting comparison with Bradburne’s paradisaical vision. From his barge, Arthur describes “the island-valley of Avilion”, “the Island of Blessed Souls, an earthly paradise in the Western seas”

(Tennyson 520n.1):

Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow’d, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crown’d with summer sea... .

(“The Passing of Arthur” II. 428-31)

12 *leas*. Poetic for fields or meadows (see *OED* “lea” n.¹).

13-14 *All...time*”. Bradburne expresses his earnest wish that his poetic voice will be strong in the future, withstand time and be remembered in posterity. He implies that his choice of subject matter, that which is *good* and *beautiful*, will hone his poetic skill (“my rhymes” (l. 13)) and cause his poems to live on.

13 *song*. Bradburne often refers to himself as a bard and to his poems as songs. See note on 14 “bard’s” in “Of Angels and of Birds” (BA 12) for more on his use of “bard”.

14 “*the...time*”. Cf. *The Tempest* 1.2.49-50: “What seest thou else/In the dark backward and abysm of time?” Shakespeare suggests that time (like an “abysm”) is immeasurable and endless. “Backward” refers to the “past portion (of time)” (*OED* “backward” n. 2).

14 *abysm*. Abyss.

[2] Des Histoires

“Des Histoires” is dated 19 February 1970. In this disparaging piece, in which Bradburne attacks historians, he highlights the need for integrity in those who recreate myths through their writings. As was humorously expressed in the US periodical “Puck” (although Bradburne is unlikely to have read it) in 1889 (XXV. 133), “If the hero who thinks he ‘makes history’ could only wake from his sleep after three hundred years and read the works of half-a-dozen historians, he wouldn’t know his own face on their pages” (quoted in *OED* “history” n. 4c). Bradburne’s tone remains scathing throughout the sonnet, palpably so (through the repetition of long, thin “e” sounds) in line 8, where the historians are said to “deal in treason’s reasonable doubts”. His disgust for historians who spread lies and cover up the truth is, perhaps, also evident in the possible acrostic, HIT A HISTOTRIEW, which may have been intended as “Hit a historian”. Bradburne varies the conventional rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet here: ababcdcdeffegg – a pattern which he repeats in four other poems in the *Assays* (namely “De Spiritu Domini” (BA 29), “Of Dignity” (BA 35), “Of Familiarity” (BA 38) and “Of Benevolence” (BA 40)).

Title: French for “Some stories”. Used in phrases such as “Tout ça, c’est des histoires” meaning “That’s all fiction” and “Raconter des histoires” meaning “To tell lies”. The title may be translated “Of Stories” in keeping with the other titles in *Bradburne’s Assays*, in which “Of” indicates the subject matter to be addressed.

3 *they*. Throughout the poem Bradburne uses third person pronouns to personify “Histories” (l. 1). Although he levels most of his criticism at this personification, by the concluding couplet it seems that his real condemnation is of the historians who write these histories down.

4 *walker*. Any ordinary person.

4 *cast*. The interpretation of “cast” in this context is complicated by the ambiguity of the subject of “its” (most likely referring to “learning”). Three possibilities are: a historians’ cast of mind or mould of thought (their paradigms) is such that it finds flaws in everyone; histories are like anglers who cast their lines “this way and that” (l. 3) to extract selected bits of information from the past; or “cast” alludes to the *dramatis personae* in the play of life.

5 *Haphazard...plan*. Bradburne implies that histories are retold as random events without respect for their design (“plan”). Alternatively, it may be the “plan” of the principal actors that appears haphazard in the retelling of the events. His inverted syntax, “Haphazard” being foregrounded, illustrates this haphazardness. “Happily” denotes the happy manner of the historians, with implications of their blissful ignorance, while also emphasising their haphazard manner (in this case “happily” is understood in the sense of “by chance” (see *OED* “happily” adv. 1) or “by happenstance”).

5 *Haphazard*. “Mere chance or accident”, “without design; at random, casually” (*OED* “haphazard” n. Aa). Cf. “This way and that” (l. 3); also “twists” (l. 1) and “turn” (l. 3).

6-7 *Intent...can*. Beauty shouting is contrasted with the muffling of truth, which is done “softly” (l. 7). While historians attempt to silence truth, beauty shouts – either triumphantly (because beauty is *not* muffled) or in desperation (because with the stifling of truth, beauty too is muffled). Bradburne implies that the historians ignore both truth and beauty. As such, this may be a criticism of their chosen subject matter. Bradburne does not explore this relationship of beauty and truth further here, although in the following poem (“Of Truth”) he describes the beauty of the truth contained in the Bible.

9 *Outlandishly assured*. One of Bradburne's accusations is that historians are strangers to, or alienated from, the events and personalities they describe – their ignorance masked by unwarranted confidence.

10 *books*. History books.

11 *Rapt*. Entranced or enraptured (cf. *Macbeth* 1.3.143: "Look, how our partner's rapt"), and/or trapped, caught, ensnared.

11 *their primal looks*. The history books have a fake appearance of being "primal" (original and important) when, in fact, they are inauthentic. Bradburne also implies that their contents are simplified into distortion in a primitive ("primal") or uneducated manner.

12 *claptrap*. "Language designed to catch applause; cheap showy sentiment. In modern use passing into the sense 'nonsense, rubbish'" (*OED* "claptrap" 2).

12 *lowing...herd*. The gullible buyers behave like an unthinking herd of cattle, emphasised by their unintelligible (subhuman) lowing.

13-14 *Exquisite...fight*. Two meanings are gleaned from the ambiguity of the concluding words: "who can no longer fight" (l. 14). Historians ("bandits") who can no longer fight physically, resort to attacking others with words. Also, the historians attack with words those who are unable to fight back, since they are dead. In this way they rob the people they write about like common lawless bandits. They are sarcastically described as "exquisite", possessing only the appearance of beauty like their seemingly authentic books. "Exquisite" may also be read as in "a coxcomb, dandy, fop" (see *OED* "exquisite" n.), in which case the historians are "dandified" intellectuals.

13-14 *write/Wronging*. The alliteration on "write" and "wronging" draws attention to the pun that highlights the ethical choice between right and wrong underpinning the writing of other people's histories.

[3] Of Truth

“Of Truth” is dated 19 February 1970. Having criticised false histories in the previous sonnet, Bradburne admires the Bible for its “true” histories. In contrast to the darkness and secrecy of “Des Histoires” (where truth is hidden in “mines of information” (*l.* 2) and deliberately muffled (*ll.* 7-8)), the Bible’s histories, in “Of Truth”, are symbolically associated with music and with light (significant in its association with truth and illumination). Lines 1-4 utilise a variety of musical images and describe such histories as “melodiously true” (*l.* 2). Later on the book of Acts is described as a “record bright” and Bradburne closes with an image, inspired by the book of Revelation, of an eagle soaring “from light to light” (*l.* 11).

Bradburne cites, as examples of “true” history, certain historical books of the Bible, such as the Pentateuch, Kings, the Gospels and Acts. He includes the book of Revelation in his selection, an apocalyptic work in which the writer describes his visions of God to various churches. This book is out of place in the sequence of historical books previously listed, but concludes the list appropriately, as Bradburne mimics the Biblical progression from history to revelation. The poem begins in admiration for biblical histories (as opposed to those mentioned in “Des Histoires”) and concludes with a vision of a time beyond history, when future and past are fused, and everything is made new. At this future date, the desire to probe history for truth is lost in that which is of “deeper worth” (*l.* 14), namely wonder (see *l.* 14) of God. Having “narrow[ed] matters down” (*l.* 7) to Jesus’ appearance in history, there is a sense in which the poem (again mimicking the biblical structure) suddenly expands with a final upward movement (see *ll.* 11-12). In this way Bradburne demonstrates that truth leads to God. The sense of lift and lightness that accompanies this progression from historical facts to revelatory vision is enhanced by the repetition of “l” sounds in the last five lines: “Leading”, “last”, “light”, “led”, “lost”.

The acrostic, SMACK ON GALILEE, seems unrelated to the subject matter of the poem. “Smack”, in this instance, refers to a light fishing boat (see *OED* “smack” n.³ 1). There are several reports of Jesus sailing in such a vessel on the Sea of Galilee, but none that are pertinent to this poem.

1 *Some histories*. Following his scathing remarks in “Des Histoires” about false histories, Bradburne names books of the Bible as examples of history as *he* thinks it should be told.

1-2 *strike...true*. Bradburne combines two sayings, namely “to strike the right note” (“Note: To strike the right note”, *Brewer*, 784) and “to ring true” (*OED* “ring” v.² B:1c). In order for a musical instrument to sound a “true” note it must be without cracks and well tuned. Using this musical language, he implies that the Bible’s histories are flawless. Cf. p. 25.

2 *true*. Exactly in tune.

3 *four of five*. Four or five histories. Bradburne mentions five sections of the Bible in the course of the poem: Kings (I and II), the Pentateuch, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and Revelation. The first four of these purport to record historical events.

3 *get by rote*. “To learn by rote is to learn by means of repetition” (“Rote”, *Brewer*, 955).

4 *mind...echoing*. Bradburne states that the mind can only learn by rote from the Bible if it echoes the truth it learns. This implies that, like an echo, the mind repeats and closely imitates the words it hears, thus resounding with the Bible’s truth.

5 “*Kings*”. Kings I and II “report the events of the Solomonic monarchy and the divided kingdoms” (“Kings”, *IDB*, 3: 26).

6 *Pentateuch*. The first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) “essentially in the form of a narrative running from the creation to the death of Moses just before the entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land” (“Pentateuch”, *OCB*, 579). Bradburne believed that Moses wrote the Pentateuch (see Dove 223).

6 *put my shirt*. A slang phrase, “to put one’s shirt on (a horse)”, meaning “to bet all one’s money on” (*OED* “shirt” n. 2f). In this context, Bradburne is figuratively betting all his

money on the Pentateuch having all the characteristics of a true history, such as he describes in the opening lines.

7-8 Narrowing...spurt. Since the Gospels are about Jesus (that which is “most pure”), Bradburne suggests that they have a short burst (or spurt) of precedence in the queue of truth holders.

8 Gospels. The first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). They “include stories about Jesus, sayings of Jesus, and a passion narrative” (“Gospel, Genre of”, *OCB*, 258).

9 Acts...bright. The book of Acts is a record of the acts of Jesus’ apostles. It records “certain phases of the progress of Christianity for a period of some thirty years after Jesus’ death and resurrection” (“Acts of the Apostles”, *OCB*, 6).

10 Revelation. The last book of the Bible. It “professes to be a record of the prophetic visions given by Jesus to John” (“Revelation, Book of”, *ABD*, 5: 694). It has been described as the apostle’s “dramatization of the gospel message” in which he attempts to “set forth the mind and purpose of God as seen in redemptive history”, to “present a theodicy or theology of history” (“Revelation, Book of”, *IDB*, 4: 58). See Rev. 1.1,19.

11 Eagle. The writer of the book of Revelation describes the heavenly throne-room as follows:

...in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. (Rev. 4.6-8)

Although not originally intended as such, “After Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 180) the four creatures came to symbolize the four Gospels (Mark is the lion, Luke the ox, Matthew the man, and John the eagle)” (“4:1-5:14, The Heavenly Throne Room”, *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, 1309). The “flying eagle” is transformed by Bradburne into an “Eagle [that] soars from light to light” (*l.* 11), and is symbolic of the apostle John.

12 *Led...past*. Bradburne imagines the Eagle (the apostle John) being “Led up” (presumably by God) to “fuse the future with the past”. Although Bradburne does not explain how future and past are literally melted into one, he may be alluding to the nature of John’s apocalyptic or revelatory writing, which draws on past events and prophecies about the future. The phrase also echoes Rev. 1.8: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty”.

13 *new heaven...earth*. See Rev. 21.1: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea”.

14 *Enquiry’s...worth*. Bradburne looks ahead to the time foretold in Revelation (see note on 13 “new heaven...earth”) when heaven and earth will be transformed. At this time, when God will, traditionally, be revealed in all his glory, Bradburne envisages wonder at the Creator usurping people’s earlier desire for historical enquiry as a means of discovering truth. The sense of this final revelation is captured in the closing lines of Charles Wesley’s well-known hymn “Love divine, all loves excelling”:

...Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise! (*English Hymnal* no. 582)

14 *Enquiry’s*. “Enquiry” is “The action of seeking, especially (now always) for truth, knowledge, or information concerning something” (*OED* “inquiry, enquiry” 1a).

[4] **Of Gardens**

“Of Gardens” is dated 19 February 1970. Bradburne’s opening statement sets up an interesting tension between gardens and wildernesses. The gardens are “fenced in” (l. 1), as opposed to the wildernesses that are left to grow freely, without any pruning or imposed order. However, there is a sense in which the gardens possess the greater freedom since they are fenced in by grace, indicative of the devotion afforded them by their creator. Instead of asserting the one over the other, though, Bradburne describes

gardens and wildernesses as different parts of a complex harmony, as in counterpoint (see note on 2 “counterpoint”). “Fenced in” also implies that the gardens Bradburne recalls are enclosed – the one in Cumberland is probably walled as it has an “Eastward door” (l. 8). In light of the rich history of religious significance that enclosed gardens have, it is significant that he situates his gardens within this tradition.

The *hortus conclusus* (enclosed garden) was the medieval garden of the Virgin Mary, inspired by the Old Testament book Song of Songs (also called Song of Solomon or Canticles)... . In practice the *hortus conclusus* became the model for medieval romance gardens, thus becoming associated with the more secular manifestations of courtly love; yet it was also regarded as a representation of Paradise, frequently as an enclosed garden within a garden, an earthly but exquisite refuge. (“Hortus Conclusus”, *Encyclopedia of Gardens*, 2: 600)

Bradburne reminisces on two gardens from his boyhood which were important to him. He remembers their beauty, and brings them to life again on the page. The poem progresses from these two, associated with the innocence of childhood, to the Garden of Eden, exemplar of humankind’s primal innocence. Bradburne concludes with the Garden of Eden – the ultimate earthly garden, since it is both the original one and the one inhabited by God himself. (According to the creation story in Genesis, God walked in the garden with Adam and Eve before the Fall (see Gen. 3.8).) All gardens thereafter are, in a sense, an imitation of this divine garden. Bradburne stops short (“no further gardens would I cite” (l. 13)) when contemplating Eden, probably because it surpasses any beauty he has yet seen. His most pristine memories of gardens give him a glimpse of heaven.

In the acrostic, GARDENS GALLANT, “gallant” is probably meant as “a general epithet of admiration or praise” (*OED* “gallant” a. 4a) of the gardens themselves. Alternatively, it may be interpreted as “Garden’s gallant” or “Gallant of gardens”, where Bradburne sees himself as a dashing or chivalrous lover of gardens (see *OED* “gallant” a. 5a, 7), but this secondary reading is less apparent.

The mind, the imagination and memory all play an important role in the poem. Gardens originate in the imagination and are accessible through memory long after they have withered. This process of drawing up memories from the past seems to sanctify (or “anoint” (l. 4)) them (see note on 4 “anoint”). Ultimately, Bradburne implies that no human thoughts (that find their creative expression in gardening) are comparable to those contained in the mind of the Creator.

1 Gardens...thoughts. “Greensleeved” dates back to a ballad published in 1580 in which the subject of the love song is referred to as “my Lady Greensleeves” (see *OED* “greensleeves”). Bradburne uses the word frequently in connection with the Virgin Mary, whom he names as his “greensleeved Queen of Heaven” (“Greensleeves”, *l.* 5; 73.2).

“Greensleeved thoughts” is reminiscent of “The Garden” where Andrew Marvell coins the phrase “a green thought in a green shade” (*l.* 42). In both instances, “thought” is suggestive of a creative imagination at work. Bradburne may also be extending the proverbial phrase “to have green fingers”, “said of a successful gardener” (“Green: Green fingers”, *Brewer*, 500). To have green sleeves, in such a context, might denote an exceptionally successful gardener. “Thoughts” that are “greensleeved”, in this sense, extend into reality and give rise to beautiful gardens.

1 fenced...grace. “Fenced in” refers to both “gardens” and to “thoughts”. Grace figuratively encloses the gardens or thoughts, thereby fortifying or protecting them (perhaps symbolically against wildernesses, which are effectively fenced out).

2 counterpoint. In music, “the melody added as accompaniment to a given melody or ‘plain-song’” (*OED* “counterpoint” n.¹ 1). In general usage “counterpoint” often refers to the “opposite point” (*OED* “counterpoint” n.¹ 4). Bradburne sets the wildernesses in contrast to the gardens, seeing them figuratively as two distinct melodies woven together to form a harmonious whole.

3 gay. “Light-hearted, exuberantly cheerful, sportive, merry” (see *OED* “gay” a. 1a).

3 trace. The traces (or tracks) (see *OED* “trace” n.¹ 5a) of the gardens Bradburne remembers, as well as the impression the gardens themselves have left on his mind (see *OED* “trace” n.¹ 6a). “Trace” may also be understood in the sense of tracing or drawing an object (*op. cit.* 8a), with memories being drawn up from the past like a tracing of the original garden.

4 anoint. Anointing persons and objects signifies their consecration to God and imparts a blessing on them. Here the past anoints the memory of the garden in Bradburne’s mind.

As time passes, his childhood memories of gardens become more cherished. There is also a sense in which gardens have anointed his past.

5 Earliest...Cumberland. Bradburne's earliest memory of a garden is in Cumberland, where he was born (see pp. 1-2).

6 two...winters. At the time of writing "Of Gardens" Bradburne was forty-eight years old. Thus more than forty-two winters had passed since he was first in Cumberland.

7 Fells. The mountains and hills of Cumberland. Skirwith, Bradburne's birthplace, lies at the foot of Cross Fell. Cf. "Of a District" (BA 21).

8 Eastward. Fells such as "Cross Fell" lie east of Skirwith.

9 Norfolk. Bradburne lived in Norfolk from 1929 to 1939 (see p. 3).

9 for the nones. "For the nones", or "for the nonce", is a poetic phrase used to mean "verily, indeed. Also as a virtually meaningless metrical tag, or as an intensifier" (see OED "nonce" n.¹ 1b). Chaucer uses it, for example, in the "General Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales*:

The millere was a stout carl for the nones;
Ful byg he was of brawn, and eek of bones. (ll. 545-46)

A cook they hadde with hem for the nones
To boille the chiknes with the marybones. . . . (ll. 379-80)

In view of Bradburne's delight in punning it should be noted that "none" or "nones" refers to one of the canonical hours, during which Bradburne sang the *Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (see p. 22).

10-11 Lawngreen...gold. Variations of this phrase occur numerous times in Bradburne's poetry. He locates his memory of this scene in the rectory of St. Agnes Church in Cawston, a village close to Holt, where he attended Gresham's.

I sang in a Rectory garden -
Lawngreen and lilac, laburnum and yew -

From the top of a forty foot beech I embarked
On a dream-liner launched in the view. (From "Prologue"; 58.06)

Cawston I remember well -
Laburnum, lilac, yew,
And golden hours in copper-beech
With hayricks in the view. (From "Ut Unum Sint"; BRAD0876)

The variety of trees (both deciduous and evergreen) and colours ("lawngreen", lilac, reddish gold (copper-beech), dark green (yew) and gold (laburnum)) that Bradburne describes evokes the beauty and fertility of the garden.

10 *copper-beech*. A deciduous tree, the leaves of the Copper Beech (also called the Purple Beech) turn a coppery colour in autumn or, occasionally, purple (see More and White 343).

10 *yew*. An evergreen tree, found in large numbers in British country churchyards. "The yew is also a life symbol, and was sometimes scattered on graves" (*Book of the British Countryside* 527).

11 *Laburnums gold*. The laburnum tree has golden yellow flowers "arranged in hanging clusters", giving it the nicknames "golden chain and golden rain" (*Book of the British Countryside* 258).

11 *a-hum*. The repeated "um" sounds ("Laburnums gold, summers a-hum") conveys the humming of the bees, which in turn suggests a warm, summer atmosphere. The onomatopoeia also communicates the busyness of the bees, with the garden full of sound and life.

11 *drones*. A drone is a male honey bee: "It is a non-worker, its function being to impregnate the queen-bee" (*OED* "drone" n.¹ 1). Used figuratively to describe a "non-worker; a lazy idler, a sluggard" (*op. cit.* 2a). Bradburne frequently refers to himself as a drone bee, for example, in "Cogito, ergo sum": "Amongst that silence busy bees hummed past, / I sole was drone and they the workers fast!" (*ll.* 13-14; 69.198). Here he describes himself as one of the drones, the "one with less than any else to do" (*l.* 12). This view of

himself as a “drone” was fuelled by his feelings of being useless, since he was so impractical (see p. 25). He signed himself “John Bee (drone)” in several letters (see 70.24, 73.173, 74.196) and named Mary the “Queen of the hive” (“Heyday Freedom”, *l.* 24; 69.234) or “Queen of this drone” (meaning himself) (“Venite, adoremus...”, *l.* 20; 69.215). See p. 31. Cf. “Of a Sunday in Lent” (*BA* 27).

13-14 *No...habitat*. This may be paraphrased as: “No more gardens would I cite except the one that trembles on Eden’s haze - that is, God’s habitat”. The image of heaven (“God’s habitat”) “trembling on Eden’s haze” suggests a shimmering effect in the haze of God’s presence, like that of a mirage.

[5] **Of Erudition**

“Of Erudition” is dated 19 February 1970. In it Bradburne mocks those who confine their lives to acquiring knowledge rather than wisdom. He questions their sense of self-importance and their false confidence at being in control merely as a result of their intellectual prowess. Ultimately, he maintains, their very lives are being written by a divine pen; God will have the ultimate say in the events of their life regardless of their earthly status. He adds that if all their erudition and scholarship do not widen their perspective sufficiently to accommodate ultimate reality then it is futile. Also, that erudition can lead a man so far from reality and truth that he is like a blind man in the dark (see *ll.* 7-8). Bradburne underlines the transience of all scholarly endeavours. As such, the narrow-minded scholar can be compared to the man condemned by God as a “fool” for ignoring the fact of his own transience and mortality, devoting his energies to acquiring perishable goods and neglecting things of ultimate importance or significance (see Luke 12.20). The futility of the scholar’s efforts is proved when death puts an end to them by “Ruling his line of exit” (*l.* 11). Bradburne suggests, in the closing couplet, that no-one should rely on his erudition to lead him into truth or wisdom, or to God. Another consideration of the nature of true learning may be found in “Of Education” (*BA* 10).

Bradburne misspells the word “atrophy” in the acrostic (ATROFHY LEARNED), but the intention is clear: mere scholarship for its own sake, unrelated to daily life, leads to a wasting away of the heart and mind.

1-4 *Art...edict?*. In this densely-packed rhetorical question Bradburne mocks the sense of superiority that the “Erudite Sir” (*l.* 13) feels in consequence of his having “gone out from” the ranks of people he esteems coarse or uneducated (“rude” (*l.* 1)). The self-satisfied erudite may consider such people inferior to himself, but Bradburne recognises that their shared starting point means that he/she is inextricably bound to the mass of ordinary people. Bradburne is far more sympathetic towards the lives lived by unsophisticated people, such as the lepers of Mutemwa, than he is to those of “erudite” scholars. Subtly drawing attention to the fact that uneducated people also have intelligence, Bradburne describes how they occupy their minds “Rightly” (*l.* 3) with tasks of everyday importance, as opposed to erudite scholars who, in his opinion, waste their minds on irrelevant piles of paper (see *ll.* 6-7). He implies that unsophisticated people are accustomed to living as circumstances dictate. “[I]n the rhyme and mood/Of circumstance’s edict” (*ll.* 3-4) intimates the kind of harmony they have with the type of lives they lead. Cf. *ll.* 8-12.

1 *thou*. Bradburne addresses a single, unnamed “Erudite Sir” (*l.* 13), representative of all erudite people who have a false sense of superiority accruing from their learning – those who may possess knowledge but lack wisdom.

1 *gone out from*. Left behind or departed from. The implication is that the erudite person, having “gone out from” unsophisticated society, considers himself superior.

1 *rude*. Coarse, uneducated, unsophisticated (see *OED* “rude” a. 1a).

4 *circumstance’s edict*. The inexorable dictates of circumstance, what is decreed by the exigencies of day-to-day living.

4-8 *whoso...heavily*. Anyone who disparages those people who do not spend their lives poring over old documents is as clumsy and ungainly as a man being led through the dark by a blinder man. See note on 8 “blinder”.

5 *wights*. People (see *OED* “wight” n. 2).

6-7 *pile...age*. A pile of old documents or books, discoloured over time, or a “lofty mass of buildings; a large building or edifice” (*OED* “pile” n.³ 4a). In both cases, the scholar is preoccupied with the study of the pile.

7-8 *man...blinder*. Erudition can lead you so far from reality and truth that you are like a man in black (in black clothes and/or in the dark) led by a blinder man. See note on 8 “blinder”.

8 *blinder*. A person who is even more blind, one with even less (in)sight; alternatively, one who blinds or misleads others (see *OED* “blinder” n. 1a). An echo of the words of Jesus: “If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matt. 15.14).

8-12 *beguile...known*. A man may cleverly deceive himself every moment of his life, but death will come unpredictably one day; no amount of erudition can change the fact of his mortality.

8 *beguile*. “To entangle or over-reach with guile; to delude, deceive, cheat” (*OED* “beguile” v. 1).

10 *portal*. Entrance or doorway (see *OED* “portal” n.¹ 1a): here, the moment of death, when earthly erudition loses its relevance. “Portal” is used in a similar context in the second verse of the hymn “Jesus lives”:

Jesus lives! Henceforth is death
 But the gate of life immortal;
 This shall calm our trembling breath,
 When we pass its gloomy portal.
 Alleluya! (*English Hymnal* no. 192)

11-12 *day/Not known*. Cf. Mark 13.32-33:

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

13-14 *how...men*. Bradburne describes God as divinely writing the lives of men as they live them. He thus adds another dimension to the proverb “the pen is mightier than the sword”: the divine pen being the mightiest of all. The realisation that God’s pen writes lives puts scholarly efforts into perspective.

[6] **Of Mortification**

“Of Mortification” is dated 19 February 1970. The act of mortification was known to Bradburne from his personal experience. Although he did not deliberately inflict pain on his body he did deny himself most simple comforts. At the time of writing this poem he was living in the disused butcher-shop in Mutemwa (see p. 34). He lived on very little food and almost no sleep. He is recorded as saying that he “could pray better on an empty stomach” (Dove 212). His lifestyle focused on denying his body and feeding his soul. In many ways, he tried to emulate Romans 8.13: “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live”. It is worth remembering that this poem is dated in Lent, during which Bradburne fasted from various food and drink.

The acrostic, MAYBESTIMATEDO, may be interpreted as “May be estimated as nothing”, with the “O” symbolising zero. The statement echoes the words of St. Paul: “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (Phil. 3.7). In a similar vein, the process of mortification encourages the individual to count himself as nothing so that God may become all.

1 *Mortification.*

An ecclesiastical term used to describe the action of the ‘killing’ or ‘deadening’ of the flesh and its lusts (cf. Rom. 8.13; also Col. 3.5, Gal. 5.24) through ascetic practices, and more particularly through the infliction of bodily discomfort and even bodily hurt. Fasting and abstention from pleasure are among the many means of

mortification. Its chief aim is by breaking bad habits to lead men into better and holier ways. ("Mortification", *ODCC*, 942-43)

1 *slaying*. The conflict between body and soul is seen in terms of a battle to the death. Cf. Gal. 5.24: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts". This image recurs in line 5 ("combat") and is humorously implied in the reference to Don Quixote (see *l.* 8), a knight determined on slaying windmills.

3-4 *Yet...goal*. Since the body objects to being denied its natural desires, like a donkey braying in protest, Bradburne acknowledges that it must be coaxed into submission. As a hooked fish is played on a line until it becomes exhausted, so too must the body be played "with grace" (*l.* 4).

3 *brother ass's*. As a member of the Third Franciscan Order, Bradburne was a follower of St. Francis of Assisi, who nicknamed his body "Brother Ass" or his "Brother the Ass" (Chesterton 1). Bradburne adopts the phrase and uses it frequently in his writing. In "Psalms on Pantheism", he writes

But, brother ass my body, stranger stay
To baneful sway of any surplus weight
And, soul, be master of my pilgrim-way
To heaven, both a narrow and a straight (*ll.* 33-36; 73.98).

Elsewhere he more explicitly refers to riding on his "brother ass": "But brother ass shall saddled be and sweet/Rider my soul shall show" ("Resurgum", *ll.* 11-12; 74.524).

This image recurs later in the sequence, in "Of The Lord's Prayer" (*BA* 43):
"bestride/The season I and ride my brother ass" (*ll.* 4-5).

4 *with grace*. By means of spiritual assistance. Also, graciously, with understanding of the suffering of the body as it undergoes mortification.

4 *his goal*. Sanctification, the ultimate aim of spiritual striving.

5 *Sancho*. Sancho Panza, the common-sensical servant of Don Quixote, who accompanies him on his adventures. Like Sancho on his ass ("Sitting his mount

precariously" (*l.* 6)), Bradburne views his relationship with his body (his "brother ass") as "precarious" because the body has a will of its own and, like an ass, might prove stubbornly ungovernable. See note on 3 "brother ass's".

6-8 *I/Trust...high*. Bradburne trusts that the Lord will go beside him as his guiding light. See John 8.12: "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life". The comfort of a Lord who will walk "beside" him is contrasted with one who might be "too high" (*l.* 8) – characteristic of the undesirable leadership of Don Quixote. See note on 8 "Quixotic".

8 *Quixotic*. As in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, referring to a person or power obsessed with lofty ("too high"), impractical, unrealistic or romantic ideals who, in this context, would prove a hindrance to Bradburne's striving to counteract his innate sinfulness.

9-10 *Move...right*. The "progress of the soul" (*l.* 2) is slowed by the limitations of the body.

9 *we*. The body and I.

11-12 *Till...plight*. Each evening God (mercifully) rewards the entire lack of progress made (see *ll.* 9-10) at attempting not to sin, with some rest. See note on 12 "restful plight". "Alack/Entire" may be interpreted as the opposite of "entire sanctification": "The doctrine of *entire* or *perfect sanctification* is "the view, held by some Protestants, that the condition of freedom from sin...is attainable in the present life" (*OED* "sanctification" 1a).

11 *Alack*. "Alack" primarily denotes "Lacking, wanting, missing" (*OED* "alack" adv. (pred.a.)) (of progress), but is also "An exclamation...of dissatisfaction, reprobation, or deprecation = *pity or shame that it should be so*; and hence of regret or surprise" (*OED* "alack" int.).

12 *restful plight*. The plight or predicament is unpleasant, and changes little from day to day, yet is described as “restful” because each day closes with sleep.

13 *bright Knight*. Jesus, the positive counterpart to Don Quixote, who is described by Sancho as “el Caballero de la Triste Figura” - “the Knight of the Doleful Countenance” (Cervantes 1: 171).

13 *gale of Love*. Jesus’ love is deliberately described as a “gale”, an emblem of irresistible force.

14 *lead... Wood*. Bradburne depicts humankind as entirely dependent on the grace of God, with Jesus as the heroic knight who leads them through the trials of life and death. Cf.

The opening of “Canto I” of Dante’s *Inferno*:

In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself within a dark wood where the straight way was lost. Ah, how hard a thing it is to tell of that wood, savage and harsh and dense, the thought of which renews my fear! So bitter is it that death is hardly more. (*Dante* 1: 23)

[7] Of Death

“Of Death” is dated 19 February 1970. From the opening rhetorical question Bradburne challenges humankind’s fear of death: of it being, metaphorically, the hardest road to travel. Bradburne inverts this perception by implying that with faith (in Jesus, who has conquered death) nothing could be easier than the road to death. He combines different images to describe Jesus in relation to death. Jesus is seen as Light (“His bright being” (l. 6)); as a chivalrous, victorious Knight (see ll. 9-12); and as a Shepherd (who is simultaneously the sacrificial Lamb, see line 13) leading his flock. All these metaphors highlight the comfort Jesus brings in the face of death. Bradburne’s attitude towards death is similar to that expressed by St. Paul:

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15.55-57)

Bradburne makes extensive use of words beginning with “b” or “d” throughout the poem: “beseeming bread” (l. 2), “drum and bust” (l. 4), “Dread is befitting” (l. 5), “bright being” (l. 6), “deep in black despair” (l. 7), “describe the battle done” (l. 12), “Dispelled is darkness, belled are we to bliss” (l. 14). The consistent use of these weighted, voiced stops or plosives adds to the confidence of the tone and gives the impression of a determined speaker.

Within the acrostic, RVALDEVERBUMYD, lies the Latin phrase *valde verbum*, the surrounding letters apparently lacking significance. *Valde*, meaning “truly” or “very”, and *verbum*, meaning “word”, may be interpreted together as meaning “the true word”, or “truly, the word itself” as in “the Word...made flesh” (see John 1.14). This ties in broadly with the subject matter of the poem, which focuses on Jesus and, more specifically, on his victory over sin and death.

1 *Road...trust?* Bradburne’s rhetorical question may be rephrased: “would there be any easier road (than the road of death) if we trust (in God)?” There is a possible thematic connection between the closing couplet of the previous sonnet and the opening line of this one, since in both the believer is called upon to trust Jesus on his/her journey through life and death.

2-3 *Viand...dead.* The resurrected body of Jesus appears in the form of the Eucharistic bread (“gleaming” white wafers), feeding the soul through the miracle of transubstantiation. This is as directed by Jesus at the Last Supper, where “he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22.19). Jesus, as bread, promises life in the present as well as eternal life: “Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6.35). Cf. John 6.53-56 and 1 Cor. 10.16-17 for more bread symbolism.

2 *Viand.* Food or sustenance (see *OED* “viand”¹ 1, 2). Bradburne may also be punning on *via* (contained within the word “viand”), which refers to the “road” or “way” to death (see *OED* “via” n. 2a) or, more specifically, to the *Via Dolorosa*, the road Jesus followed

to his crucifixion on Calvary. Bradburne's use of "viand" here implies that the Eucharistic bread provides spiritual sustenance for the "road" or "way" of the Lord.

2 *beseeming*. Bradburne is drawing on two meanings of "beseeming", namely "in the appearance of" or "seemingly" (see *OED* "beseeming, besemyng") and "becoming" or "befitting". The Eucharistic bread is beseeming in that it only seems or appears to be bread, but is in actual fact the body of Jesus. In the second sense, the bread is beseeming in that it is fitting for the occasion (or becomes the occasion).

4 *Let...bust*. Bradburne's mention of drums and trumpets, which sometimes form part of funeral processions (especially military ones), suggests that he wants no pomp and ceremony to herald his death. Cf. the military imagery in lines 10-12. In addition, he does not want to be commemorated by a bust, which would for him be nothing more than a physical object resembling his mortal body. His motivation possibly lies in his belief that after death he will rise like Jesus and gain an immortal body, and will live on in eternity with God.

6 *Entwining*. Bradburne imagines himself being entwined with Jesus like two strands that are woven or plaited together. The prospect of being united with Jesus in a mysterious embrace (during life on earth and after death) causes all fear of dying to vanish. The image is suggestive of an intimate relationship with God. The closeness of this relationship finds expression in the Eucharist (cf. *ll.* 2-3) where the believer becomes intertwined with Jesus as he partakes of his being. This is explained by Jesus, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6.56).

7-8 (*Verily...nigh*). The distorted syntax of these lines obscures the meaning. In general, Bradburne is indicating the kind of deep despair into which he would sink without the knowledge of Jesus' near presence or immanence – despair as a result of the doom or annihilation that would otherwise await him in death. The knowledge that Jesus, who has conquered death through his resurrection, is nearby, "entwining His bright being" (*l.* 6) with the poet's, frees Bradburne from fear (cf. *ll.* 5-6). "[T]one/Empowered unto doom" recalls the archaic phrase "the crack of doom", which refers to "the thunder-peal of the

day of judgement, or perhaps the blast of the archangel's trump" (*OED* "crack" n. 1a). "Tone" might be interpreted as the trumpet that is empowered to sound the doom of those not saved by Jesus. The phrase is also evocative of the "Dies Irae" (Day of Wrath), "the first words, and hence the name, of a Latin hymn on the Last Judgement ascribed to Thomas of Celano (c1250)" (*OED* "dies" a). The hymn is often included in the Mass for the Dead, and forms part of both Verdi and Mozart's Requiems. Bradburne's imagery here is comparable with that of the hymn:

Wondrous sound the trumpet flingeth,
Through earth's sepulchres it ringeth,
All before the throne it bringeth
Death is struck, and nature quaking,
All creation is awaking,
To its Judge an answer making (*Daily Missal*, 1571, ll. 7-12)

Bradburne suggests that the sound would lead him to despair were it not for Jesus' presence.

8 sans. Without.

9-12 Rapidly...done. Jesus is pictured as a heroic warrior scarred from his battle with death, which he has conquered (through his resurrection). His banner of Love prevails. Cf. "Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle" (*English Hymnal* no. 95) and "The royal banners forward go":

The royal banners forward go;
The Cross shines forth in mystic glow;
Where he in flesh, our flesh who made,
Our sentence bore, our ransom paid... . (*English Hymnal* no. 94)

10 Five Scars. The Five Sacred Wounds of Jesus, namely those in his hands, feet and side – the outward and visible signs of his fight and his victory.

11 Love's Troubadour. Jesus is depicted as the troubadour of Love itself. A troubadour is "One of a class of lyric poets, living in southern France, eastern Spain, and northern Italy, from the 11th to the 13th centuries, who sang in Provençal (*langue d'oc*), chiefly of chivalry and gallantry, sometimes including wandering minstrels and jongleurs" (*OED* "troubadour"). Jesus' ballad is of love and victory, sung by his bard, Bradburne, in this

poem. For Bradburne, a Third Order Franciscan, the word “troubadour” is also associated with St. Francis of Assisi, who was influenced by the Troubadours. Writing of “the young poet of Assisi”, Chesterton notes that “when [St. Francis] and his secular companions carried their pageant of poetry through the town, they called themselves Troubadours” (Chesterton 66). (However, “when he and his spiritual companions came out to do their spiritual work in the world, they were called by their leader the Jongleurs de Dieu [God’s Jesters]” (*loc. cit.*.)

13 *Lamb-led sheep.* Jesus, the “Lamb of God” (John 1.29), leads his followers, often described as his sheep (see John 1.1-30). Bradburne combines two metaphors to describe Jesus’ relationship with his followers: Jesus as the good shepherd (see John 10.11-17, Heb. 13.20, Isa. 40.11) who tends to his flock, and Jesus as the sacrificial “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1.29).

13 *in...this.* As in numerous other poems, Bradburne puns on the Shakespearean phrase, “in such a night as this”, found in *King Lear*, “In such a night/To shut me out? Pour on, I will endure./In such a night as this!” (3.4.17-19), and repeatedly in the dialogue between Lorenzo and Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice* (5.1.1-22). The night is dispelled by the very presence of Jesus, the Knight (see note on 14 “Dispelled is darkness”).

14 *Dispelled is darkness.* The dark night of sin and death has been rendered powerless by the light of Jesus. Here Bradburne elaborates on the apostle John’s depiction of Jesus as Light itself, able to dispel darkness (see *ll.* 6, 14). See John 1.4-5: “In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not”, or, as translated in the Revised Standard Version, “the darkness has not overcome it”.

14 *belled...bliss.* Jesus leads his sheep into the ultimate joy of heaven. He becomes their bell-wether, “The leading sheep of a flock, on whose neck a bell is hung” (*OED* “bell-wether” 1), and they follow the sound of his bell.

[8] Of Possession

“Of Possession” is dated 20 February 1970. From the opening proverb Bradburne makes a comparison between the common human desire to possess material things and the soul’s desire to be possessed by God. He establishes that material possessions are corruptible (they “rot” (l. 14)) and will therefore decay, whereas what God offers is permanent (“keeping All for ever” (l. 13)). Thus, being possessed by God is the highest form of possession. Cf. note on 12 “possessed”.

The acrostic in the sonnet reads: PAT PATER NOSTER. It is unclear whether PAT is meant to be interpreted as the English word or as an unsuccessful beginning of PATER NOSTER, which Bradburne then completes. *Pater noster*, Latin for “our father”, has a subtle relevance to the subject of possession. God, named as “our father” (with an emphasis on the possessive pronoun), is the only thing worth “possessing” or being possessed by. In such a relationship the possession is mutual: as he is *our* father, we are *his* children. *Pater noster* also refers to the Lord’s Prayer (see Matt. 6.9-13 or Luke 11.2-4), but there is no clear connection between this prayer and the subject matter of the poem. A possible indirect link exists between the request within the prayer, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6.13), and the trappings of material possessions implicit in the poem. However, the passage that follows this verse, in the gospel of Matthew, is more relevant to the theme of this particular poem:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt,
and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in
heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break
through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

(Matt. 6.19-21)

1 Possession...law. “Possession is nine (formerly eleven) points of the law” (ODEP 640). In other words, to have something physically in your possession is virtually the same as legally owning it.

1-2 Possession...alone?. Bradburne uses this proverb to highlight an unusual aspect of a spiritual relationship with God. While God owns humankind, in the same way he owns everything under heaven (cf. Psalm 24.1: “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein”), in order for anyone to be truly possessed

by God they have to love him in return – an act of free will. However, as Bradburne goes on to explain, even this task requires God’s active grace.

1 *Law*. The capitalisation indicates God’s divine law, which is a law of love and grace (see *l.* 3). Cf. Rom. 6.14.

2 *loving God alone*. This may be rephrased as “loving only God” where God is the sole recipient of that love, or as “only loving God”, doing nothing else but loving God – since that is an all-encompassing task.

3 *That...graces*. Bradburne states that even loving God requires God’s help. His grace is an unmerited gift (cf. Rom. 5.15-21) and is an ongoing process. Bradburne’s use of the plural, “graces”, indicates that they are dispensed continually. Cf. Hopkins’s use of “graces” in “As kingfishers catch fire”: “that keeps all his goings graces” (*l.* 10).

3 *more and more and more*. The play on words here relies on different uses of “more”. Slightly different punctuation clarifies the syntax in line 3-4: “more and more, and more/Perhaps...”. The first two (“more and more”) should be understood as “to an increasing extent”; the third (“more/Perhaps”) is comparative. Later in the poem, “more” (*l.* 5) signifies “great” or “much”. The build-up of “more and more and more” and “more’s the pity” (*l.* 5) culminates in the superlative “most” (*l.* 8) which completes the playful incrementation.

4 *own*. “Own” here means both “possess” and “admit”.

5-8 *And...odd*. God unceasingly invites his elect to be possessed by his love (and caught up in ecstatic rapture as a result), despite the fact that others may think them odd. “[B]eing thought most odd” only adds to the fun (“sport”) of being a fool for God.

5 *more’s the pity*. It is very regrettable.

6 constant. This refers to God's unceasing invitation, and points to his immutability. While he remains fixed, his invitation steadfast, it is humans who have to respond or accept his grace in order to be fully possessed by him.

7 Enjoining. To "urge strongly; command" (*Collins* "enjoin" vb. 1). (Cf. Heb. 9.20.) The simultaneous invitation (see *l.* 6) and command of God is puzzling. The paradox may be seen as an expression of the intensity of God's desire for humankind to respond to his invitation.

7 His best elect. "Elect" denotes choice – God's best elect are those who choose to be his chosen people. Logically, it is impossible for everyone to be "His best" since "best" implies that others are less favoured. The paradox points to the fact that all are equally valued by God, since there is no hierarchy under a law of grace. "His best" may also be a playful use of the word, meaning "favourite". Again Bradburne plays on the degrees of comparison, but here the order is reversed: "best" (*l.* 7), "better" (*l.* 9), "Good" (*l.* 10).

8 Rapt. This refers to the elect of God who are caught up in a mystical rapture.

8 sport. Bradburne uses the word unusually to mean "fun" or "joy". The word also has connotations of oddity or freakishness. Cf. "Of Angels and of Birds" *l.* 4 (*BA* 4).

9-11 Normality...got. The desire to conform to that which is conventional or typical should be rejected in order to gain what God has in store for his chosen ones. To achieve possession by (and of) "The Good" it is better to set aside normality and become "fools for Christ's sake" (1 Cor. 4.10; 1 Cor. 1.17-21).

10 The Good. The *summum bonum* – the ultimate or supreme good, which defies comparison. This has been one of the traditional ways of describing God since Thomas Aquinas Christianised Aristotle's idea.

Aquinas took from Aristotle the notion of a final end, or *summum bonum*, at which all action is ultimately directed; and, like Aristotle he saw this end as necessarily linked with happiness. This idea was Christianized, however, by the idea that happiness is to be found in the love of God. (*NEB* 18: 501)

11 *got, - e'en*. This idiosyncratic use of two punctuation marks together lengthens and thus emphasises the pause between the statement and the following simile.

11-12 *e'en...she should*. The soul's desire to be possessed by God is likened to that of a bride who longs for her husband. The comparison highlights the desired unity of the soul with God. Song of Solomon, which celebrates love between the sexes, uses similar imagery. This has been interpreted as an allegory of the love that exists between humankind and God, justified thus:

It is only from a profound knowledge of human love, in all its manifestations, that men can rise to an understanding of the love that unites God with his children.
 ("The Song of Solomon", *ICB*, 325)

The image of God as a bridegroom recurs in Jesus' Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25.1-12). Matthew 9.15 also records Jesus speaking of himself as a bridegroom.

12 *possessed*. Being spiritually possessed usually refers to demon possession, but here it is used positively to indicate that God takes complete control of the soul once it is relinquished to him. Cf. John Donne's "Batter my heart, three person'd God":

Take me to You, imprison me, for I,
 Except You enthrall me, never shall be free,
 Nor ever chaste, except You ravish me. (*ll.* 12-14)

13-14 *Enter...not*. This may be rephrased as "we do not readily enter into the opportunity of keeping All forever". Bradburne is alluding to two distinct processes that stem from the experience of possession. As the soul is possessed by God it enters into the Godhead ("All") and is forever united with him. Since everything that exists, all that is, is possessed by God, being united with him means possessing "All" for ever. Thus the possession is both of God and by God. Cf. Song of Sol. 2.16: "My beloved is mine, and I am his".

14 *from...sever*. Relinquishing control to God and becoming possessed by him has consequences which require sacrifice: it demands that the believer sever himself from rot (that which decays). In other words, he must separate himself from that which is transient. This may be material goods or an attitude towards them. Bradburne's attitude in this poem is similar to Jesus', as expressed in his conversation with a rich young ruler

who asks him what he must do to inherit eternal life: “Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me” (Matt 19.21). Cf. Matt. 6.24.

[9] **Of No Thing**

“Of No Thing” is dated 20 February 1970. Since God in the person of Jesus Christ cannot be regarded as a thing, the title “Of No Thing” is appropriate. The poem forms a companion piece to “Of nothing” (BA 20), a poem about Satan – see introductory notes on “Of nothing” for a more detailed comparison. “Of No Thing” has an internal structure of six two-line units (where each line must be read in conjunction with its partner) concluding with a triplet. Bradburne adapts the usual Shakespearean sonnet with this rhyming triplet, giving the poem fifteen lines instead of fourteen, and a rhyme scheme of ababcdcdefefggg. Apart from the tightly controlled metre, the set rhyme scheme and the consistent use of “H’s” at the start of each line, he gives the poem additional structure with internal patterning. Bradburne patterns the poem further by using several carefully balanced rhyming pairs within the same line: “carried” – “parried” (l. 4), “spurned” – “earned” (l. 7) “doubt” – “scouts” (l. 10) and “sing” – “fling” (l. 13) (cf. “Of nothing” (BA 20)). Through rhyme and alliteration, he catches the reader’s eye, by pairing together words in the same relative position in consecutive lines: for example, “gladness” (l. 1) and “sadness” (l. 2). In addition to this patterning, he uses anaphora in lines 1-2 (with the repetition of “He is a”), parallel phrasing in lines 11-12 (“Hell is” in contrast to “Heaven is”) as well as alliteration and assonance. It is interesting that whereas in most of Bradburne’s writing he capitalises personal pronouns that refer to God, he chooses not to do so here, apart from line beginnings. The reason may be partly aesthetic, so as not to detract from the visual impact of the capital H’s at the start of each line.

Bradburne’s use of past and present tense to describe Jesus underlines the fact that Jesus, being both God and man, is simultaneously outside of time and located in specific historical time. By using the present tense, Bradburne subtly makes the point that Jesus is the “Eternal Presence”, the “I Am” (“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8.58); see also Exod. 3.14). Bradburne’s use of the

present tense to refer to Jesus' actions in historical time, "His *is* to empty all he ever was" (my emphasis) (l. 5), implies that Jesus' incarnation, in which he emptied himself of "all he ever was", is an ongoing process. It implies that he is continually sacrificing himself, pouring himself out for humankind. Cf. note on 5-6 "empty...despise".

1 *He*. Jesus.

2 *He is...God*. Not entering into a relationship with Jesus (and thereby making him "our God") causes unhappiness.

3-4 *Heavily... "Ichabod"*. Jesus warded off the departing glory from Israel (symbolised by "Ichabod") through his death at Calvary (see Luke 23.33). See notes on 4 "parried" and "Ichabod".

3 *the Wood*. The capitalisation indicates the cross of wood upon which Jesus was crucified.

4 *parried*. The word "parry" is predominantly used in fencing to describe the action of warding off an attack by blocking or deflecting an opponent's weapon (cf. note on 13 "fling...aground"). In this case, the battlefield is Golgotha and Jesus wards off the impending doom of the human race by sacrificing himself for their sins. Bradburne may be envisioning this battle as a duel between Jesus and Satan, if "Ichabod" is understood as a nickname for the devil (see note on 4 "Ichabod"). In addition to this, Bradburne may even be suggesting that Jesus *restored* ultimate glory to Israel by becoming God's incarnate glory visible on earth. From his birth, Jesus is described in such terms: "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2.32).

4 "*Ichabod*". The name given by Eli's daughter-in-law to her son after hearing the news of her husband and father-in-law's death, and of the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines. "And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel" (1 Sam. 4.21). She is understood to be referring to the Ark of the Covenant, "the most sacred religious symbol of the Hebrew people and believed to represent the

Presence of God” (“Ark”, *ODCC*, 87). God’s glory was seen by the people of Israel as a visible manifestation of his presence, hence the association between the lost ark and the departed glory. This is clearly indicated in the story of the completion of the construction of the tabernacle: “Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exod. 40.34). Bradburne uses the word “Ichabod” several times elsewhere, often as a rhyme for “God” at the end of a line. In this case he seems to be using Ichabod as a nickname for Satan, as in “Of nothing” (*BA* 20) – see note on 13 “Ichabod” (*BA* 20). See also note on 4 “parried” above.

5 *His is*. The syntax of this line lends itself to two interpretations that are simultaneously valid. It is Jesus’ duty *and* his purpose “to empty all he ever was...” (*l.* 5).

5-6 *empty...despise*. This phrase requires a fair amount of interpretation as it is not clear *what* Jesus is emptied into nor *how* such an event can be described as an emptying process. It may be understood as signifying that in his incarnation Jesus gave up his previous existence (“all he ever was”), and, as such, emptied himself of his previous form. The phrase has overtones of Jesus being poured out, an image he himself used at the Last Supper,

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matt. 26.27-28)

The Revised Standard Version uses the word “poured” instead of “shed”: “for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”. The idea that Jesus emptied himself of his divine nature is referred to as kenosis, “a term used in Christian theology...to describe the idea expressed in Phil. 2:7, according to which the pre-existent Christ ‘emptied himself,’ ‘impoverished himself,’ or laid aside his equality with God, in order to become man” (“Kenosis”, *IDB*, 3: 7). The surrounding passage in Philippians helps to clarify the traditional Christian understanding of the incarnation of Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (Phil. 2.6-7 *RSV*)

This is an idea Bradburne explores in several other poems, for example:

Emptied Himself that Hero God, for us became
 Chained to mankind as slave combined to save from sin... .
 (“Antony and Eros”, *ll.* 15-16; 69.94)

“That which men despise” (*l.* 6) alludes to Jesus’ crucifixion. Here Bradburne is drawing on two well known passages of scripture, traditionally interpreted as referring to the way Jesus was willing to become an object of shame, despised by humankind, in order to achieve their salvation.

Jesus... for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12.2)

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (Isa. 53.3)

The passage from Isaiah is frequently used in reference to Jesus’ Passion. It is, for example, included in the set readings on the Wednesday of Holy Week in the Roman Catholic Missal.

7 Honour...earned. Bradburne is not suggesting that Jesus’ actions were in any way dishonourable. Jesus “spurned honour”, in the sense of mere outward veneration, being more interested in the honour that comes from doing works of great merit. He also put aside heavenly honour by leaving his position in heaven to come to earth.

7 spurned. Scorned. Rejected with contempt or treated contemptuously (see *OED* “spurn” v.¹ 6).

8 He...skies. Cf. John 3.16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”.

Cf. also Milton’s “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity”:

That glorious form, that light unsufferable,
 And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,
 Wherewith he wont at heaven’s high council-table
 To sit the midst of trinal unity,
 He laid aside, and here with us to be,
 Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
 And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay. (*ll.* 8-14)

9-10 *Hit...hope*. Bradburne's implicit challenge to critics is for them to provide hope by actively seeking the truth, rather than to do what is most politically expedient. See note on 9 "bitter critics" for more on the identity of these critics. His instruction to them to "be the scouts of hope" is incongruous with his characterisation of them as embittered. The paradox reveals their failings, from Bradburne's point of view.

9 *fact*. The implication is that what critics write or say is at best unintentionally fictional, at worst deliberately deceitful. Cf. "Of Erudition" (*BA* 5). It is interesting that Bradburne refers to the events he has just narrated as "fact", since Christianity is based on faith in these events and faith is, by Scriptural definition, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11.1).

9 *bitter critics*. Bradburne leaves open to speculation the questions of who these critics are or what they are criticising. Perhaps he is referring to those who stand in judgement of Jesus or his followers. The word "bitter" implies that these critics are embittered by their critical nature, and also that their words are sarcastic or harsh. Such bitterness is so contrary to hilarity (see *l.* 15) that it precludes the critics Bradburne has in mind from entering into the joyous freedom offered by Jesus (as alluded to in line 15). See notes on 14-15 "Hailing...man" and 15 "to nothing bound".

10 *scouts of hope*. "Scout" has connotations of espionage, perhaps alluding to the scouts sent by Moses to spy out the Promised Land. According to the book of Numbers, only two of the scouts gave hopeful reports of what they discovered (see Num. 13-14.9). Bradburne adjures the critics to do likewise, being "scouts of hope" not despair.

11 *Hell...politics*. Bradburne's insinuates that there is a similarity between politics and hell owing to their mutual immorality. Politicians are commonly suspected of doing that which is most expedient for themselves.

12 *Heaven...Pope*. The inverted word-order of the line obscures his meaning. Rephrased it reads: "the Pope must always preach on heaven". Bradburne implies that the Pope should not concern himself with politics, since heaven is beyond its scope.

13 *Heyday*. “An exclamation denoting frolicsomeness, gaiety, surprise, wonder, etc.” (OED “hey-day, heyday” int.).

13 *fling...aground*. Flinging his gage to the ground indicates Bradburne’s challenge to do battle with anyone who would disagree with his assertions (see OED “gage” n.¹ 2). The gesture, sometimes used by a knight in defence of a lady’s honour or virtue, is employed by Bradburne with reference to Mary, his “Lady”. Cf. additional chivalric imagery in line 4. Cf. “Of Woman” l. 14 (BA 36).

14-15 *Hailing...man*. Bradburne hails the Virgin Mary, “from whence humankind receives its crown of grace”, since it is she who gave birth to Jesus, the source of grace. Bradburne alludes to the “Ave Maria” or “Hail Mary”, one of the most commonly said prayers amongst Roman Catholics, which begins “Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus” (Daily Missal 25). Cf. Luke 1.28: “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women”.

15 *Hilariously*. The word “hilariously” lends itself to multiple interpretations. In one sense, it is hilarious (ridiculous) that man should be given such grace, being as unworthy as he is. In another sense this experience of grace makes one hilarious – full of mirth. Primarily, those who are bound to God find themselves light-hearted and cheerful, because they have been freed by His grace.

15 *to nothing bound*. This phrase lends itself to multiple interpretations owing to Bradburne’s play on “nothing” and “bound”. He is punning on the title “Of No Thing” and using “bound” in the sense of being restricted and of being headed in a certain direction. He states that by God’s grace, expressed in Jesus’ sacrifice, man is set free, no longer restricted by anything. At the same time, he implies that those who do not accept God’s grace are bound to nothing – headed for nothingness, as well as shackled or enslaved by it. Bradburne is simultaneously punning on the title since in being bound to God man is bound to no mere “thing”. “Bound” can also be understood in two ways here:

either in the sense of being restricted by nothing or no thing, or of being destined for or headed in a certain direction.

[10] Of Education

“Of Education” is dated 20 February 1970. The subject-matter of the poem echoes “Of Erudition” (BA 5), dated 19 February 1970. In “Of Education”, Bradburne draws a distinction between education and academe. He claims that *true* education is not about the acquisition of knowledge, but about developing a generosity of spirit. He undermines the glory of earthly accolades by shifting his perspective in the closing couplet to God’s achievements. The implied suggestion is for people to educate themselves in that which is of eternal significance rather than become caught up in “the getting of diplomas and degrees” (l. 9). Bradburne’s own life as a mystic is testimony to the type of learning he most valued, being himself greatly influenced by *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which advises the contemplative to reach out to God in a state of intellectual darkness or “cloud of unknowing” (see p. 43). The mystic way rejects finding security in one’s intellectual prowess.

3 *more generous, less mean.* That which makes people more generous and less mean. Alternatively, that which makes more people generous and fewer people mean.

5-8 *Someone...name.* Someone born into great wealth will not achieve true fame unless he frees himself from the trap of relying on his privileged position and makes a name for himself independently. The connection between this stanza and the topic of education is not explicit, but Bradburne may be implying that wealth is no substitute for education.

7 *exaltation...birth.* Lofty or elevated position owing to the family into which he is born.

8 *fetters...name.* His family name can be a source of entrapment if it succeeds in binding him to the “goods of earth”, thereby giving him a false sense of his own importance.

9-10 *The...power.* Tertiary education puts too great a value on the power of concentration to achieve purely intellectual endeavours.

11-12 *Under...tower.* The scholars wear “hoods of academic ease”, suggestive of their vanity and self-satisfaction. Their practice of wearing hoods, in order to gain public respect, seems ridiculous when compared with the natural nobility, authority and power a lion possesses. Bradburne shows up these trimmings by comically imagining a lion’s head in such an outfit. He may also be playing on the word “lionize”, which is to “treat (a person) as a ‘lion’ or celebrity; to make a ‘lion’ of” (*OED* “lionize” v. 4).

11 *hoods.* “Hood” refers to the “hoodlike garment worn over an academic gown, indicating its wearer’s degree and university” (*Collins* “hood” n. 5), but Bradburne also uses the word with strong overtones of being “hooded” – disguised or hidden.

13-14 *On...got.* The final couplet, with its awkward, inverted word-order, may be rephrased: “bright God did not get his divine right to his kingdom by depending on the might and main of his brain”. In other words, God does not depend on brain power to illustrate what is rightfully his; there is no need to do so for his power is unquestionable. (His is not merely the power of intelligence, but the power of love and self-sacrifice.) “Bright” may be understood as “intelligent” or as “glorious”.

13 *might...brain.* Greatest possible brain power. See *OED* “might and main”: “utmost or greatest possible power or strength” (*OED* “might” n.¹ 7a).

14 *Divinest...kingdom.* A playful adaptation of the “divine right of kings”, a concept that legitimate kings are appointed by God and answerable only to him. God, on the other hand, is not answerable to any higher power, and has a divine right to his kingdom, or, as Bradburne phrases it, a “divinest right of kingdom”.

[11] Of Solitude

“Of Solitude” is dated 20 February 1970. Using the examples of solitude set by the desert fathers and by Jesus, Bradburne argues for the need of a temporary withdrawal from society in order to grow in spiritual health. Bradburne himself felt this desire very strongly in his personal life (as demonstrated in the Biography outlined earlier). He again relates his personal need for “some solitude” in “Of Misanthropy” (BA 42).

The acrostic for this sonnet reads: SAPIENTIA MARIA. The conjunction of *sapientia*, Latin for wisdom, and *Maria*, Mary, does not make syntactic sense, but it might be interpreted as the “wisdom of Mary”. *Sapientia* may simply indicate Bradburne’s feeling that some solitude is wise and necessary to a healthy existence. In the context of the poem, the phrase can be understood in relation to the story of Jesus in the house of Mary and Martha, where Jesus acknowledges Mary as being in some sense wiser than her sister for choosing to sit at Jesus’ feet rather than busy herself with everyday chores – see note on 1 “needful”.

1 *Some solitude*. Bradburne does not advocate a life of solitude to the exclusion of all else here, but *some* solitude in balance with the activities of life.

1 *needful*. Cf. Luke 10.41-42:

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

In this passage, Jesus advocates a withdrawal from busyness for a time, commending Mary for choosing the contemplative way rather than the active life. This passage is a primary text in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, used to justify and explain the life of the contemplative (see ch. 17). Bradburne is drawing on a similar idea here, recognising the need for temporary withdrawal from the world, since excessive activity can become a distraction from one’s spiritual life.

2 *As...food*. Solitude is necessary for spiritual healing or restoration and for growth.

2 *physic*. Medicine.

3 *dole*. “That which is distributed or doled out; especially a gift of food or money made in charity... ; the popular name for the various kinds of weekly payments made from national and local funds to the unemployed since the war of 1914-18” (*OED* “dole” n.¹ 6a). Bradburne claims that while some solitude is healthy there are those who “abuse” (l. 4) it. He may have in mind people who resort to solitude when melancholic, thereby feeding their melancholy.

4 *rude*. Crude, uncivilised or coarse.

5-7 *Entered...desert*. This may be interpreted as: “Christianity made its impact only through the fathers of the desert; despite their behaviour having appeared foolish, they were responsible for giving Christianity real power in its early days”.

Their life represented a total commitment to God, an undertaking that made them strangers on earth... . As the new holy men of the Christian age, they became recognized sources of divine power and authority. They were instrumental in the spread of Christianity, particularly in the countryside.

(“Monasticism”, *EEC*, 1: 774)

5 *infant Christendom*. Early Christianity. Christendom here probably refers to “Christians collectively; the church” (*OED* “Christendom” 3a).

6 *seeming fools*. The behaviour of the desert fathers appeared foolish in the eyes of the world, but they were “fools for Christ’s sake” (1 Cor. 4.10). Bradburne himself, who was seen as mad in the eyes of the world, sought to follow God’s wisdom and not the ways of the world, as instructed in 1 Cor. 3.18-20:

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

7 *fathers...desert*. The desert fathers were

the hermits and cenobites of Egypt, c. 250 to 500, who through their way of life and spiritual teachings developed the institution of monasticism... . From the end of the 3rd century, increasing numbers of Fathers, many of them simple Coptic peasants, drew thousands to permanent discipleship in their desert retreats through the force of their single-minded search for God and the freshness and vigor of their teachings.

(“Desert Fathers”, *NCE*, 4: 793)

Their desire for solitude was met in the remote, expansive landscape of the desert, as Bradburne's was in various remote locations in his life.

7 *sum*. The "essence", as in "sum and substance" (*OED* "sum" n.¹ 11), or "the ultimate end or goal" (*op. cit.* 13a).

8 *hidden lives*. "Hidden" here refers both to the fact that the desert fathers hid themselves from the public eye by choosing to live in the desert, and also to their inner spiritual life, which was hidden to all human eyes.

8 "*Silence rules*". Bradburne refers to the fact that many monks lived by a rule of silence. In rejecting the values of the secular world, these monks asserted a lifestyle of separation from the world, in which silence "ruled", as opposed to the busy activity of cities. See p. 16.

9 *zenith*. Figuratively, the "Highest point or state, culmination, climax, acme" (*OED* "zenith" 3).

9 *At...thing*. Jesus' forty days in the wilderness (see Matt. 4.1, Luke 4.1) is portrayed by Bradburne as the ultimate endorsement for the kind of solitude the monks sought. Indeed, imitation of Jesus informed the development of monasticism as "withdrawal into the desert became the way, accessible to anyone, to imitate Christ" ("Desert", *EEC*, 1: 230). Like Jesus, the monks found themselves confronted by temptations in the desert.

10-11 *Messiah...temptation*. Bradburne refers to one of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness.

And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. (Luke 4.5-8)

10 *alone*. Jesus is alone in his temptation in that he is unaccompanied, but also alone in the sense of being unique, since Christians believe him to be the only Son of God. Since he is at the “zenith” he is necessarily alone and unique.

11-12 *being...count*. Jesus, with his authority as King, and in a fittingly royal manner, is able to cast off every temptation Satan puts in his path.

13-14 *In...alloy*. A single psalm, said in solitude, whether in sorrow or in joy, has the power to drive away that which would debase, diminish or impair the soul’s communication with God.

14 *alloy*. Used figuratively to denote “anything that detracts from, impairs, or sullies” (see *OED* “alloy” 7); adulteration.

[12] **Of Angels and of Birds**

“Of Angels and of Birds” is dated 20 February 1970. Bradburne begins the poem stating that angels are not imaginary things, and adding that people should engage with them, albeit only imaginatively. He sees the angels as playfully participating in such an engagement. To illustrate the power and value of imaginative thought, Bradburne then requires readers to use their imagination throughout the rest of the poem. He describes a realm that can only be seen imaginatively and yet influences humankind’s day-to-day existence (cf. *l.* 8). Bradburne uses birds in the poem to exemplify tangible reflections of the divine realm that exist in the material world. Their presence aids him in seeing and hearing angels with his imagination. He describes this process as a “delightful vision” that he invites readers to enact while reading the poem and in their own lives. The ability to see at once imaginatively and rightly is echoed in Bradburne’s word choice throughout (see note on 5 “Lo and behold”). The subject matter of the sonnet follows the two key words in the acrostic (ANGELS AND BIRDS) in roughly two sections. The discussion on angels corresponds with the acrostic in the first part (ANGELS), while Bradburne

focuses on birds in the second part (with an acrostic of BIRDS). This shift forms a kind of volta in the middle of a Shakespearean-style sonnet.

1-4 *Angels...sport*. These lines may be roughly paraphrased as: “Angels are not figments of our imagination, but to know or understand them we need to enter into imaginative thought, a process which should be delightful and playful. When we do this we find that angels themselves assist us in this playful, imaginative thinking about them”.

2 *Needs must*. “It is necessary or unavoidable” (*OED* “needs” adv. 3b).

2 *thereon*. On or upon it or them.

3 *gadding*. Gallivanting; going in search of pleasure, especially in an aimless manner (see *Collins* “gad¹” vb. 1). This personification of imaginative thought indicates that it does not progress in a linear or logical, rational fashion, and that it is not static, but instead moves erratically, even whimsically.

4 *abet and aid*. A reversal of the common phrase, “aid and abet”, meaning “to assist or encourage [someone], especially in crime or wrongdoing” (*Collins* “abet” vb.). Although the phrase is used primarily to refer to criminal activity, here it is probably intended jokingly as a pleasant conspiracy. Since Bradburne is clearly promoting the use of imaginative thought, he is probably using this phrase ironically, referring to angels encouraging the “crime” of subverting the rational logical order with the imagination (or using the imagination in defiance of reason).

4 *sport*. Fun. Cf. “Of Possession” l. 8 (*BA* 8).

5 *Lo and behold*. Bradburne’s deictic instruction is to behold that which is normally invisible. The ability to *see* is a recurrent theme in this poem, suggested by “imaginative thought” (l. 2), “divine” (l. 9), “glimpses” (l. 10), “discern” (l. 13), “sight” (l. 14) and “vision” (l. 14). Bradburne calls readers to see the realities beyond the physical with their imaginative or spiritual eyes.

5-6 Arches...Angels. Bradburne is punning on “Arches”, referring colloquially to three Arch-angels: Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, pictured standing like arches. Archangels, angels of the highest rank, are traditionally understood to be messengers from God. Since they mediate between the divine and human, the image of them standing as arches between the two realms is a useful one. The gap between God and humankind might be traversed via such an arch. In addition, Bradburne’s description of them standing as arches presents them in concrete terms, in accordance with his claim that they are not “imaginary things” (l. 1).

6-7 principally...Raphael. Although there are traditionally seven archangels, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael are the three principal ones and the only three mentioned in canonical Scripture: Michael in Dan. 10.13, 12.1, Jude 1.9, Rev. 12.7; Gabriel in Dan. 8.16, 9.21, 10.5-6, Luke 1.19, 26; and Raphael in the Apocryphal book of Tobias 3-12.

8 Nor...me. The archangels, pictured fleetingly in line 6 as fixed standing arches, also walk alongside human beings. Both images reveal an aspect of man’s relation to these heavenly beings, the latter indicating their supportive role.

9-12 Divine...psalm. Often while I sit by moonlight aloft among the birds, those calming and peaceful glimpses of angelic charm, I interpret (read) the hooting sounds of the owls as the psalm “Holy, holy, holy” (the trisagion. See note on 12 “trisagion’s their psalm”).

9 Divine. Discern or perceive with the imaginative eye. Bradburne interprets the hooting of owls imaginatively as “Holy, holy, holy”. The word “divine”, although used as a verb in this context, also suggests other shades of meaning applicable to this experience, such as “heavenly” and “sacred”. Cf. note on 5 “Lo and behold”.

9 aloft...birds. It is possible that Bradburne is picturing being on top of Chigona Hill, where he enjoyed watching the birds playing in the updrafts during the day and often sat at night as well. See p. 35.

10 Becalming. “Calming, tranquillising, soothing” (*OED* “becalming” ppl.a.).

10 *angelic charm*. “Charm” may be interpreted here as delight or as enchantment (alluding to the magical nature of supernatural beings). “[C]harm” might also be used to refer to “the blended singing or noise of many birds” (see *OED* “charm” n.² 1), but this meaning may not have been known to Bradburne. His description of the birds as angelic is not merely an expression of their beauty or their shape (which in the dark would look very similar to the silhouette of an angel). Like the angels Isaiah sees around God’s throne, these owls declare “Holy, holy, holy (is the Lord God Almighty)”. See note on 12 “*trisagion*’s their psalm”. To Bradburne’s imaginative eye, they are also angelic in that they bring him this message from God; see note on 5-6 “Arches...Angels”.

12 *trisagion*’s their psalm. *Trisagion* (literally, thrice holy) is commonly used to describe the *Sanctus* in the Roman Catholic Mass; it is in this sense that Bradburne is using it here. The end of the Preface leading into the *Sanctus* runs:

And therefore with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominations, and with all the hosts of the heavenly army we sing a hymn to Thy glory, evermore saying... . (*Daily Missal* 879)

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts!
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory!
Hosanna in the highest! (*op. cit.* 935)

The *Sanctus* is an adaptation of Isaiah 6.3, where the prophet has a vision of angels above the throne of God crying to one another “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory”. Cf. Rev. 4.8. Bradburne’s interpretation of the owls’ hooting - normally considered ominous and presaging death - as “Holy, holy, holy” is part of his own playfulness, his imaginative thought gadding gaily and being inspired by the angels (see *ll.* 1-4). He is using “psalm” in the more general sense of a sacred song or hymn (see *OED* “psalm” n. 1).

13-14 *Discern...vision*. The sight of the birds is a vision, filled with delight, one that is bright, clear, exact and full of life. It may be likened to Isaiah’s vision which enlightens the seer (see Isa. 6.3).

13 *Discern*. This may be read either as an imperative (“Notice...”) or as the grammatical subject of “I” in line 9.

13 *quickness*. Liveliness, readiness, often of sight or of the mind (see *OED* “quickness” 3).

14 *bard's*. The word “bard” is most commonly used in reference to a poet or singer. Bradburne, being both musician and poet, often refers to himself as a bard. He often plays around with this word, signing himself “John Bardburn” on a number of occasions. Elsewhere he also uses the word in reference to other poets, most especially William Shakespeare, whom he, like many others, calls the “Bard of Avon” or “Swan of Avon”. He enjoys the similarities, in sound and meaning, of “bird” and “bard”, sometimes conflating them into “bardbird” (“Posthorn”, *l.* 1; 71.18) to draw attention to the parallels.

[13] **Of Intuition**

“Of Intuition” is dated 20 February 1970. Throughout “Of Intuition”, there is an interplay between religious and spiritual love, between the soul and God, and romantic or sexual love between men and women (see *ll.* 3-4 and 13-14). This is not unusual for religious poets, who often use romantic love as a metaphor for spiritual love. A prime example of this is in John Donne’s “Batter my heart, three person’d God” (“Holy Sonnet 14”). It is often unclear whether Bradburne is referring to human lovers or to human interaction with God. Herein lies the central ambiguity that informs the poem and is never fully resolved. What might otherwise have been thought of as exclusively spiritual or carnal experiences of love are described as comparable to one another. The concept of “love at first sight”, for example, traditionally thought of as an exclusively romantic, erotic experience, is applied to the spiritual realm.

1 *Love...intuition*. Bradburne equates love at first sight with intuition, claiming that the one is a manifestation of the other. Intuitive experiences occur when vision and knowledge merge, beyond reason or language. Bradburne claims that the same is true of love at first sight, which surpasses logic and works like lightning (*l.* 6). The opening lines, upon a first reading of the poem, seem to refer to love at first sight in the context of

a human ideal of romantic love. However, in the broader context of the poem, Bradburne is simultaneously using the phrase in a spiritual context to describe an ideal intuitive experience of love at first sight between the human soul and God. Cf. note on 6 “Love’s...nature”. He develops the idea until, in the poem’s conclusion, he returns to an instance of human romantic love at first sight. See note on 13-14 “Naught...pre-mated”.

1 *this*. “[T]his” may refer to either “Love at first sight” or to “intuition”, but since Bradburne claims that “Love at first sight *is* intuition” (my emphasis), the ambiguity is inconsequential.

2 *walls...time*. Bradburne’s mixed metaphor here creates a complex image. The idea of walls created by or inherent within the wheels of time suggests that time itself is restrictive and constraining. In the sense that the wheels of time move steadily, they are indeed restrictive since they cannot be stopped, turned back or hastened. The fact that they are always turning is also indicative of the mutability of life, since nothing is permanent or eternal. Bradburne implies that the experience of love at first sight, which he sees as an experience of intuition, has the power to break through time and achieve timelessness. By breaking through the wheels of time, which slow down “Love’s eternal lightning nature” (l. 6), perhaps time is accelerated. Cf. note on 5 “gearing down”.

3 *Wildly*. This word highlights the passion, excitement and lack of restraint of love at first sight. Bradburne’s diction (seen especially in “breaks through” (l. 2), “wildly” (l. 3), “intensity” (l. 3), “lightning” (l. 6) and “generated” (l. 10)) stresses the enormous energy, erotic overtones, and uncontrollability of love at first sight. Cf. note on 6 “Love’s...nature”.

3-4 *that...sublime*. Eternal unity and intimacy is implicit in a moment of intensity.

3 *eternal kiss*. This oxymoron captures the power of love at first sight, as it is able to unite that which is temporal with that which is eternal. It is an expression of the eternal union created by such love, and of its intimacy. Cf. l. 14.

5 *gearing down*. The purpose of the wheels of time is to slow down “Love’s...lightning nature” (l. 6). Bradburne expands this image by introducing gears, which transfer power or momentum to the wheels. Thus, gearing down the lightning fast movement of love denotes a tighter control being placed on it, causing it to slow down.

6 *Love’s...nature*. By personifying love, Bradburne indicates that the type of intuitive experience he is concerned with here is of a divine nature. It takes place between the soul and God, who is the embodiment of Love itself. This nature of Love is described as “eternal lightning”, an oxymoron signifying its power, intensity and brilliance. Bradburne, however, invites a further comparison to be made between lightning and intuition. Whereas lightning illuminates the *sky* swiftly and briefly, the experience of Love at first sight enlightens *spiritually*, giving the soul a foretaste, “in intensity sublime”, of the crown of life to be won through strife on earth. Cf. note on 3 “eternal kiss”.

7-8 *crown...life*. The crown of everlasting life is the biblical promise to the faithful followers of Jesus Christ:

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. (Jas. 1.12)

...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (Rev. 2.10)

The crown symbolically replaces the wheel in the poem, as the promise of everlasting life overcomes the constraints of time.

8 *below*. “Below” indicates life on earth, implying that everlasting life is found somewhere *above* this, in the heavenly realm. The intuitive experience Bradburne is describing breaks through the barrier between the two realms, between the seen and the unseen; cf. notes on 3 “eternal kiss” and 7-8 “crown...life”.

11-12 *thrice...re-cast*. The Romeo and Juliet experience, an ideal of romantic love-at-first-sight, is very rare. Few people are cast into such parts.

11 *First Sight*. The capitalisation of this phrase here, where Bradburne is focusing on romantic love, as opposed to in line 1, where he focuses more on spiritual love, again blurs the distinction between the two, adding a divine aspect to romantic love, and an earthly metaphor for spiritual love. In both cases, such love changes the lovers' vision and causes some kind of enlightenment.

13-14 *Naught...pre-mated*. Since love at first sight is an intuitive experience, involving perception and understanding beyond reason, there is no need for language in that moment. Everything is communicated by the eyes.

14 *pre-mated*. The moment when the lovers' eyes meet is prior to physical union but, as explained in the opening lines, it surpasses physicality. It transcends the temporal and unites two lovers in an eternal embrace – in what Bradburne calls the “eternal kiss” (l. 3).

[14] **Of Envy**

“Of Envy” is dated 20 February 1970. In it, Bradburne meditates on the nature and effect of envy, traditionally one of the seven deadly (or “cardinal”) sins. Although his observations are applicable to envy of spiritual gifts, Bradburne’s illustrations focus primarily on envy of earthly goods (such as “neighbour’s goods” (l. 5) and “acres broad” (l. 12)). He states that displeasure at the good fortune of another estranges people, causing the entrapment of both the envious person and those whom they envy. Bradburne accentuates the spiritual struggle between envy and charity through his use of war imagery (“warfare” (l. 7), “fortress” (l. 9), “siege” (l. 10)). According to Bradburne, the battle against the pride and self-love from which envy springs is to be won through an attitude of good will “towards both God and man” (l. 11) and of gratitude for everything (life itself) that has been “received from Christ” (l. 14). This sonnet has a curious rhyme scheme of *abbacdcdefegg*, unique among the *Assays*, but similar in its variation to that used in “Des Histoires” (*ababdcdeffegg*).

1-4 To envy...replies. Bradburne sees God's gifts as being deliberately apportioned in varying amounts, like the master in the parable of the talents who entrusts a different number of talents to each of his servants. See Matt. 25.14-30 and Luke 12.48. The parable makes the subtle point that the talents belong to the master (or, by extension, to God – appropriately called the “Liege” (l. 12)) who distributes them as he pleases and not according to the servant's merit. Likewise, Bradburne demonstrates that God's allotment of gifts to his servants is by his grace and for a purpose. His “plan” (l. 3) is to save their souls if they use their gifts well, and to ultimately say to them “enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt 25.21). Since there is a divine plan behind the giving of such gifts, Bradburne deduces that envy is, in effect, a desire to redistribute what God sees fit to allocate to each, and thus a subtle scorning of His wisdom.

2 allotment. The word “allotment” denotes that the way in which God distributes gifts does not allow the recipients a choice in what they are apportioned (see *OED* “allot” v. 1,2). It also indicates that the gifts are given for a particular purpose (*op. cit.* 3). Cf. Rom 12.4-8, 1 Cor. 12.11, Eph 4.7.

3 but a plan. With no intention other than (to save the recipient's soul).

4 if...replies. If, having used his gifts well, he can give a good account of how he has used them, like the first two servants in the parable of the talents (see Matt. 25.14-30). What each servant does with his talent reveals the measure of his understanding of the master (or, by analogy, God).

5-6 The...in. Bradburne notes that envying “your neighbour's goods” compels them to fence their property in to protect their possessions from being stolen or damaged. He also implies that the person who envies their neighbour, metaphorically fences them in – the fence being emblematic of the separation between the two. This is in direct opposition to Jesus' summary of the Ten Commandments, in which he stated that the second greatest commandment is to “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 22.39). Envy estranges where love builds up and unites.

5 neighbour's. The word "neighbour", as Bradburne uses it, is not limited to a person who lives next door to or nearby another, but has a broader meaning (in the general Christian sense) of a fellow human. Cf. Luke 10.29-37.

7-8 They...win. Shifting the focus briefly to the person whose goods are envied, Bradburne states that those who find themselves at war with their neighbour's jealousy (or attacked by their neighbour's jealousy) will seldom win if they have no defence. They need to ensure that they are never de-fence-less (a typical Bradburnian pun on "fence" (*l.* 6) and "defenceless" (*l.* 7)), literally without some kind of fence with which to protect themselves. Alternatively, these lines may be interpreted as meaning that envious people render themselves defenceless in spiritual warfare by becoming jealous of their neighbours. Such people will not win the battle for their souls, which are "at siege" (*l.* 10), or under attack from their own envy. Bradburne does not distinguish between envy and jealousy in the poem.

10 set...siege?. Spiritually, the restrictive effect of envy is twofold. Not only does it fence in the neighbour who is envied (see note on 5-6 "The...in"), but it causes the envious individual's soul to become besieged, figuratively hemmed in on all sides by jealousy. Envy can cause a soul to become cut off from the outside world, alienated and estranged, like a town or castle that is besieged (see *OED* "siege" n. 6a). If the siege is successful and envy wins it will take over and consume the soul.

11-12 Having...Liege. Answering his own question (see *ll.* 9-10), Bradburne finds a fortress in "good will", since it is able to counter envy (ill will), curbing jealousy and inspiring praise. Armed with good will and the knowledge that God, the "Liege", is the one who actually owns the broad acres, the previously envious person is able to enjoy the sight of his neighbour's wealth. Instead of coveting God's gifts, he is then able to praise the Giver himself ("hail their Liege").

12 Liege. A direct reference to Christ, the liege lord. This resonates with the role of the master in the parable of the talents (see note on 1-4 "To envy...replies"). The realisation that Jesus is the liege lord over the broad acres, the owner of the land to whom loyalty

and service are owed, liberates individuals because it changes their perspective and increases their understanding of God's purposes. It can change their reaction from envy of the gift (be it a neighbour's fields or any other kind of wealth) to praise of the giver of all gifts. (In "Mantra on Carmel" (79.15) Bradburne explicitly refers to "Christ The Liege/Lord" (ll. 11-12).)

14 *Christ our Brother*. Having emphasised his position as master or liege (see ll. 1-4, 11-12), Bradburne closes by drawing attention to the fact that Jesus does not behave towards his servants like a distant lord, but treats them as brothers. Although he has all authority, bestowing gifts as and when he pleases (illustrated in the rhetorical question: "what hast thou.../That has not been received from Christ...?" (ll. 13-14)), he gives them in brotherly love. Jesus is cited as the perfect example of what it means to be a true neighbour.

[15] **Of Popularity**

"Of Popularity" is dated 21 February 1970. In this sonnet, Bradburne characterises popularity as fraudulent, describing it as no more than the abdominal wind of a bloated cow. Despite the value accorded it by society in general, he proceeds to describe popularity as a "brute" (l. 5) and a "beast" (l. 11) and therefore beneath human dignity. His scorn for its value is evident when he extends the metaphor to describe the cure for the cow's obscene inflatedness: a mere pin-prick. The sonnet itself acts as a sort of pin-prick, consistently mocking popularity and showing it up for what Bradburne believes it to be. Key characteristics of popularity that he points out are pride and gluttony (notably two of the seven deadly sins) (cf. "Of Envy" (BA 14)). His deliberate use of the obstruent hissing and popping consonants "f" ("fraud", "fatted", "flanks for fodder", "field", "falls", "flabby", "fraught"), "p" ("puffed", "profitable", "prick", "pin/Pricking", "prosper", "pride") and "b" ("bursting", "battens", "broad", "brute", "bulk", "blubber", "beast") throughout the poem, lends it an overall tone of disgust.

1 *puffed up fraud*. Popularity is fraudulent, deceiving people into believing that attaining the admiration or favour of the general public is a significant achievement. Those who attach value or credibility to their popularity become figuratively puffed up, inflated with their own self-importance.

1-2 *fatted...fodder*. Bradburne compares popularity to a fatted cow that continues gorging itself out of gluttony until it is literally in danger of bursting, a condition well known to stock farmers whose cattle have strayed into, for example, fields of green lucerne. The metaphor reveals popularity's insatiable appetite (for more admiration and praise – its "fodder"). Bradburne's choice of the unusual word "fatted" calls to mind the parable of the Prodigal Son, where the father orders the slaughter of the "fatted calf" (Luke 15.23) – an animal raised for no other purpose than to be killed and eaten.

3 *battens*. To grow fat, feed abundantly, thrive, especially at the expense of someone else (see *OED* "batten" v.¹ 1c).

3-4 *no...habitat*. The phrase "no matter how broad" is made to apply to the antecedent noun "field" and also to the following pronoun "it". The implication is that the popularity-cow is never content with its environment, always seeking more and greater adulation. Irrespective of either the extent of the field (its "habitat") or of the quantity of fodder already consumed, its desire is insatiable.

5 *treatment*. The procedure Bradburne goes on to describe, of pricking the cow so that its "windy bulk" (l. 7) subsides, is similar to that used on cattle suffering from bloat, a disease characterised by a distended rumen due to an accumulation of gases in the stomach (see *OED* "bloat" n. 1b). The disease is often caused by the excessive ingestion of green grass. In life-threatening cases, it is sometimes treated by a rumen puncture operation where the rumen is punctured with a sharp object to release the gases (Miller & West, "Bloat", ll. 96-97). In this case, Bradburne sees the cow as having been killed by its overindulgence; the carcass, when stripped of its hide, is insubstantial. The implication is that popularity-seekers are simply puffed up with hot air or gas, not with anything of real substance, and that the condition may prove fatal if not treated early.

6-12 *quickly will...through*. Bradburne suggests that the illusion of importance popularity brings may be deflated by something as small as a pin-prick. The humour (“you will simply hoot/With laughter” (ll. 7-8)) lies in the contrast between appearances and reality. The cow *looks* hefty or robust, and therefore valuable, but when examined more closely (“Just look inside” (l. 9)) it is in actual fact full (“swelled...out” (l. 10)) of fat (“flabby blubber” (l. 10)), not flesh. As in a rumen-puncture operation, where the suddenly released gas hisses from the cow like air from a deflating balloon, popularity, though it may appear significant or substantial, may easily and humorously be deflated. Bradburne’s references to the cow’s “thinness” (l. 12) (“not thick of skin” (l. 8)) highlights the hypersensitivity of popularity-seekers to criticism.

8 *hide*. Literally, the skin of the cow; figuratively, the covering that popularity affords or behind which the person who trusts in his own popularity hides.

12 *lout*. A boorish or oafish person; a lazy good-for-nothing whose behaviour is unacceptable. The word notes a shift away from the cow metaphor to describing popularity in human terms.

14 *fraught with pride*. “Heavily laden” or “burdened down” with pride. However, since pride has no substance or weight, the idea of someone being fraught with it is as ludicrous as the condition of the person being described.

14 *whined*. Bradburne is probably referring to the “lout” (l. 12) whining at being found out, which would serve to highlight his pathetic nature, but he is also punning on “wind”, though he probably avoided that word as an imperfect rhyme for “find”. However, a person listening to the poem being read might easily interpret “whined” as “wind”. Bradburne may have in mind an older version of the word such as “whynde” or “winde” (see *OED* “wind” n.¹ spellings) since he delighted in archaic words and in early English poetry (see pp. 56-57).

[16] Of Purgatory

“Of Purgatory” is dated 21 February 1970. In the light of the great suffering of the lepers among whom Bradburne worked at Mutemwa and whose earthly existence was indeed purgatorial, he anticipates the time when they will be delivered from pain. In describing the beauty of the natural surroundings as a foretaste of heaven itself, he provides hope amidst their despondency. The landscape symbolically moves onwards and upward (the wilderness “rolls” (l. 7), the knolls “rise” (l. 7), the hills “lift up” (l. 8) their heads), reaching towards this state of grace. An even greater source of hope and inspiration, he argues, is the fact that God himself dwells amongst the lepers, comforting them with his presence (expressed in music) until the day when he will take them unto himself (“lead them forth” (l. 14)). Bradburne describes God’s special relationship with these outcast people, in whom he “delights” (l. 10). Unlike most of his sonnets, which follow the Shakespearean tradition of a discrete concluding rhyming couplet, Bradburne’s rhetorical structure is hybridised here. After the volta in line 9 (“but”) he allows his thought to run on into the middle of line 14, from where he neatly ends the sonnet with five words: “grow mealies, bees are humming”.

1 *Purgatory*.

According to the teaching of the Church, the state, place, or condition in the next world, which will continue until the last judgment, where the souls of those who die in the state of grace, but not yet free from all imperfection, make expiation for unforgiven venial sins or for the temporal punishment due to venial and mortal sins that have already been forgiven and, by so doing, are purified before they enter heaven. (“Purgatory”, *NCE*, 11: 1034)

Bradburne uses the term to describe the state of temporary suffering in which the lepers find themselves. The implication is that their physical suffering helps to purge them of their sins, cleansing them so that at the end they “shall come forth as gold” (Job 23.10). Cf. 1 Pet. 1.6-7. In “Colloquy”, Bradburne voices his understanding of purgatory as an *earthly* temporary trial period, through the assumed voice of one of Mutemwa’s blind lepers, Zachery:

‘The lord our Love Divine
Asks but a fleeting purgatory since
We leper beggars die princess or prince’. (ll. 22-24; 72.33)

2 avenue. The avenue of jacaranda trees that lines the dust road leading into Mutemwa. At the time of composition, Bradburne was living in an old butcher-shop near the leprosy settlement. See p. 34.

3 It. Ambivalent, since it refers both to Mutemwa and to Purgatory, which are identified with each other in the poem.

3 place for inspiration. The inspiration Bradburne gains from his surroundings is both spiritual and poetic. In “Greensleeves”, he describes the same avenue as follows:

Six hundred yards of silvan glory, ode
To jacarandas all along the road.

They hold us like a triumph-arch
Close to the wings of hope,
A vista on the homeward march
To heaven... . (ll. 5-10; 70.46)

3 bards. A reference in which he includes himself – see note on 14 “bard’s” in “Of Angels and of Birds” (BA 12).

5-9 On...panorama. A description of the landscape surrounding Mutemwa. The avenue of jacaranda trees Bradburne describes lies in an open plain, sparsely covered with trees and shrubs. Out of the plain rise whaleback granite hills, Chigona Hill being the closest one to the village.

5-6 wide...despond. The beauty and vastness of the expansive wilderness surrounding Mutemwa inspires Bradburne to liken it to heaven. It offers a vision of hope to the lepers in the village because, unlike their present purgatorial reality, it seems to spread beyond despondency. Its expansiveness also contrasts with the lepers’ confinement within the settlement.

6 despond. Hopelessness; archaic for “the act of desponding; despondency” (OED “despond” n.). The word calls to mind the “Slough of Despond” (Bunyan 148) into which Christian falls in John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

6 *conned...afar*. Wide heaven is known and visible both from nearby and from looking outwards and upwards. It is revealed in the rolling wilderness, the low bushy hills and in the higher granite hilltops, where nothing obstructs the view.

6 *conned*. Known (see *OED* “con” v.¹ 3).

7 *bosky knolls*. Low, bushy hills.

7-8 *sheer...up*. Rephrased, this might read: “grave granite hills lift up [their] sheer heads”.

8-9 *there's...panorama*. Nothing detracts from (“mars”) the vastness and magnificence of this panorama.

10 *Great Pan*. There are several instances in his verse where Bradburne refers to Jesus as Pan, “the Greek god of shepherds and of flocks” (“Pan”, *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, 406). “He was quite early associated with Greek... ‘the all’, and in Roman times came to be seen as a universal god, or god of Nature” (*OED* “Pan” n.³ 1). Bradburne draws on these two similarities in his comparison – Jesus the ultimate Shepherd of humankind and the God immanent in Nature. Bradburne is likely to have encountered a similar comparison between the two in Milton’s “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity”:

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row;
Full little thought they than
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with them below... . (ll. 85-90)

10 *pipe*. In Greek mythology, Pan is commonly depicted playing the reed pipe – which he is credited with inventing – and thereby inspiring and arousing immensely powerful emotions, including “panic” fear. Similarly, Bradburne often describes Pan (metaphorically Jesus) piping, as in “Of Deicide” ll. 3-4 (*BA* 44) and “Of Glory” l. 8 (*BA* 47). The music, in this case, is an inspiration to the lepers in their present suffering –

Jesus gives them hope and comfort by keeping them in “vibrant expectation” (l. 13) of his Second Coming.

11 *His own peculiars.* Bradburne describes the lepers as God’s own “peculiar”, meaning that they are his special, chosen, distinctive people (“His leper people” (l. 12)), who are separate from ordinary people. “Peculiar” in this sense is usually preceded by a possessive pronoun, as in “my own peculiar” (see *OED* “peculiar” a. 1). Here the lepers belong to God. They are also “peculiar” in that they appear odd due to their deformities (*op. cit.* 4a), but this secondary meaning serves only to enhance the special nature of their relationship with God. In addition, Bradburne may be alluding to the lepers of Mutemwa as “peculiar” in the ecclesiastical sense: “a parish or church exempt from the jurisdiction of the ordinary or bishop in whose diocese it lies” (*OED* “peculiar” n. 5a), since they could be considered a separate church falling solely under Jesus’ jurisdiction.

11 *hut.* At this time most of the lepers in Mutemwa lived in a hut of their own. This was a small free-standing single brick room with a tin roof. The huts were dotted around the enclosure. Bradburne sees each hut as potentially a hive of activity, vibrant with expectation, like a colony of bees. Cf. “Of a Sunday in Lent” ll. 5-8 (*BA* 27).

12 *ripe.* Jesus holds the lepers in readiness, “ripe” for “the harvest”, a time when he will gather his faithful people into the Kingdom of God: see Mark 4.26-29.

13-14 *His...forth.* The Second Coming of Jesus; believed to be a time when he will return to earth to lead his people into heaven, which is characterised in the book of Revelation as a place where “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21.4). Cf. note on 12 “ripe”. Bradburne’s words are also evocative of the triumphal procession described in Isaiah:

Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. (Isa. 51.11)

The Exodus-theme where God leads His suffering people out of their misery towards the Promised Land has been an inspiration in Judaeo-Christian mythology for more than two millennia (see Exod. 6.2-8, 12.51).

14 *grow...humming*. Bradburne closes with two images of productivity: growing mealies and making honey. He instructs to the lepers to keep busy in their work, harvesting their own crops, such as maize (“mealies”) (cf. note on 12 “ripe”). *Sadza*, a stiff, white porridge made from maize meal, is the staple diet of the country. Bradburne finds in bees an example of such industriousness for the lepers to follow. Cf. 1 Cor. 15.58: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”. The word “humming” ends the poem with a sense of warmth and busy expectation. Bees are associated with the Biblical land of promise, traditionally characterised as “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exod. 3.8).

14 *bees*. Cf. “Of a Sunday in Lent” (*BA* 27).

[17] **De Verbo Dei**

“De Verbo Dei” is dated 21 February 1970. As suggested by the title, the poem focuses on the word of God, both the written word as found in Scripture, and the Word of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

(John 1.1, 14)

Uppermost in Bradburne’s thinking is Jesus’ relationship with the Virgin Mary. He begins the sonnet by referring to the woman who cried out to Jesus “Blessed is the womb that bare thee” (Luke 11.27-28). From this point of departure Bradburne arrives at a deeper understanding of the unique relationship between Jesus and Mary, stating: “that Word is bound/In Bibles whom Our Lady’s womb enwound” (*ll.* 13-14). Implicit in this comparison is the accessibility of Jesus to all people: although his relationship with Mary

is unique, he is no longer enwound in her womb but available to everyone through the Bible. This point is emphasised again in the final image of Jesus as “uplifted Fruit” (*l.* 17) – symbolically offered to all humankind.

The form of the poem is unusual, and unique in *Bradburne's Assays*. He extends the three quatrains and rhyming couplet of a Shakespearean sonnet, using both a rhyming triplet and a rhyming couplet to give the poem 17 lines and a rhyme scheme of ababcdcd efefggghh. Since the heart of the poem is found in lines 13-14, it seems that he intended to end here, but was struck by a new idea, which he then introduced in lines 15-17.

Title: Latin for “Concerning the word of God”, or “Of the Word of God”, in keeping with the other titles in *Bradburne's Assays*, in which “Of” indicates the subject matter to be addressed.

1-2 *A woman...suck.* A direct reference to Luke 11.27-28:

And it came to pass, as [Jesus] spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

This scripture echoes Elizabeth’s cry upon meeting her cousin Mary, at the time pregnant with Jesus: “And [Elizabeth] spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb” (Luke 2.42). Cf. *l.* 17.

3-4 *Our...statement.* Jesus’ rejoinder to the woman from the crowd was “Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it” (Luke 11.28), as already quoted. Bradburne highlights the fact that Jesus does not contradict the woman’s statement by his rejoinder. He does not deny that Mary was indeed singularly and uniquely blessed in bearing the son of God in her womb. However, whereas only one woman could enjoy that blessing, the blessing to be gained by devotion to the word of God is not exclusive or unique. It is to this fact that Jesus alerts the crowd. They were, in fact, doubly blessed by having not only the word of God, contained in the Hebrew scriptures, but also the Word made flesh in their midst (see *l.* 10). Bradburne develops these ideas further in the poem – cf. note on 13-15 “that...freely”.

5 *Roman Breviary*. Referring to a Roman Catholic breviary, “a book of psalms, hymns, prayers, etc., to be recited daily by clerics and certain members of religious orders as part of the divine office” (*Collins* “breviary” n).

6 “*Sacrosanctae*” ...said). The final prayer in the *Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, which Bradburne recited daily in Latin (see p. 22). The prayer, recited before going to bed (see l. 8), begins with the words “*Sacrosanctae et individuae Trinitati*”, from whence Bradburne draws the title “*Sacrosanctae*”. The English translation, in Bradburne’s copy of the Office, is entitled “Prayer after the Office” and reads as follows:

To the most holy and undivided Trinity, to the manhood of our crucified Lord Jesus Christ, to the fruitful virginity of the most blessed and glorious Mary, ever a Virgin, to the entire assembly of the Saints, be ascribed praise, honour, power and glory everlastingly by every creature; and to us be granted the remission of all our sins, world without end.

R: Amen.

V: Blessed be the Virgin Mary’s womb, which bore the Son of the everlasting Father.

R: And blessed be the breasts which gave milk to Christ our Lord.

(The sign “V” indicates the versicle announced by the officiant and “R” the response of his auditors.)

7 *urbanely*. A peculiar use of the word, probably used to mean “elegantly” or “pointedly”.

8 *Triune Love*. “Triune Love” is love that stems from the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Bradburne draws his inspiration from the “Prayer after the Office”, which is addressed to “the most holy and undivided Trinity”. See note on 6 “*Sacrosanctae*”... said)’.

8 *before...bed*. See note on 6 “*Sacrosanctae*”...said)’.

10 *Word made flesh*. Cf. John 1.14: “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...full of grace and truth”.

11 *Prophets...Law*. A reversal of “the Law and the Prophets”, a compendious name for the Hebrew Scriptures; used by Jesus, for example, in Matt. 22.40. In his reply to the woman from the crowd (Luke 11.28) Jesus refers to the word of God (as found, in his day, in the Law and the Prophets). Cf. note on 3-4 “Our...statement”.

13 *fine combining fact*. What follows is a “combining” fact because it contains two separate facts, deliberately juxtaposed by Bradburne. It is “fine” in the sense of being excellent, as well as “delicate, subtle” (*OED* “fine” a. II). Bradburne is also punning on “fine comb”, as in the phrase “to go over something with a fine-tooth comb”, thus referring to a very thorough examination (most likely of the Scriptures in this context).

13-15 *that...freely*. Bradburne stresses the importance of keeping the word of God, as found within the Bible, because it contains the same Word of God that was once contained within Mary’s womb. Cf. note on 3-4 “Our...statement”. Bradburne sets up a light-hearted paradox between Mary bearing Jesus *freely* and him, as Word, being *bound* in Bibles.

15-16 *no...Inviolat*e. “Ground”, in this context, is symbolic of Mary and lends itself to two interpretations: Mary as soil, out of whom grows the “Fruit” (*l.* 17) Jesus; or Mary as the background, which displays the Word of God in Jesus. Describing Mary as “inviolat” is not uncommon in Bradburne’s poetry and usually refers to her virginity, to her being unprofaned and therefore sacred. There may be an oblique reference here to an heraldic shield which has been prepared for, but not yet decorated with, the bearer’s device, most often a cross quartering the escutcheon. If this poetical conceit is Bradburne’s intention, then Mary, the “ground inviolat”, has been prepared and awaits the sign of the Cross. Bradburne admires Mary for having “no divisions” – division being the opposite of union, unity, integrity and wholeness. Bradburne cannot resist a musical pun on “divisions on a ground”, a piece of music based on improvisation and variation on a ground base (Westrup *et al.* 169). For example, such a piece might be called “Divisions on a Ground in D minor”, which Bradburne playfully modifies to “divisions on a ground in-violat”. The pun introduces the musical imagery of the following line, when the lute is brought in. Given Bradburne’s known love of word-play, it may not be too far-fetched

to read into “inviolate” a reference to a viol, an early type of violin contemporaneous with a lute (mentioned in the same line).

16 rift...lute. A lute, like any stringed instrument, will not sound properly if it has a crack in it. The phrase, “rift in the lute”, is also used metaphorically as in: “a split or crack, hence a defect betokening the beginning of disharmony or incipient dissension” (“Rift in the lute”, *Brewer*, 935). Tennyson uses the image in “Idylls of the King”:

In love, if love be love, if love be ours,
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers:
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all,

It is the little rift within the lute
That by-and-by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all.

The little rift within the lover's lute,
Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,
That rotting inward slowly moulders all. (“Merlin and Vivien” ll. 385-93)

Bradburne sees no such rift in Mary, the “Fruit” (l. 17) of whose womb, Jesus Christ, is believed by Christians to be without sin or flaw. The implication is that such Fruit can only be produced if there is no rift in the lute (to mix metaphors). Cf. Matt. 7.17-18. Thus, Bradburne simultaneously admires Mary's virtue, for being chosen by God to bear good fruit, and sets her up as an example to others to follow.

17 Displaying...Fruit. The closing line invites several interpretations. The Fruit, deliberately capitalised, clearly refers to Jesus, the Fruit of Mary's womb (see note on 1-2 “A woman...suck”). It is the context in which he is “uplifted” or “lifted up” that is multi-layered. In religious art, one of the most common ways in which Mary and the baby Jesus are depicted is with Mary lifting Jesus up on her lap. In this context, it is Mary who “gracefully” (literally full of grace, as in “Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee” (*Daily Missal* 25)) displays Jesus to the world. The image does, however, contain overtones of Jesus' crucifixion, in which he was lifted up on the cross. It also brings to mind the passage in the Gospel of John where Jesus signifies the sort of death he will die, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12.32). In this context Jesus, who is “full of grace and truth” (John 1.14), sacrifices himself for

humankind in a divine act of grace. He becomes the Fruit for salvation. This introduces the third context which infuses the final line: the sacrament of the Eucharist, in which Jesus' body and blood (in the form of the bread and wine) are symbolically elevated by the priest, who lifts up Jesus' body, the Fruit of Mary's womb, as it was lifted up on the cross. Jesus, who was enwound in Mary's womb, is not only bound in the Bible, but also found continually in this sacrament.

[18] Of Ambition

"Of Ambition" is dated 21 February 1970. The sonnet contains Bradburne's contemplations on ambition of various kinds, including worldly and spiritual ambition. The series of rhetorical questions that unfold in the course of the poem trace his thoughts as he actively wrestles with the nature of ambition (with all its potential virtues and vices) in different contexts, times and situations. In support of his ideas, he deliberately chooses imagery that contains movement – either forwards or upwards, and of varying speeds. The active verbs, such as "drive" (l. 1), "navigate" (l. 3), "rocket" (l. 4), "fly" (l. 9), "climb" (l. 11), also complement the subject matter of ambitiously striving towards a greater or higher goal. The poem ends on an enigmatic note, leaving the reader with more questions than answers, as Bradburne considers ambition in the context of lust and love, but does not conclude or summarise his thoughts.

1-3 *drive... aeroplane*. Desires such as becoming a train-driver or a pilot are typical of the normal, childhood ambitions of a young boy, and as such are admirable examples of a legitimate wish to better oneself or improve one's situation. Because they are harmless, even useful, Bradburne sees these as instances of "sweet ambition" (l. 5). Here he contrasts the innocent hopes of young boys with the later ambitions of grown men (see note on 4 "Later... woe").

4 *Later... woe*. Ambitions later in life (presumably those of adults, see note on 1-3 "drive... aeroplane") propel "one" (the subject of the sentence from line 1) into "woe". Bradburne does not explain why these ambitions are a cause of grief, but given the three

travel images he chooses and their ordering in the poem, it would seem to be because they overreach themselves. He begins with land-travel (by train), then moves to air-travel (aeroplane) and concludes with space-travel (rocket). There is a deliberate increase in the angle of elevation of each moving body as well as an increase in the speed at which each travels. Bradburne may thus be suggesting that it is a person who aims too high, who over-reaches himself, propels himself, like a rocket, at excessive and uncontrollable speed into anguish or misery. Bradburne uses a Donne-like conceit of rocketing (upward) into woe (usually thought of as being reached by plummeting downward). The paradox heightens the disappointment; the greater the ambition the greater the fall.

4 *rocket*. The word “rocket” is used to describe several different devices, from fireworks to spacecraft. Given the first two methods of transport Bradburne mentions in the opening quatrain, he is almost certainly referring to the latter here. It is interesting to note the historical context in which Bradburne uses the word: this poem was composed less than a year after the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) launched the Apollo 11 mission and successfully landed the first human beings on the moon, thereby fulfilling a grandiloquent American ambition. Bradburne makes mention of rockets in his poetry from as early as 1957, the year in which the Soviet Union launched “Sputnik I”, the first man-made satellite, into orbit round the earth.

5 *seat*. Here “seat” denotes the location or place in the human frame where ambition resides or originates (see *OED* “seat” n. 14a).

6 *Whence...springs?*. “Whence” is used to mean “what is the cause of”. Bradburne questions what causes ambition to be sullied, or to become corrupted; what “bitter springs” spoil its “sweet[ness]” (l. 5). His use of “bitter springs” echoes the penultimate verse of Rudyard Kipling’s “The Children’s Song” (also included in hymn-books as “Land of our Birth” or “Father in heaven, who lovest all”),

Teach us Delight in simple things,
And Mirth that has no bitter springs;
Forgiveness free of evil done,
And Love to all men ‘neath the sun! (Kipling 306)

Bradburne uses the same phrase again in “Of Flattery”, dated 15 May 1970:

Flattery is a plethora of words
 Kind in themselves but said without affection,
 It rises in a spate, it flies like birds
 Made but of paper upon stage-direction;
 Often beneath it well such bitter springs
 As much have mingled with the fall of kings:
 Sweet to the ear, it waits, then mates with stings. (70.187)

7-8 *Is...kings?*. In this rhetorical question, Bradburne expresses his opinion that the sort of ambition which strives to compete with the *best* (even with royalty) is the most praiseworthy. He regards faithful believers as “men...that vie with kings”. While accepting the legitimacy of the human drive towards self-improvement, he is essentially enquiring what sort of ambition merits commendation, and is still actively wrestling with his previous question (see *l.* 6) of where ambition degenerates into something destructive or contemptible.

7 *laudable*. “Praiseworthy or commendable” (see *OED* “laudable” a. 1), with a typical Bradburnian pun on “Lord” and “laudable”.

8 *breast the tapes*. “To breast the tape” is a phrase used in athletics (referring to the tape stretched at chest height across the track at the finish), meaning to win the race by crossing the finish line first.

8 *vie*. “To display, advance, practise, etc., in competition or rivalry *with* another person or thing; to contend or strive *with* in respect of (something)” (*OED* “vie” v. 4) (sic).

9-12 *With...glad*. Bradburne contrasts the ambition to *fly* above the highest temple with the task of *climbing* the mountain of life, which, he suggests, may lead to greater happiness than the first endeavour. Interestingly, both actions progress upwards, but at different speeds, the latter requiring more effort. The happiness achieved by climbing the mountain is contrasted with the inevitable woe of the previous ambition (see note on 9-10 “With...had”).

9-10 *With...had.* Of all the ambitions cited thus far, the ambition to fly above places of religious worship is the most obviously dubious, as it would glorify the *individual* by giving him/her unnatural, perhaps even blasphemous, power. The ambition to fly above the temple symbolically usurps God. Such flight imitates the rocket's movement (*l.* 4) of soaring up into the air and so, according to Bradburne's previous observations, will inevitably result in "woe" (*l.* 4). The "pinnacles of temples" is a deliberate echo of Satan's third temptation of Jesus (as recorded in the gospel of Luke):

And [the devil] brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. (Luke 4: 9-12)

Bradburne makes the point that even if ambitious desires appear to be harmless, they may contain subtle temptations. In Jesus' case the temptation was "to prove that he was the Messiah by thrusting himself into peril and compelling God to intervene for his safety by miracle" (*IB* 8: 87), thus to force God's hand and thereby glorify himself. In addition, the ambition to fly goes against the natural abilities humankind have been given. The implication of the phrase "With wings one *might* fly" (my emphasis) is that since humankind do not have wings it is appropriate that they should rather use their legs to climb.

11-12 *Unless...glad.* This may be paraphrased as: "Unless climbing the mountain of life, with as little personal self-interest as is compatible with the selflessness implied in altruistic love, may actually prove more satisfying than simply soaring above it". The tension between lust and love here is problematic, as Bradburne himself admits in the closing lines. See note on 13-14 "But...how?" for a more detailed discussion on the meaning of lust in this context. It seems that when ambition metamorphoses or degenerates into self-seeking lust for personal position, power or glory, it becomes a burden. Bradburne emphasises the benefit of freeing oneself from carrying this heavy burden up the mountain of life, the heaviness being suggested by the choice of the contrasting word "light" (*l.* 11).

13-14 *But...how?*. Bradburne is not using the word “lust” in the most common sense of “sexual desire”. His usage goes much deeper, to the essence of what distinguishes lust from love. At their most basic, love is selfless while lust is selfish or self-interested. Whereas love is centred on the act of giving, lust focuses on the taking, or, violent grasping of a desired object or “objectified” person. In such an interpretation the two move in opposite directions, and are at variance with one another. It is from this backdrop that Bradburne’s question arises, “But what is lust?” He questions the essential nature of lust and whether it can be reconciled with love. His question can only be understood in the context of the poem, whose main thrust is a meditation on the virtues and vices of ambition. In the light of Jesus’ temptation (alluded to in *ll.* 9-10), the implicit question seems to be whether ambition is sometimes a disguised lust for power or glory. Yet in a playful subverting of the preceding serious questions, Bradburne here uses the word “ambition” to mean no more than “wish” or “intention”, however keen. Acknowledging the force of both drives, he seeks to reconcile the tension between them, evidently believing that reconciliation between “sweet ambition” and love can act as a creative spur to greater achievement.

[19] Of Sex-Appeal

“Of Sex-Appeal” is not dated, but is positioned between two poems dated 21 February 1970. The single opening parenthesis after the double line under the poem suggests that Bradburne began dating it, but for some reason (perhaps an interruption) never did. He attributes the origin of sex-appeal to God, or, more specifically, to the Love life of the Trinity. This theme, of the relationship between God and his creation, continues for most of the sonnet. God is “above” (*l.* 3) created things, he glows within his creation (*l.* 8) and surpasses her in beauty (*ll.* 13-14). Sex-appeal and, more generally, sexuality is part of this creation; Bradburne affirms its power and beauty in his assertion that there is nothing quite as sweet as the feeling of its fire leaping within the human body (see notes on 9-11 “Indeed...Aught” and 9 “seed’s inherent fire”). Much of the sonnet has to be deduced by the association of key words that Bradburne uses to refer to God. These include: “Three In One” (*ll.* 2-3), “Creator” (*l.* 4), “the Sum” (*l.* 7), “beauty’s

Maker” (l. 8), “Name” (l. 12), “Lamb” (l. 14), “I AM” (l. 15) and “Flame” (l. 15). Instead of the conventional rhyming couplet that ends a Shakespearean sonnet, his elusive conclusion has three lines, giving the sonnet fifteen lines in total and a rhyme scheme of ababcdcdefefggf – unique in the *Assays*. The acrostic, FAIREST MIRACLES, forms an appropriate subtext for the sonnet, referring to the fair miracle of creation, including sexuality.

1 *Female...them*. Cf. the first account of God’s (Yahweh’s) creation of humankind in Gen. 1.27: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them”. Bradburne inverts the phrase “male and female”, ostensibly to adhere more to iambic rhythm.

2-3 *fount...Love*. Bradburne traces the source (or fount) of attraction between the sexes to the source of life itself: the Trinity (“Three In One”). He explains sexual attraction between men and women as stemming from the “Love” between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As such, the sexual union of men and women is a reflection of the mutual attraction that binds the members of the Trinity.

3-4 *above...be*. This may be paraphrased as: “the Creator must [surely] be above the created stem’s rising”. Bradburne highlights God’s position as Creator above (or superior to) his creation. Since God is the fount(ain) lovingly playing above creation, so the current of physical attraction rises in his creatures. The parallel between a fountain shooting jets of water into the air and the “stem rising” links the Divine and the human procreative urges. Bradburne’s use of the phallic image of a rising stem in conjunction with his recognition of God’s supremacy over his creation implies that physical intercourse, the ultimate conclusion of sex-appeal, is also created by God, and as such is a (pro)creative act that reflects his own Creativity. Bradburne’s incorporation of the Trinity at this point might even be read as implying that besides the man and the woman there is a third person present in the act of sex, namely God, the Creator.

5 *Shembe dances*. Shembe is a term used loosely to describe the followers of the prophet Isaiah Shembe (1867-1935) who founded the Shembe Church, the oldest and “largest

African Independent Church (AIC) among the Zulu speaking people of Southern Africa” (Becken par. 1). The Shembe Church, otherwise known as “ibandla lamaNazaretha (the Nazareth Baptist Church)” (*loc. cit.*), “believes in the dance (Zulu style) as a form of worship” (Vilakazi *et al.* 155). It is to this traditional Shembe dance that Bradburne makes reference. Cf. “Of Glory” l. 11 (BA 47). There is no record of Bradburne personally witnessing Shembe dancing, although he may have done so. His choice of the word “Entrancing” (l. 5) indicates that dance may have the power to induce an altered state of consciousness in which one’s awareness of the Divine is enhanced.

6 *Spanish dames aflow*. Bradburne sees a comparison between the Shembe dancers’ movements and the fluid, flirtatious way in which Spanish women dance.

7 *There...Sum*. There, in the beautiful dance of sexual attraction, is found a force which draws people to creation, or to God in creation. See notes on 7 “the Sum” and 8 “Midst...glow”.

7 *the Sum*. “Sum” is Latin for “I am”, the name of God – see note on 14-15 “forgot...Flame”. This may also be a reference to the “Summa” – the totality of creation; the capitalisation hints at God’s presence infusing all creation. Sum may also be understood to mean essence, as used in “Of Solitude” – cf. note on 7 “sum” (BA 11). Here the essence of life and creation again refers to God.

8 *Midst...glow*. The Maker (or Creator) of beauty itself is found amidst all beautiful things (more specifically, amidst beautiful women and their dancing). “[M]eans to glow” shows God’s intention of infusing his creation with his presence. Cf. l. 7 – see note on 7 “There...Sum”. The line recalls Hopkins: “Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God, beauty’s self and beauty’s giver” (“The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo” l. 35).

9-11 *Indeed...Aught*. The contorted word-order of these lines is probably dictated by the requirements of the acrostic. It may be paraphrased as: “rarely does anything leap as sweetly in the mortal frame as the passion inherent in sexual urges”. In other words, there

is hardly any feeling in the human body that is as sweet (figuratively speaking) as the intense desire found in sexual attraction.

9 *seed's inherent fire*. In keeping with the image of the "stem/Rising" (cf. note on 3-4 "above...be"), Bradburne uses "seed", in the older sense or the word, to denote semen. This is, in turn, suggestive of sexuality or sex-appeal. The image of leaping fire suggests the intensity, power and burning, rising passion of sexual desire, which is "inherent" in the seed. Apart from its direct sexual connotation, the action of leaping also recalls the transmission of fire when a spark or flame crosses a gap to ignite an adjacent object. The suggestion is that the lovers catch fire from each other.

11 *Aught*. "Anything whatever" (*OED* "aught" n. A). It is noteworthy that the word, despite being the grammatical subject of the sentence, is placed at the very end of the clause, in a position of great emphasis.

11-12 *yet...Name*. Bradburne shifts his focus from physical to spiritual desire, and affirms the value of those who steep themselves in God (signified by the capitalisation of "Name"). He describes their experiences as deeply fulfilling. "Steeps", meaning to soak or become saturated (see *OED* "steep" v.¹ 2), encapsulates the saint's total immersion in God's presence. Cf. "Of Solitude" (*BA* 11). "Saint" may be understood in the more general sense of a holy person who has set himself apart for God (see *OED* "saint" n. B).

13-14 *Less...Lamb*. Mary's Lamb (Jesus) is not less lovely than the loveliness God created. Bradburne shifts focus from the wonder of creation to the Creator himself, echoing the sentiments of line 4. He asserts that as beautiful as all of creation may be, it cannot surpass the beauty of God himself.

14 (*Entwined...name*). Mary is an English form of the Hebrew "Miriam" (an anglicised spelling of Miryam) (Kotlatch 378), as noted by Bradburne: "Miriam (for that is Mary's name/In Hebrew speaking)" (from "Prologue"; 58.06). He frequently uses Miriam to denote Mary, the mother of Jesus, sometimes as a play on some of the letters in "Maria". Here, as elsewhere, he is playing on the words "Miriam" and "I AM". The letters "I AM"

are, literally, entwined within the word “Miriam”. Two other, more explicit, examples of this in his poetry include: “Entwined with Miriam I AM abides” (“The Agony in the Garden”, *l.* 9; 77.130) and “Miriam’s Lamb/Who is I AM” (“Panegyrick”, *ll.* 28-29; OBS.1).

14 *her Lamb*. A reference to Jesus, as well as a term of endearment for him by his mother (see *OED* “lamb” n. 2c). Cf. *l.* 15 – see note on 14-15 “forgot...Flame”.

14-15 *forgot...Flame*. “I AM” is recorded as the reply God gave Moses from the burning bush when Moses asked him for his name:

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. (Exod. 3.14)

Even if people have forgotten God, as Bradburne asserts, he is still “strong I AM”. “I AM” asserts the eternal, immutable, absolute and unconditional nature of God’s existence. Bradburne concludes by comparing God to fire, naming him as “her [Mary’s] Flame”. This may be light-heartedly interpreted as God being the object of Mary’s affection (see *OED* “flame” n. 6b): her “sweetheart”. More seriously, and reiterating Bradburne’s assertion that the Trinity is Love (*ll.* 2-3), it recalls the appearance of God the Father to Moses in the form of a burning bush (see Exod. 3.2), of Jesus the Son with eyes of flame (Rev. 1.14) and of the Holy Spirit descending upon the disciples at Pentecost in tongues of flame (Acts 2.3). Thus, it is God, characterised as “Flame”, who is the source of the “inherent fire” (*l.* 9) found in his human creations. Cf. notes on 9 “seed’s inherent fire” and 14 “Entwined...name”.

[20] **Of nothing**

“Of nothing” is dated 21 February 1970. From the outset of the sonnet Bradburne mocks Satan, entitling a poem that is primarily about him “Of nothing” – “nothing” is deliberately not capitalised to make a statement about Satan’s worthlessness and his lack of power. This is in direct contrast to its companion piece, “Of No Thing” (*BA* 9), which affirms Jesus’ power and importance, and his victory over Satan. Whereas Jesus chose to

leave his position of glory in heaven to come to earth (“He loved the earth enough to leave the skies” (*BA* 9, *l.* 8)), Satan was thrown out of heaven. As in “Of No Thing”, Bradburne makes extensive use of carefully balanced, internally-rhyming pairs: “morning” (*l.* 1) – “yawning” (*l.* 2), “Naught” – “sport” (*l.* 3), “marriage” – “carriage” (*l.* 4), “maker” – “breaker” (*l.* 5), “debt” – “let” (*l.* 7), “paid” – “made” (*l.* 7), “not” – “plot” (*l.* 8), “net” – “set”, “get” – “pet” (*l.* 12). Bradburne teases Satan in “Of nothing” by outlining his limitations in detail, drawing on traditional roles Satan has played in Christian history. For example, since he cannot create anything (creator “Of nothing”) he seeks only to mar or destroy. He tries to break the relationship between humankind and God (by tempting Adam and Eve into sin), but Jesus intervenes, saving men from their fate (parrying “Ichabod” – see “Of No Thing” *l.* 4). Now powerless, “but for his plot abroad” (*l.* 8), he can only “subtract, distort/And drive us to distraction from our goal” (*ll.* 9-10), but he fails in this venture too as Jesus catches him in his own trap (*ll.* 11-12). By the concluding lines of the sonnet, Satan has symbolically been replaced by Mary, significantly also a created being, but one who maintains her position of honour due to her obedience to God. Satan’s rebellion against God has led to his descent into nothingness, into “oblivion” (*l.* 2).

1 *Lucifer...star*. Bradburne’s use of the words “Lucifer” and “whilom morning star”, to refer to Satan, opens up a rich tradition of mythology in Christianity to which he alludes throughout the sonnet. Poetically, “Lucifer”, meaning “light-bearer”, is used to represent the morning star, or day star (the planet Venus) (see *OED* “Lucifer” 1). Christian tradition has adopted the term to describe Satan, “The rebel archangel whose fall from heaven was supposed to be referred to [in Isaiah 14.12]” (*op. cit.* 2): “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!” This passage contributes to the many sources that have, over the years, inspired

the tradition that the Devil had been among the greatest of the angels, beautiful and perfect, that his pride had at the beginning of the world led him to rebel against God, and that he had been expelled from heaven and awaited punishment in fire.
(Russell, *Satan*, 132)

It was Milton’s *Paradise Lost* that

made the traditional story of the fall of angels and humanity into a scenario so coherent and compelling that it became the standard account for all succeeding generations. (Russell, *Mephistopheles*, 95)

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton too refers to Satan as “the morning star” (V: 708) and describes his fall from heaven thus:

...Him the almighty Power
Hurled headlong flaming from th’ ethereal sky
With hideous ruin and combustion down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamant chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy th’ Omnipotent to arms. (“Book I” ll. 44-49)

Satan is appropriately portrayed by Bradburne as “low” – referring to the morning star’s low position in the sky, while also acting as “a term of reprobation or disgust” (*OED* “low” a. 7). In the concluding lines the “whilom morning star” is replaced by Mary (see note on 14 “Your...God”).

1 *whilom*. Former, once, at some past time (*OED* “whilom” adv. (adj.) 2).

2 *Goes...last*. Satan’s fate is to peter out into nothingness, like a worn out star that sinks into the horizon, never to rise again. “[Y]awning” implies a state of exhaustion and boredom. This final fall concludes Satan’s initial fall out of heaven (see note on 1 “Lucifer...star”). He who is, as the title suggests, “Of nothing”, returns to a state of oblivion.

2 *oblivion*. “The state or condition of being forgotten; (also, more generally) obscurity, nothingness, void, death” (*OED* “oblivion” n. 2a). To fall or sink into oblivion: “to become forgotten or disused; (also) to die” (*loc. cit.*).

3-4 *Naught...fast*. Bradburne is drawing on the age-old belief that Satan cannot create; he can only destroy. Russell summarises the influential work of second century theologian, Tertullian:

The Devil’s function in the cosmos is precise. As God creates the cosmos, the Devil destroys it. As God has created things good, the Devil distorts and perverts them... .

In every way the Devil acts as God's opposite, seeking to destroy the truth, corrupt virtue, and pollute beauty. (*Satan* 94-95)

Bradburne highlights three such things that Satan seeks to mar or destroy: he makes sport out of damaging "marriage" and "carriage light" and out of obstructing that which would move faster were it not for his influence. "Carriage light" alludes to God's curse on Eve for succumbing to the serpent's temptation in the garden of Eden: "Unto the woman [God] said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (Gen. 3.16). In other words, women, who might have enjoyed easy childbearing, were it not for the serpent, are cursed to have difficulty in their "carriage" of children. Thus Satan marred light carriage.

5 *Maker...be*. See note on 3-4 "Naught...fast".

6 *bond*. Loosely, an agreement or engagement between two or more persons (see *OED* "bond" n.¹ 8a). Legally used to refer to a "written acknowledgement of an obligation to pay a sum or to perform a contract" (*Collins* "bond" n. 8). Bradburne alludes to the bond between humankind and Jesus, which Satan seeks to break.

6 *lien*. "A right to retain possession of another's property pending discharge of a debt" (*Collins* "lien" n.). Bradburne is alluding to the traditional belief that Satan had a claim over humankind until Jesus paid the debt of sin. Russell summarises the writings of second century theologian, Iranaeus:

All humans participate in the sin of Adam and Eve. By our own free choice we became slaves of the Devil, powerless to free ourselves from him... . Because we turned our backs on God through our own free will, we delivered ourselves into the power of Satan, and it was right and just that Satan should hold us until we were redeemed. (*Satan* 83)

7-8 *debt...not*. The saving work of Jesus' Passion has been interpreted widely through this "ransom" metaphor, in which Jesus frees humankind by paying the debt owed to Satan, and incurred through the Fall of Adam and Eve. Cf. "[Jesus came] to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10.45). Iranaeus perceived it thus: "since Satan justly held the human race in prison, God offered himself as a ransom for our freedom. The price could be paid only by God" (Russell, *Satan*, 83). Herbert explores this theme in his sonnet

“Redemption”. Like Herbert, Bradburne compares man’s relationship with God to that of a tenant who “lets” property from his landlord, fusing this with the metaphor of Jesus’ Passion as a ransom for sin.

7 *let*. “A letting for hire or rent” (*OED* “let” n.²).

8 *hindered...abroad*. “Abroad” is used figuratively to refer to the outside world (see *OED* “abroad” adv. 2). Thus, Bradburne asserts that there is no hindrance between God and humankind, apart from Satan’s conspiring against them in the wider world:

The author of all evil, [Satan] has become lord of this world, not in the sense that he controls the cosmos, but in the sense that he dominates the part of it that he has corrupted, and he is lord of that part not absolutely but only insofar as he has permission from God. (Russell, *Satan*, 94)

9 *Empowered...distort*. Cf. note on 3-4 “Naught...fast”.

10 *our goal*. Cf. “Of The Lord’s Prayer” l. 45 (*BA* 43).

11 *Lying he lies*. Satan, named as the “Father of lies” by Jesus:

He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (John 8.44)

Bradburne is simultaneously punning on “lying” and “lies”, meaning “a prostrate or recumbent position” (*OED* lie v.¹ 1a). Hence the situation that follows, in which Satan is caught “lengthwise” in his horizontal position.

12-13 *pet...Lamblord*. Bradburne implicitly mocks Satan for having thought he could trap Jesus in a net, and then keep him like a pet lamb.

13 *Ichabod*. A nickname for Satan, used by Bradburne as a taunt, as he mocks Satan for losing his former glory (“Your glory’s gone” (l. 14)). Satan is believed to have been “among the greatest of the angels, beautiful and perfect” (Russell, *Satan*, 132), “the most eminent of angels, created the wisest of all of them” (*op. cit.* 93n.38) before his fall from

heaven. Milton writes, “for great indeed/His name, and high was his degree in heav’n” (*Paradise Lost*, “Book V”, ll. 706-7). See note on 4 “Ichabod” in “Of No Thing” (BA 9).

14 *Your... God*. Having belittled Satan, Bradburne concludes by exalting Mary (“Our Lady” – see l. 13). His use of “preferring” is ambiguous: Mary is preferred or favoured by God by virtue of being chosen as the mother of Jesus, but she also gives God preference in the sense that she worships him alone. This is in contrast to Satan who “fell from grace because he envied God, wishing to be adored like his maker” (Russell, *Satan*, 81). In Milton’s words,

...his pride
Had cast him out from heav’n, with all his host
Of rebel angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in glory above his peers,
He trusted to have equalled the Most High... . (*Paradise Lost*, “Book I”, ll. 36-40)

Some of Bradburne’s other poems on Lucifer’s fall help to illuminate this final image. For example, in “For they shall see God”, he writes:

Lucifer fell like lightning, faster far
Arises she we call The Morning Star. (ll. 13-14; 78.467)

Thus Mary “succeeds him as the new Morning Star” (“De Historia Salutis”, l. 3; 78.482).

[21] Of a District

“Of a District” is dated 21 February 1970. Like many poets before him, Bradburne is inspired by the beauty of the landscape in Cumberland, particularly in the Lake District. He imagines the Fall of humankind taking place in such Edenic surroundings. The light, calm feel of the poem is achieved by Bradburne’s choice of sounds and use of long phrases. This musical evocation of place is enhanced by the assonance and alliteration in, for example, “wind a mere sweet balm/On becks and lakes alike and light as charm/On Eden” (ll. 2-4). Bradburne’s playfulness is evident in his punning on “fell” and “rose” (see ll. 5, 6, 9). Whereas most of the sonnets in *Bradburne’s Assays* adopt a Shakespearean rhyme scheme (ababdcdefefgg), the hybridised rhyme

scheme in “Of a District” (abbacddceffegg) is rare in the sequence. He uses it again in “Of Glory” (BA 47).

1-2 *Great...Saddleback*. Great Gable, the Langdale Pikes (comprising Pike of Stickle, Harrison Stickle and Pavey Ark), Sca Fell, the Screees and Saddleback are all mountains found in the Lake District.

1 *the Screees*. “Scree” is “an accumulation of weathered rock fragments at the foot of a cliff or hillside, often forming a sloping heap” (*Collins* “scree” n.). “The Screees”, or “Wastwater Screees”, refers to the steeply sloping north-western flank of Illgill Head, a mountain in the Lake District. The “fellside from top to bottom...is piled deep with stones lying at their maximum angle of rest” (Wainwright, *A Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells*, 2), and drops directly into Lake Wastwater. “The screees, when seen in the light of an evening sun, make a picture of remarkable colour and brilliance: a scene unique in this country” (*loc. cit.*).

2-4 *wind...ease*. Bradburne’s description of the wind helps to paint an Edenic picture of the district. The wind acts as a “sweet balm” (l. 2), which soothes. It is as “light as [a] charm” (l. 3) (“charm” in the sense of a spell, with connotations also of enchanting beauty), and it blows unhurriedly, reaching Appleby “with ease” (l. 4) – at its own leisure.

2 *wind a mere*. A pun on “Windermere”, “the largest lake in England” (*Collins* “Windermere” n.), which is surrounded by the foothills of the Lake District.

3 *becks*. “Beck” is the ordinary name for a brook or stream in Cumberland (see *OED* “beck” n.¹ 1).

3 *lakes*. Those found in the Lake District.

4 *Eden*. Both the Biblical Garden of Eden (see Gen. 2.8-3.24) and the Vale of Eden in Cumberland. The Vale of Eden is formed by the course of the River Eden, which passes

through Appleby-in-Westmorland. This valley separates the Pennines (of which Cross Fell is the highest fell – see note on 9 “Crossfell”) from the Lake District (where all the mountains mentioned in lines 1-2 are to be found).

4 *Appleby*. Appleby-in-Westmorland, a small town south-east of Skirwith in the Eden Valley, at the foot of the Pennines.

5-8 *Fell...fair*. These lines may be rephrased as: “Because of an apple, Adam and Eve fell amidst a garden from whence seven streams rose to water the whole world and to nurture dreams. The garden was fair until man brought ‘reality’”.

5 *Fell...apple*. “Fell” refers, primarily, to Adam and Eve’s fall into sin when they succumbed to temptation and ate the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, traditionally pictured as an apple. They “fell” from grace and were, figuratively, cast down or defeated (see *OED* “fell” v. 1e). Alternatively, they were “felled” by their eating of the apple, as a tree is felled or cut down (see *OED* “fell” n.⁴ 1b). In addition, Bradburne puns on “fell” as a hill or mountain (see *OED* “fell” n.² 1) such as he has been describing, as well as on “by an apple” and “Appleby” (*l.* 4). He thus connects this Edenic landscape with the garden of Eden.

6-7 *whence...dreams*. This recalls the depiction of the garden of Eden in Genesis:

...the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden... . And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four [rivers]. (Gen. 2.8-10)

Bradburne, however, replaces the four rivers from the biblical account with seven. His reasons for doing so are unclear. Seven is often symbolic of perfection or totality, especially in Scripture (see *OED* “seven” a. 1d). He may thus be emphasising that these rivers go out into *all* the world (see *l.* 7). Bradburne attributes spiritual properties to the water that flows out of Eden: it is able to nurture the dreams of humankind.

8 *Until...them*. Bradburne implies that Adam and Eve lived in a dream-like state in the garden of Eden until the Fall, which brought with it harsh reality. He also implies that the garden of Eden was fair or beautiful until the Fall.

9 *Crossfell*. Cross Fell is the highest peak of the Pennines, “a system of hills in England, extending from the Cheviot Hills in the north to the River Trent in the south” that “forms the watershed for the main rivers of Northern England” (*Collins* “Pennines” n.). The Fell overlooks Skirwith, where Bradburne was born.

10 *parson’s son*. Bradburne’s father, Reverend Thomas William Bradburne, was an Anglican priest (see pp. 1-2).

11 *Haunted...one*. Bradburne’s claim never to have prayed in Skirwith is similar to his claim never to have written poetry until his conversion to Roman Catholicism – see pp. 48-49. After his conversion to Catholicism and subsequent revolutionised prayer-life, all previous prayers may have appeared insignificant to him.

12-13 *Atop...concave*. This may be rephrased as: “Mary’s well stands in grace in the granite crown on the top of Crossfell”. “Crown” is interpreted as the “rounded summit of a mountain or other elevation” (*OED* “crown” n. 18). It also alludes to the grandeur and majesty of the mountain.

12 *Mary’s Well*. Bradburne may be referring to the Cross Fell well that lies on the main route to the summit of Cross Fell, quite near the top. The name, “Mary’s Well”, may stem from the well’s proximity to the old Roman road that crosses the fell and is known as “Maiden Way” (see *Road Atlas of Great Britain* 53, grid F1-F2). Bradburne refers to “Maiden Way” in his letter to his mother, written during his 1961 trip to Skirwith (see p. 24). Alternatively he may be referring to a spring. In the same letter, he notes discovering a spring on top of Cross Fell, which, he says, may have been the one they call “Gentlemen’s well”. He goes on to speculate that the name was probably altered at the Reformation from “Our Lady’s well” (see NELM MS 2005.66 133).

13-14 *looking...town*. This phrase is ambiguous, since “her” could either refer to Mary or to “Skirwith spire”. In either case, Bradburne calls on the reader to look down from the mountain and admire the little town.

14 *Skirwith spire*. Now spelt “Skirwith”. The spire belongs to the Church of St. John the Evangelist, the Anglican Church in Skirwith, where Bradburne’s father was the vicar (see p. 2).

[22] Of a District Commissioner

“Of a District Commissioner” is not dated, but is positioned between two poems dated 21 February 1970. While its title is similar to the previous poem, its subject matter is directly connected to the subsequent poem – see “Of Position” (BA 23). The District Commissioner in question is Rodney Simmonds, known by some as Rodney “Slasher” Simmonds. He was a Member of Parliament (MP) for the constituency of Mtoko-Mrewa, and District Commissioner for Mrewa (Murewa). Mutemwa, where Bradburne composed this poem, is in the Mtoko district to the north-west of Mrewa district. Simmonds was convicted of flogging an African man in his office for not taking his hat off to him, and was fired from the Department of Internal Affairs (formerly “Native Affairs”). The court case for assault took place between 1967 and 1968.

3-4 *doff/His headgear*. To doff one’s headgear is “to take off or ‘raise’ (the head-gear) by way of a salutation or token of respect” (OED “doff” v. 1). Here the district commissioner demands the gesture of respect, despite the insincerity that the enforcement of such an action produces. Cf. “Of Position” l. 11 (BA 23).

4 (*forelock...alack*). A forelock is “A lock of hair growing from the fore part of the head, just above the forehead” (OED “forelock” n.² 1). Bradburne sarcastically bemoans the fact that the black man in question had no such forelock to pull. The English peasantry used to pull their forelocks as a sign of respect and subservience to the gentry.

[23] Of Position

“Of Position” is dated 21 February 1970. It outlines the sort of person exemplified in the previous poem. Bradburne shows his scorn for such people, who, he believes, live an insular existence, convinced of their own “majesty”. He highlights the temptations facing a person in a high social position: the temptation to be puffed up with pride (*l.* 6), boastful (cf. “Of Popularity” (*BA* 15) – composed on the same day), self-congratulatory (*l.* 7), to show off (*l.* 8), or to demand expressions of subservience from scorned persons of lesser status (*l.* 13). By contrast, Jesus is, for him, the ultimate example to follow, since he resisted all temptation to lord his status over his followers, and rather assumed the position of a suffering servant.

The acrostic, “PP BATS IN BELFRY” (“belfry” being the bell-tower of a church), appears unrelated to the literal subject matter, except as a pointer to Bradburne’s presumed (if *sotto voce*) opinion – “PP” is the musical marking for *pianissimo*: very soft – that to be arrogant about one’s arbitrarily acquired position is tantamount to being at least mildly insane. The metaphorical sense of the idiomatic expression “to have bats in one’s belfry”, often abbreviated simply to “bats” or, more colloquially, to “batty”, is “To be crazy in the head” (“Bats”, *Brewer*, 85).

1 *Position...high*. Bradburne has in mind a high social position, or “place in the social scale”, a person’s “social state or standing; status; rank, estate” (*OED* “position” n. 9b).

1-3 *very...estate*. Bradburne asserts that having a high position in society is “all very well”, but any person in such a position has a *false* sense of importance because, in actual fact, his position is dependent on the subordination of those around him. Any assertion of his having a “higher” status than others depends on his being surrounded by people who are not as important as himself (in his eyes or those of the world). Bradburne expounds on this image later in the poem: see note on 11-13 “forelocks...mane”. The word “insulated” implies that such a person is falsely protected from the reality of his own unimportance; he is protected by people of “less estate” who act as “buffers” to lessen the impact of the truth of his position. “Estate” may be understood in both the sense of “status, standing, position in the world” (*OED* “estate” n. 3a) and of “landed property” (*op. cit.* 13a) – cf. “great estate” (*l.* 5) and “squire...acred” (*ll.* 9-10).

3-4 *fiends...majesty*. In addition to high position being “insulated” by other people, the fiends of hell (the demons or devils themselves) insulate its “majesty” – Bradburne’s use of “majesty” is heavily ironic. See note on 14 “Yet...reign”.

5 *man...alone*. Bradburne points out the detachment and isolation that comes from being insulated from the rest of the world. The man in high position, who rules over his great estate, does so alone.

6 *to the Nth*. “To the nth degree”, meaning that the man must be humble and serene to the utmost degree or extent.

7 *throne*. Bradburne likens the man in high position to a king sitting on his throne, a throne of great “breadth and length” (*l.* 8). Cf. “seat” (*l.* 9). This man does not behave in a kingly manner though, as Bradburne later points out: see line 13.

9-13 *Being...mane*. This may be rephrased as: “it is all right (or all very well) to be a squire who is set squarely on a seat that is extravagantly aced, as long as whenever you meet a fellow man or country bumpkin, they rally round you and pull their forelocks in respect. Such actions will boost your ego, or, figuratively, augment your “lion’s mane”. Mixing metaphors, Bradburne refers to the man as both a squire and a lion. The former accentuates the gravity of the man as well as his rigidity – “set squarely” (*l.* 9) has connotations of being set firmly and solidly. The latter is used comically in a similar way to “Of Education” (*BA* 10) – see note on 11-12 “Under...tower”.

9 *squire*. Bradburne uses “squire” loosely in the sense of “a country gentleman or landed proprietor, especially one who is the principal landowner in a village or district” (*OED* “squire” n. 5b). Cf. “man of great estate” (*l.* 5).

9-10 *seat/Extravagantly aced*. The squire’s country seat (see note on 5 “country-seat” in “Of Philanthropy” (*BA* 41)) functions like the aforementioned “throne” (*l.* 7), symbolising his position of authority or dignity. Bradburne, however, undercuts any

authenticity such a person might have by pointing out the extravagance of his material possessions. Any suggestions of his kingly attributes are self-fabricated.

11-13 *forelocks...mane*. Bradburne again highlights the need of people in positions of authority or high social standing to feed off other people's support and loyalty (regardless of the sincerity of their rallying around). As in "Of Education" (BA 10), it is the impostor lion-figure who looks ridiculous in his costume.

12 *Fellows...bumpkins*. Fellow men, and awkward or clownish country people (see *OED* "bumpkin" 1).

14 *Yet...reign*. Having stated moral guidelines for a "man of great estate" (l. 5) in the second quatrain, Bradburne now points to the ultimate example Jesus gives, of a man in high position who embodies all these qualities. Jesus "reign[s]" as an authentic king, with true humility and care for his fellow men, as opposed to the man Bradburne describes throughout the poem. Cf. Phil. 2.6-9.

[24] Of Cocks and Hens

"Of Cocks and Hens" is dated 21 February 1970. It is the only poem in the sequence where the acrostic matches the title exactly. Interestingly, "Of Angels and of Birds" (whose acrostic reads ANGELS AND BIRDS) is the closest other example in *Bradburne's Assays*. "Of Cocks and Hens" derives its coherence from its subject matter and its rigid form rather than from any inherently logical progression of thought. Bradburne's powers of observation allow him to describe unexpected similarities between fowl and human behaviour. A theme of communication underlies most of the octave: "speaking" (l.1), "cluck" (l.1), "chuckle" (l.2), "crowing" (l.3), "rattling" (l.4), "cry" (l.5), "shouts" (l.6), "remark" (l.7), "words" (l.13). The first two quatrains refer mainly to male behaviour (the "cocks" of the title), the third to female (the "hens"), while the final couplet alludes to Jesus. The quatrains are linked by the overarching theme of cocks and hens, with implied parallels with human activity. Otherwise the sonnet appears

to be largely an acrostic game – though it might perhaps be read as an allegory or parable. It may be summarised thus: humans seem content to punctuate their humdrum lives with an occasional muttering, and to raise their voices only on special occasions. They are content to behave like roosters that crow morning, noon and night, or, like broody hens that spend their time fretting anxiously over their chickens. Bradburne suggests that humankind is so busy with their ordinariness (suggested by “Ordinarily”) that they never fully grasp (“never enough...recall”) the extraordinary love of Jesus, epitomised by his words of loving pity as he wept over Jerusalem: see note on 13-14 “Never...birds”. It is possible that Bradburne gained some inspiration for this poem from his time at St Anthony’s mission station, Gandachibvuva, during 1963. See p. 26. At Gandachibvuva,

On the hill there dwelt with John two cocks and about 20 hens. He called himself in Shona a ‘fudza huku’ (hen herdsman). The two girls at the Mission kitchen entrusted this little flock to his care. The flock soon had names and the two cocks were called the Earl of Ganda and the Duke of Chibvuva! The cocks were wont to fight over their wives and the supremacy of their kingdom. The Earl was a big bustling cock – fine to behold. The Duke was lean and could out-manoeuvre the portly Earl. John wrote about their antics in verse. (Dove 155-56)

He is probably also drawing on his later experiences at Silveira House, where he moved out of the mission house (see p. 30):

He built a lean-to shack next to the hen house with bits of roof sheeting, bricks and wire. In the daytime he put his typewriter upon a box amid the hens and typed away merrily. (Dove 170)

Bradburne’s predominant use of “k” sounds in the poem (in “speaking”, “cluck”, “chuckle”, “scratch”, “crowing”, “occasions”, “luck”, “cock”, “cry”, “kindly remark”, “cock-clocks keeping”, “chicks”, “mankind recalls”, “Christ’s affection”) onomatopoeically imitates the clucking of chickens.

1-2 *Ordinarily...scratch.* In drawing out the similarities between the ordinary speech of humans and the inconsequential clucking of fowls as they scratch in the dirt, Bradburne comments on the triteness of a lifestyle characterised by shallow communication, however amicable, and on the impoverished existence of people who are obliged to “scratch” a living. In using the first personal pronoun “we”, he identifies with the cocks, rather than commenting deprecatingly from a position of ironic detachment.

2 *Friendly*. “In a friendly manner, like a friend” (*OED* “friendly” adv.).

3-4 *Crowing’s...match*. Bradburne notes two occasions that stimulate a livelier vocal response in people than their usual mundane or inarticulate “clucking”. He notes that they “crow” when wishing men good luck before going into battle, and also when “rattling” (the opposition) before a sporting match (see *OED* “match” n.¹ 6b). “Crowing” and “rattling” both denote the loud phatic sounds that people make on such occasions.

5 *Cock...noon*. The comma in “at dawn, at noon” may be replaced with “and” for the sense of the line. The use of “cry” affords the cock the position of a town crier shouting out the time.

6 (*Kindly...sleeping*). Bradburne’s “kindly remark” notes a slight annoyance at being woken by cocks crowing at dawn. “Kindly” is used to mean “please”. Here, as again in line 8, an outsider (the reader) is called upon to take note of what the poet has observed.

8 *cock-clocks*. Bradburne challenges the reader with a two-fold impossibility: to keep up with the crowing of cocks (which, he claims, crow morning, noon and night) and to attempt regular time-keeping by using the crowing of cocks. The latter recalls the Nun’s Priest’s assertions about Chaunticleer’s crowing, in the tale of Chaunticleer and Pertelote (see Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*):

In al the land, of crowing nas his peer.

 Wel sikerer was his crowing in his logge
 Than is a klokke or an abbey orlogge.
 By nature he knew ech ascencioun
 Of the equynoxial in thilke toun;
 For whan degrees fiftene weren ascended,
 Thanne crew he that it myghte nat been amended.

(“The Nun’s Priest’s Tale” ll. 2850, 2853-58)

10, 12 *full oft, full soft*. These archaic adverbial uses of “full” have a Chaucerian ring. Not only is this use of the word outdated but so is its positioning, which in both instances is after the expression that would normally have preceded it. Paraphrased, they should read: “very often, desperate with anxiety” and “very soft meal”.

11-12 *Happy...soft*. Playing with the proverb, “don’t count your chickens before they’ve hatched”, Bradburne notes that the broody hen will only be happy when her chicks are hatched and enfolded safely in a pen, feeding on meal.

13-14 *Never...birds*. The words which symbolise Jesus’ affection for humankind (words, Bradburne says, which people do not remember often enough) are found in the gospel of Matthew as Jesus weeps over Jerusalem:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (23.37)

Having described arrogant male behaviour and anxious female behaviour, Bradburne characterises both by implication as infantile (“children”, “chickens”) in the face of the all-encompassing love of God, which would render arrogance and anxiety superfluous. That human beings reject this love (“ye would not”) reduces them to the status of feather-brained creatures – with whom Bradburne, again, identifies himself (“*us* birds” (l. 14) (my emphasis)).

[25] **Of Election**

“Of Election” is not dated, but is positioned between two poems dated 21 February 1970. Bradburne’s syntax in “Of Election” obscures the meaning to such an extent that it requires rewriting in order to become accessible:

Esau, that hairy son of Rebecca, did not suit her, to the point that she plotted against him. Catholically speaking, Rebecca prefigures La Plus Belle well. Jerusalem, let the blessed election of Jacob never be forgotten (the election bestowed on him by God in his vision of angels as he dreamt, pillowing his head on a stone). Jerusalem, it does not matter if you are as hairy as Esau, as long as you freely choose Mary as your (spiritual) mother – she who is fairer than Rebecca by far, and rarer too. Therefore choose the Morning Star.

The theme is Divine election, where God chooses the “smooth” brother Jacob, rather than his hairier twin Esau, to be the ancestor of the people of God. Bradburne asserts, however, that even the sons of Esau may share in the blessings of that election if they, hairy or not, accept the love of the mother of Jesus. The poem centres on the story of

Esau and Jacob, the twin sons of Isaac and Rebecca. Jacob, the younger of the twins, was the elect of God, chosen over his brother to become the father of the nation Israel.

And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. (Gen 35.10-12)

Even before Esau and Jacob were born,

the Lord said unto [Rebecca], Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger. (Gen. 25.23)

It is from the line of Jacob that Jesus ultimately descended (see Matt. 1.1-16). There is only an indirect link made between these two in the poem, by virtue of the comparison of their mothers: Rebecca prefigures Mary.

The acrostic Bradburne chooses is defective and does not appear to be directly related to the subject matter of the poem. Whether interpreted as ETCHED EIO or as ETCHED (D)EIO, it seems not to have much meaning. The poem consists of roughly three groupings of three-line stanzas, although by the initial rhyme scheme of abba, it would appear that Bradburne may initially have set out to write a sonnet.

1 Esau...not. From his birth Esau is described as hairy, having skin like a “hairy garment” (Gen. 25.25). As an aside, Bradburne playfully puns on this in “her suited”, “hirsute” meaning “hairy” (*OED* “hirsute” a. 1). Esau did not “suit” Rebecca since she favoured Jacob (see Gen. 25.28).

2-3 who...Belle. Rebecca, the mother of Israel (Jacob), prefigures Mary, the mother of Jesus.

3 La Plus Belle. Bradburne describes Mary as “La Plus Belle”, the most beautiful (woman).

4 Hierusalem. Latin for “the city of Jerusalem” (Lewis and Short 854) – more commonly spelt “Hierosolyma”. Bradburne addresses Jerusalem as the nation of Israel, those descendants promised to Jacob by God.

5 Election...Jacob. Jacob was chosen, or elected, by God to inherit the land promised to Abraham and Isaac, and to father the nation of Israel (see Gen 35.10-12). Cf. the “elect” of God in Isa. 45.4, 65.9.

5-6 pillows...angels. Bradburne alludes to Jacob’s dream as he slept on a pillow of stone:

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 28.12-14)

The significance of this incident, in the context of the poem, lies in God’s election of Jacob. His vision directly affects the nation of Israel, which Bradburne addresses as “Hierusalem” (see note on 4 “Hierusalem”).

6-8 pilose...Mary. In Bradburne’s mind, what is essential – regardless of whether a person is hairy or not – is a devotion to Mary. He indicates that there is hope for the Esaus of Jerusalem through claiming Mary as their mother.

6 pilose. “Covered with hair, esp. with soft flexible hair; hairy; pilous” (*OED* “pilose” a.).

9 Morning Star. Bradburne frequently refers to Mary as the Morning Star, as, for example, in “Bob Major”: the “Mother of Our Lord, that Morning Star” (*l.* 21; 76.29). In some instances she “supersedes the truant Lucifer” (*op. cit.* *l.* 22), the fallen morning star, as in Bradburne’s earlier poem “Of nothing” (*BA* 20) – see note on 14 “Your... God” in “Of nothing”.

[26] **Of Shaving**

“Of Shaving” is dated 21 February 1970. The subject matter is thematically connected with the previous one, which introduces the issue of hairiness in the opening line. Bradburne makes his opinion on shaving quite clear in the acrostic: A WASTE OF TIM(WG)E. Throughout the sonnet he argues, perhaps tongue in cheek, against the necessity of shaving, giving several reasons from his own perspective in Mutemwa. These include the expense of razors and waste of steel in making them, but, most importantly, the time it takes to shave – which he would rather spend in prayer. Bradburne finally dismisses the topic on the grounds of his belief that Jesus “wears a beard” (l. 10). The end structure in this sonnet is curious, with lines 11 and 14 acting as a disconnected concluding rhyming couplet, giving it a rhyme scheme of ababcdcdeef(ef)f.

2 Prime. Bradburne argues that shaving interferes with the canonical hour of Prime, during which he recited the *Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (see p. 22). Prime is “appointed for the first hour of the day (beginning originally at 6 A.M., but sometimes at sunrise)” (*OED* “prime” n.¹ 1).

3 orisons. Prayers (see *OED* “orison” n. 1).

3-4 His...unnerved. Yahweh has worn his beard so long (or, for such a length of time) that it unnerves those who are clean-shaven (or “shorn”). Bradburne names these people “the shorn”, thus associating them with sheep, to whom the term “shorn” more commonly applies. Bradburne may be implying that, like the herd-mentality of sheep, people usually follow the norm by thinking that shaving is necessary.

5-8 The steel...aside. Bradburne considers the amount of steel used to make razors (presumably he is thinking in global terms), the time and energy taken in their manufacture, as well as the cost of buying them, in contrast with the carelessness with which they are “tossed...aside”. He describes this contrast as “ever sharp”, and compares it to the contrast between sanity and madness. He thus implies that sanity itself is often tossed aside.

8 *carp*. To “complain or find fault” (*Collins* “*carp*” vb.).

10 *Indeed...King*. Bradburne claims that Jesus, as King, sets the ultimate example for him to follow. Since Jesus “wears a beard” the matter is concluded, and needs no more debate.

11 *knave*. Archaic for a servant; frequently as opposed to a knight (see *OED* “*knave*” n. 2).

12-13 (*When...crave*). Bradburne envisions the time when he will appear before God in heaven, where he hopes to fulfil his desire of flinging himself “Gaily upon God’s highland”. He often associates heaven with high mountainous landscape, such as the Pennine range in Cumberland where he grew up, or the Highlands of Scotland. Cf. “Of a District” (*BA* 21). In addition, Bradburne is punning on the “Highland fling”, a form of Scottish dancing.

14 “*Eternity...time*. A playful paradox, in which Bradburne justifies his own reluctance to shave.

[27] Of a Sunday in Lent

“Of a Sunday in Lent” is dated 22 February 1970 – the second Sunday in Lent that year. It comprises Bradburne’s reflections on the morning service that day, when, it seems, a number of African bees had made their presence heard. David Gibbs, based at the nearby All Souls Mission, describes services at Mutemwa:

A priest would visit Mutemwa each week for Mass and on the other days John would hold the morning service, reading from the Bible, reciting the morning prayers, administering the Blessed Sacrament and playing the organ. (Dove 204)

They met in the afternoon as well: “At about four o’clock the bell rang for the saying of the rosary and evening prayers in the church” (*op. cit.* 206). Bradburne describes the bees (real or imagined) humming along at the Sunday morning service, as if they wished to join in with the religious celebration. Having evoked a sense of the bees’ spirituality, he

compares their social structure to that of the community at Mutemwa. He muses on the possibility of these bees being called to contemplation – the vocation to which he himself felt drawn. Considering the highly successful social structure of bees (with drones, workers and queen bees each performing different essential roles in the hive), Bradburne seems to assert that contemplatives have a role to play in society.

1 *bourdon stiff*. Bradburne uses “stiff” in the archaic sense of “powerful, loud” (*OED* “stiff” a. 16) and “bourdon” as “The low undersong or accompaniment, which was sung while the leading voice sang a melody” (*OED* “bourdon², burdoun” 1). The phrase recalls the Pardoner’s portrait in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*:

Ful loude he soong ‘Com hider, love, to me!’
This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun... . (“General Prologue” ll. 672-73)

In “Of a Sunday in Lent”, the bees accompany the songs of praise sung at the morning church service in Mutemwa. Cf. the following passage from “Ut Unum Sint”

(BRAD0876):

There buzz ‘innumerable bees’
Among the shapely linden-trees,
And bumbles drowsy bourdon drones
Where e’er the honeysuckle roams.

2 *tenor...praise*. The “general drift of thought” of our praise (see *Collins* “tenor” n. 2), meaning God. Bradburne also puns on “tenor”, simultaneously referring to the adult male voice with a register between baritone and counter-tenor. The bees supplied a kind of “ground bass” to the melody sung by the congregation.

3 *These...tiff*. The bees attended as fellow-worshippers, not to cause trouble, to sting or have a dispute with anyone. Instead, Bradburne’s description of them as “great ones” suggests their dignity and importance.

4 *lays*. Short lyrics or narrative poems meant to be sung (see *OED* “lay” n.⁴ 1).

5-8 *I think...cells*. Bradburne draws a comparison between the communal life of bees and that of the lepers at Mutemwa. He imagines the bees as a monastic community: despite being highly social insects, each one lives in the solitude of the hexagonal wax cells in

which young are reared. Like the lepers, the bees each have their own “cell”, but are not isolated from one another – they are “set/Each in a hut mongst other brother cells” (l. 7-8). See note on 11 “hut” in “Of Purgatory” (BA 16). During Bradburne’s time the settlement consisted of “about 100 square huts” (Dove 202), in which the lepers were separately housed (see p. 34).

5 *cenobites*. A cenobite is “a member of a religious order living in a community; as opposed to an anchorite, who lives in solitude” (OED “cænobite, cenobite”).

8 *mongst*. Among.

9 *These... worker-kind*. “These bees” are drones (male honeybees), and are larger than worker bees, their female counterpart. Unlike the busy workers, drones function only to impregnate the queen bee (see OED “drone” n.¹ 1). Bradburne, who often alludes to his feeling of uselessness by calling himself a “drone”, wonders whether they, like him, feel called to a life of contemplation (l. 10). See note on 11 “drone” in “Of Gardens” (BA 4).

11 *cloud of witnesses*. Cf. Heb. 12.1:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us... .

Bradburne regards the bees as divine encouragement to the leper community: to exercise patience despite their afflictions.

12 *Mighty Sun*. By implying that these bees worship the sun, Bradburne associates them with ancient cultures. This gives precedence and distinction to their beliefs. Veneration of the sun as a deity dates back to Atenism in Egypt in the fourteenth century BC, and is found in Indo-European and Meso-American cultures as well (see “sun worship”, *NEB*, 11: 389). In addition, Bradburne may be making a playful comparison between the “Sun” that the bees worship and the “Son” (of God) whom Christians worship.

13-14 *We... Lourdes*. Bradburne is referring to the well-known Marian hymn, “Immaculate Mary”, sung to the “Lourdes Pilgrims’ Tune”. Verse one and the refrain run:

Immaculate Mary!
 Our hearts are on fire;
 That title so wondrous
 Fills all our desire!
 Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria!
 Ave, Ave, Maria! (*Catholic Hymns* no. 75)

Lourdes is a

Town on the Gave de Pau River, at the foot of the Pyrenees, southwest France. Lourdes was an obscure village until the Blessed Virgin appeared there to the 14-year-old St. Bernadette Soubirous 18 times between February 11 and July 16, 1858. It has since become the location of one of the most popular Marian shrines in the world. (“Lourdes”, *NCE*, 8: 1031-32)

After Bradburne’s visit to Lourdes in 1949, the town gained special significance for him. He often wrote about his time at Lourdes, and in later years frequently referred to Mary as “Our Lady of Lourdes”. On 25 March 1858 Mary is reported to have identified herself to Bernadette by telling her, “in the dialect of Lourdes, ‘I am the Immaculate Conception’” (*op. cit.* 8: 1032), a phrase taken as confirmation of the Roman Catholic Church’s doctrine on the Immaculate Conception, and one that is quoted above the words to “Immaculate Mary”. This hymn is commonly known as the “Lourdes Hymn”, owing to its emphasis on the Immaculate Conception. Although the hymn does not hail “Our Lady Queen of Lourdes” (*l.* 14) in as many words, the seventh verse does refer to her as “Immaculate Queen”.

13 *recessional that hymn*. A recessional hymn is one sung at the close of a church service as the clergy and choir withdraw from the chancel (see *OED* “recessional” a. 1). In Mutemwa this was far less formal than described here. A closing hymn would be sung as the visiting priest (and/or Bradburne himself) led the lepers out the chapel after Mass. “Immaculate Mary” may have been chosen as the recessional hymn because this particular Sunday fell within the octave of the feast day of St. Bernadette on 18 February (four days previously).

14 *no whim*. Although “whim” functions primarily as an ejaculation and a rhyme for “hymn”, Bradburne uses this peculiar ending to indicate that the chosen recessional hymn was not sung on a whim, but fitted the occasion. See note on 13-14 “We... Lourdes”.

[28] **Of the Ark (on every side)**

“Of the Ark (on every side)” is dated 22 February 1970. It is “Of the Ark (on every side)” in that it is about the three arks featured in the Old Testament, and about the Church, which comprises the virtues of these three. The original ark is the ship in which Noah was able to effect the salvation of all created beings; the second is the “close basket” (*OED* “ark” n. 1) in which Moses’s mother hid him to save his life; the last is the gold-plated “wooden coffer containing the tables of the law, kept in the Holiest Place of the Tabernacle” (*op. cit.* 2) – the Ark of the Covenant. Bradburne uses the word in an additional sense to denote the Christian Church. This is not without precedent, as

Both the Ark of Noah and the Ark of the Covenant have been symbolically interpreted by the Christian Fathers and theologians. According to Tertullian, St. Jerome, and others, the Ark of Noah typifies the Church, which, like it, is the only means of salvation, containing saints and sinners symbolized by the pure and impure animals, and being tossed about by tempests but never submerged.

(“Ark”, *ODCC*, 87)

The word “nave”, referring to the body of a church building, in which most of the congregation is accommodated, is derived from the Latin word for a ship: *navis* (see *OED* “nave” n.²). The Ark of the Covenant was particularly significant to Bradburne, who identified with its symbolism. Several passages on the Ark are underlined in his Bible, including God’s command to Noah, “Make thee an ark” (Gen 6.14). It seems that he interpreted this as an instruction to himself to build an “ark”, which he did in his room: see p. 35.

Bradburne’s personal interjections (“[I had] better begin with...” (*l.* 1), “Unless I too evade an issue, next enters my mind...” (*ll.* 5-6)) give the poem a conversational tone, as of a narrator with his audience. The acrostic, BARQUE OF PETROS, refers to the Roman Catholic Church. Bradburne often called the Church the “barque of Peter” (see Dove 41), since it was the apostle Peter on whom Jesus declared he would build his

Church (see Matt. 16.18). (When Jesus first called Peter and his brother Andrew to be his disciples, he said “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4.19).) “Barque of Peter” may be intended to symbolise the Church, akin, in its task of salvation, to Noah’s ark. The Pope, regarded by the Roman Catholic Church as the successor of St. Peter, uses as his personal symbol the crossed keys, in allusion to Jesus’ charge to Peter that he would be given the “keys of the kingdom” (Matt. 16.19). In this sense, Peter and his successors control access to salvation in the same way as Noah did.

1-3 *Noah’s...surviving*. Noah built his ark to preserve the life of his family during the Flood, along with a pair of every sort of creature on the earth. It contained all living creatures that were to be redeemed (delivered from death) by being chosen to survive the flood. See Gen. 6.12-8.19.

3 *subterfuge*. Usually used of an argument; in this case, referring to Noah’s ark – a place of concealment, a refuge from the flood (see *OED* “subterfuge” n. 1, 2). The walls of the ark successfully quelled the onslaught of the flood waters. Bradburne forces this meaning slightly in order to rhyme “subterfuge” with “huge”.

5 *Unless...issue*. The word “too” implies that someone before Bradburne has evaded an issue, but he does not give any hints as to who it might be or what the issue is.

6-8 *little...win*. Moses’s mother hid him after he was born in order to save him from being killed (along with the other Hebrew boys) under the Egyptian Pharaoh’s decree. After three months “she took for him an ark of bulrushes [underlined in Bradburne’s Bible], and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river’s brink” (Gen. 2.3). The daughter of Pharaoh saw the ark while she was bathing in the river, and took pity on the baby. She adopted him as her own, thereby saving him from death. In choosing the word “barque”, Bradburne is probably playing on the sound of “ark”, both signifying boats. “Barque” also echoes the acrostic (see introduction above).

7 *Our patriarchal.* Moses is not one of the Biblical “Patriarchs” – this title is usually reserved for the “fathers of the nation”, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – but he is “the Founder and Lawgiver of Israel” (“Moses”, *ODCC*, 943), and it is to this that Bradburne makes reference. He uses “patriarchal” to signify Moses’s position of leadership and authority over not only the people of Israel but the whole Church (indicated by the possessive “our”).

9 *Perhaps...thereon.* Bradburne links Moses’s experience as an infant, of being saved by an ark, with his experience as an adult, as the receiver of God’s law on stone tablets, which were preserved in the Ark of the Covenant.

9-10 *Bezaleel...bid.* Bezaleel was chosen by God for his talent in craftsmanship, in order that he might construct the Ark of the Covenant (see Exod. 31.1-5). He made it according to the instructions God gave to Moses: see Exod. 37.2-5.

12 *containing...hid.* The stone tablets that Moses received from God on Mount Sinai were preserved (“hid”) in the Ark of the Covenant, as instructed: “thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee” (Exod. 25.16). The stone tablets, also known as the tables of the Law, contained “Truth” because God’s commandments were written on them. Having received the Law from God on Mount Sinai, “[Moses] wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments” (*op. cit.* 34.28).

13-14 *Only...Son.* The only ark that remains to be written about is the Church and she is one whose Word (Jesus) is the Son of God and her (the Church). “God’s and her” together forms the possessive of “good Son”. Bradburne’s statement sounds peculiar since the historical Jesus is believed to be the Son of God and the Virgin Mary, and, in addition, perceived as the founder of the Church, traditionally thought of as his Bride (see 2 Cor. 11.2). However, inasmuch as Jesus is the “Word” of God (see John 1.1) and thus emanates from God the Father, he may also be regarded as the son of the Church, which is itself the custodian of the (written) word of God and bears witness to Jesus. The Son of God is also, in a sense, the Son of Man. The Church, the final ark, is seen as containing

“Truth” (l. 12) like the Ark of the Covenant (see note on 12 “containing...hid”) inasmuch as she is the custodian of God’s Word.

[29] **De Spiritu Domini**

“De Spiritu Domini” is dated 22 February 1970. In it, Bradburne celebrates the all-pervading presence of God’s Spirit in creation. Bradburne avers that human happiness in this Spirit-filled world is determined by people’s response to this Spirit. He asserts that peace is only found by actively choosing to embrace the Holy Spirit and by discarding sinful practices. Following in the hermeneutic tradition of tracing manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the Bible, Bradburne locates God’s presence in both visual and aural terms. He describes the Holy Spirit as a Voice who is heard as well as seen, and shows that the effect of that Voice is dramatic (breaking cedars, appearing as a raging fire) as well as gentle (guiding and nurturing deer, warming men’s hearts) and inspirational (see notes on 5-6 “breaks...young” and 7-8 “Beseems...tongue”). The poem concludes with a shift in perspective to Jesus – appropriately, since the function of the Voice (the Holy Spirit), in Bradburne’s model of the Trinity (see note on 5 “The Voice”), is to speak God’s Word (Jesus) and to point to Jesus. As in the Transfiguration, the example that Bradburne cites, the Voice confirms that Jesus is the Son of God. Having shifted his focus away from the Holy Spirit, Bradburne highlights Jesus’ supremacy, at the same time subtly celebrating Mary’s unique relationship with him. He uses the same unusual rhyme scheme here as he does in “Des Histoires” (BA 2) – see introduction to “Des Histoires”.

Title: Latin for “Concerning the Spirit of God”, or, as in Bradburne’s opening lines, “The Spirit of the Lord”. In keeping with the other titles in *Bradburne’s Assays*, in which “Of” indicates the subject matter to be addressed, the title may be translated as “Of the Spirit of the Lord”.

1-2 *The Spirit...world*. Cf. Ps. 24.1: “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein”.

2 *whole round world*. Cf. “whole wide world” (l. 13).

3-4 *Wonder...sin*. Bradburne characterises the human response to God’s Spirit (which infuses all of Creation) with two contrasting reactions. Either people wonder at it in awe, or they wander aimlessly: they are angry at life, or they live virtuously, in obedience to the Holy Spirit, and are at peace. (Significantly, Peter, James and John “wondered” at the transfiguration of Jesus.) Bradburne’s juxtaposition of the words “leaving” and “cleaving” echoes “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2.24), and emphasises the strength of the love people have in reaction to the love of the Holy Spirit. Bradburne envisages the close embrace of a person “cleaving” to the Holy Spirit in a similar way to a man and wife becoming “one flesh”.

5 *The Voice*. “The Voice” denotes the Holy Spirit, “The Spirit of the Lord” (l. 1). One way in which Bradburne conceived of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was as Thought, Word and Voice respectively, each member of the Trinity fulfilling a unique aspect of their actions of love. The Father’s thoughts are expressed through the Voice as the Word, his Son:

The Thought, The Word, The Voice are Persons Three
Of Love in Love with Love for evermore... . (“Logos”, ll. 7-8; 74.188)

The Thought of God is God The Father good,
The Word of God expresses what God thinks,
The Voice of God wings vibrant in the wood
Singing, or in our hearts with silence links;
These Three are Love Begetting, Love Begotten
And Love Proceeding as The Voice of both... .

(“Spring is in the air”, ll. 5-10; 78.360)

5-6 *breaks...young*. Cf. Psalm 29.5, 9:

The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon... . The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.

Bradburne quotes this Psalm to demonstrate two effects that God’s Voice may produce. The first image inspires awe at God’s sheer power, while the second reveals his

tenderness, gentleness and devotion to nurturing life. With this same verse, Bradburne celebrates the power and beauty of the Holy Spirit in a similar manner in “Vox Domini”:

The Voice of God rejoices with the breezes
 And in the wind arising form fast fire,
 The Voice of God breaks cedars as He pleases
 And sports on the support of harp and lyre;
 The Voice of God, as David has remarked,
 Shows hinds where best they may bring forth their young... . (ll. 1-6; 79.19)

6 *hind*. A female deer (see *OED* “hind” n.¹ 1).

7-8 *Beseems...tongue*. Bradburne alludes to the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus’ disciples in tongues of fire: see Acts 2.1-4. The image of the Spirit as fire reiterates Bradburne’s appreciation of God’s multifaceted nature (see note on 5-6 “breaks...young”). His Spirit, like fire, is powerful and terrible, but also imparts life-giving warmth. It “warms/The hearts of men” both physically and spiritually – giving life to their bodies and to their spirits. God also warms men’s hearts, figuratively, by inspiring them with affection towards himself (see *OED* “warm” v. 2a). In the same way that the Holy Spirit inspired the disciples to speak in tongues at Pentecost, Bradburne claims that the Spirit inspires his writing (the Spirit “makes ready pen my tongue”). Cf. Ps. 45.1: “my tongue is the pen of a ready writer”. See pp. 49-50.

7 *Beseems*. Seems, appears (see *OED* “beseem” v. 1).

7 *ire*. “Anger; wrath” (*OED* “ire” n.).

9-13 *While...Sole*. While Peter, James and John stood in wonder on the Mount of the Transfiguration before Jesus (the “One”), who shone like the sun with garments as white as snow, the Father’s Voice proclaimed from heaven that Jesus was his one and only beloved Son, beloved over and above Elijah or Moses. Bradburne is probably stimulated by the Gospel reading (in his lectionary) for the Second Sunday in Lent (the date given for the poem): the story of the Transfiguration as found in Matt. 17.1-5:

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there

appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

Bradburne also uses the Marcan description of Jesus' appearance: "his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow" (Mark 9.3). Bradburne interprets the voice the disciples hear as that of the Holy Spirit, "The Father's Voice" (Bradburne emphasises the uniqueness and divinity of the person of the Holy Spirit with the capitalised "The"). See note on 5 "The Voice". The Voice proceeding from "The Father" is both audible and visible (displayed by heaven), as with the wind and fire at Pentecost (see Acts 2.1-4).

12 (*Over...Moses*). Moses and Elijah ("Elias"), the embodiments of the Law and the Prophets respectively, represent Old-Testament Israel's experience of God, the experience fulfilled in and superseded by Jesus. "Over" may be interpreted as "higher than", "superior to" or "over and above" in that Jesus' ministry fulfils what has gone before and supersedes that of even the greatest spiritual leaders. In addition, the disciples' "vision of Moses and Elijah, most notable in law and prophecy in Israel, signifies that law and prophecy support Jesus and his mission" ("Transfiguration", *IDB*, 3: 687).

13 *Belov-ed*. Bradburne hyphenates this word to ensure that it comprises three syllables, in keeping with his other ten-syllable lines.

13-14 *the...regained*. Bradburne closes with a paradox that subtly glorifies both Jesus and his mother. He states that Jesus could not be contained (restricted, bound, restrained, controlled) by the whole wide world (emphasis on "wide" as opposed to "round" (*l. 2*)), yet the Virgin Mary contained (held, enclosed) him in her womb. Restated, "What worlds could not contain, contained her womb" ("God was the good that came from Nazareth", *l. 3*; 75.521). Cf. note on 13-15 "that...freely" in "De Verbo Dei" (*BA* 17). "Paradise regained" recalls the title of Milton's work, which describes Jesus' victory over Satan's temptations, and, thereby, the readmission of humankind into Paradise – lost through Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden (see Gen. 3).

[30] **De Voce Patris**

“De Voce Patris” is dated 22 February 1970. The theme of the sonnet follows on from “De Spiritu Domini”, where Bradburne refers to the Holy Spirit as “The Voice” (l. 5) or “The Father’s Voice” (l. 11). “De Voce Patris” seeks to answer the question “What is the Father’s Voice and how defined?” (l. 1), essentially wrestling with the implications of the complex and mysterious doctrine of the Trinity. The following passage helps illuminate the tradition of thought in which Bradburne is working.

The Trinity is the term employed to signify the central doctrine of the Christian religion – the truth that in the unity of the Godhead there are Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, these Three Persons being truly distinct one from another. Thus, in the words of the Athanasian Creed: ‘the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.’ In this Trinity of Persons the Son is begotten of the Father by an eternal generation, and the Holy Spirit proceeds by an eternal procession from the Father and the Son. Yet, notwithstanding this difference as to origin, the Persons are co-eternal and co-equal: all alike are uncreated and omnipotent.

(“Trinity, The Blessed”, *CE*, par. 1)

Furthermore, the Athanasian Creed states that

The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father, and of the Son neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

(“Athanasian Creed, The”, *CE*, par. 3)

Meditation on the Trinity is a key theme in Bradburne’s writing. Among other analogies he uses to deepen his understanding of this mystery are considerations of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as Heat, Light and Sound (see “Of Heat and Light and Sound” (*BA* 31)), as Chooser, Chosen and Choice (see “For a Peal of Eight”; 78.151), and as the Memory, the Understanding and the Will (see “In Principio – de Trinitate”; 72.71).

Bradburne structures this poem logically: he poses a question, addresses it, summarises his argument and describes its application. In the octave he explains his understanding of the interaction between the three persons of the Trinity, using his definition of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as Thought, Word and Voice, respectively. The sestet comprises Bradburne’s reflection on this definition’s implication for Christian life. This sequence of Thought, Word and Voice determines the internal structure of the poem; all three persons are evoked in this order three times. Externally, the poem is a hybrid of sonnet forms, adopting a Shakespearean rhyme scheme with concluding rhyming couplet,

but using the rhetorical structure of a Petrarchan sonnet, with a definite volta between the octave and sestet. The poem is more lucid, the tone more conversational, and the syntax less convoluted than in many of the acrostic sonnets in *Bradburne's Assays*, where acrostics inevitably impose additional constraints of their own.

Title: Latin for “Concerning the voice of the Father”, or, “Of the Voice of the Father”, in keeping with the other titles in *Bradburne's Assays*, in which “Of” introduces the subject matter to be addressed.

1 *What...defined?* Bradburne sets up the central question to be addressed by the rest of the poem. His intention is to explore and attempt to grasp what, in essence, the Father’s Voice actually is, as well as to determine how that Voice may be defined within the context of Bradburne’s understanding of the Trinity (as Thought, Word and Voice).

2 *The...thinks.* In order to answer what the “Father’s Voice” (*l.* 2) is, Bradburne first defines the Father’s Thought (from which his Voice proceeds). He characterises God the Father as the member of the Trinity in whom thought originates. This accords with Christian teaching on the Father being uncreated: “the Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten” (“Athanasian Creed, The”, *CE*, par. 3).

2-4 *His...absurd.* Bradburne defines Jesus as the expression of the Father’s “Thought”. This idea may be based on St. Augustine of Hippo, who conceptualised “the generation of the Son as the act of thinking on the part of the Father” (an idea Augustine derived from Tertullian) (“Trinity, Doctrine of the”, *ODCC*, 1395). Bradburne hastens to add that although the Word is generated by the Thought, the Son begotten of the Father, the two are “so combined...as makes division quite absurd”. Bradburne’s emphasis on the unity of the two implies that they are co-eternal and co-equal, thereby avoiding the heresy that the Son is subordinate to the Father, since he is understood to proceed from the Father. Cf. “divisions on a ground” in “De Verbo Dei” (*BA* 17, *l.* 15).

5-7 *God...Voice.* Bradburne describes the creation of the world in terms of his model of the Trinity. He imagines God the Father speaking his thought as the Word (Jesus), using

“His Voice” – the Holy Spirit. He is drawing on two passages of Scripture: Gen. 1.1-3 and John 1.1-5. “Light/Of Light” is deliberately ambiguous. It recalls “what [God] said” (l. 5) while creating the world: “let there be light” (Gen. 1.3). What came forth was “Light/Of Light” in that it originated in (or came from) the source of Light itself – it was of that “Light which is Himself”. This phrase also refers to Jesus, who is described in the Nicene Creed as “God of God; Light of light; true God of true God; begotten, not made; consubstantial with the Father, by Whom all things were made” (*Prayer-Book* 36). In this interpretation “Light/Of Light which is Himself” denotes Jesus who (“which”) is God, and again highlights the unity of Father and Son.

7-8 *is...infused?*. Bradburne links two observations about the creation story in Genesis 1: first, that the Spirit that “moved upon the face of the waters” was the Holy Spirit – an accepted interpretation of this passage; second, that God’s voice spoke Creation into being. For example: “God *said*, Let there be light” (Gen. 1.3); “God *said*, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters” (*op. cit.* 1.6) and “God *said*, “Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together” (*op. cit.* 1.9) (my emphasis). Bradburne fuses the concept of God’s Spirit with his Voice, and names the Holy Spirit as the means by which God created. The choice of the word “infused” underscores the indissolubility of the Trinity: infusion is an irreversible process.

9 *Wherefore...Voice*. “Wherefore”, meaning “for which reason”, signals the conclusion of Bradburne’s argument in the octave. Having explained the interaction between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he summarises their roles: “the Thought, the Word, the Voice”.

10-12 *Our...song*. Bradburne’s economy of style here, to allude to fairly complex thinking, makes it difficult to understand his exact meaning. It is clear that he wishes to relate the interaction of the Trinity to human behaviour, but the details of this connection are not made obvious. This is largely due to the uncertainty of what Bradburne means by “that happy word ‘Rejoice’”, and by “His apostolic song”. As evidenced by his use elsewhere of “apostolic” and “song” in connection with Jesus, it is likely that “His apostolic song” refers to Jesus. “His” seems to denote “the Father” (l. 10). In this context, “apostolic” means one who is sent, a messenger (see *OED* “apostle” 1a): Jesus is

described in this way in the New Testament – as “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession” (Heb. 3.1), since “the Father *sent* the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4.14) (my emphasis). The connection between Jesus and a “song” is a more tenuous, but not without precedent in Bradburne’s works. In “Ut Unum Sint” (BRAD0876) he writes:

...the Good Shepherd sings in our midst, for the glory and honour and praise of His Father, and for the eternal peace and blessing of His flock. And His song is heard in its sublime beauty, in the monastic choirs of the great Contemplative Orders, whose work above all works is the singing of Divine Office, the ‘Opus Dei’. And the chanting of these monks, whose life is Christ, is infinitely more than an art: it is the voice of Love Incarnate, the music of the Lord, and the folding of many in One.

He describes God’s substance as musical in “When Philomel made Melody”:

The name of God is what He is,
His substance is His song
And love it is that clarifies
His presence all along... . (ll. 9-12; 76.22)

“Spring is in the air” portrays the Holy Spirit (the “Voice of God”) as the singer of God’s Word:

The Voice of God wings vibrant in the wood
Singing, or in our hearts with silence links;
These Three are Love Begetting, Love Begotten
And Love Proceeding as The Voice of both... . (ll. 7-10; 78.360)

From this, it may be safely assumed that “His apostolic song” alludes to Jesus – the song sung by the Holy Spirit under the direction of the Father. “[T]hat happy word ‘Rejoice’” is more difficult to unravel. It depends largely on whose word “Rejoice” is. If it is an instruction to rejoice, then Bradburne may have in mind a particular passage of Scripture, such as “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4.4). Mary’s jubilation after the annunciation and her conception of Jesus seems more relevant in this context, though, since the annunciation exemplifies a three-fold manifestation of the Trinity. “Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1.46-47). It is more likely, however, that the word “Rejoice” is conceived by the Father, spoken by his Voice, and enacted by Jesus, his Word. This inter-relatedness of the three persons of the Trinity in a single action is exactly what Bradburne is suggesting Christians should replicate in their interaction with God. He advocates that

human thoughts should be related to the Father as closely as the three persons of the Trinity are related to each other.

13-14 *May...show?*. Bradburne's rhetorical question re-iterates his emphasis on the unity of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit, "the Father's Voice", is so musical (restated in "Hierusalem": "My Master-Minstrel is the Holy Ghost" (l. 83; 00.50)) that there is no dissonance between the three persons of the Trinity. All three contribute in their own distinct ways to the *same* process, in absolute harmony with one another: the Voice expresses the Thought as the Word, the Thought uses the Voice to give utterance to the Word, and the Word assumes substance through the infusion (l. 8) of the Voice by the Thought.

[31] **Of Heat and Light and Sound**

"Of Heat and Light and Sound" is dated 22 February 1970. It contains Bradburne's first attempt at using the analogy of Heat, Light and Sound for the Trinity, an attempt perhaps to make the abstract mystery more apprehensible to material beings. The materials he chooses are three basic natural phenomena that occur in all daily life. He develops this analogy far more successfully in later poems such as "Heat, Light and Sound" (79.18), dated 3 June 1979:

There is no light, other than that reflected,
 Excepted it is engendered by blithe heat,
 A fresh analogy is thus projected
 For Father, Son and Holy Paraclete;
 The Father, Love The Thought, I call His Heat,
 The Son His Light diffuses it abroad,
 Christ, who is Love Begotten and Our Lord,
 Speaks to us now through Love The Paraclete;

The Thought and Word and Voice go hand in hand
 And yet God has no hand but that of Christ,
 We see His hand not in the Eucharist
 But by our Faith His grasp we understand;

Assumed is our humanity to One
 Whose face and form are warm as God The Son.

In this example, as in most of his later works, heat, light and sound are intended to represent Father, Son and Holy Spirit, respectively. In “Of Heat and Light and Sound”, however, where the internal logic is difficult to follow, this analogy is not yet fully developed. The poem is shaped by a pattern of association, rather than by a logical progression of thought encompassing a carefully thought-out analogy. Instead of following the structure suggested in the title, the poem begins, as it ends, with the Virgin Mary and her relationship with the Holy Spirit and Jesus. Only in the second quatrain does Bradburne introduce his analogy of the Holy Spirit as “Heat”. Towards the end of the octave, he progresses onto the subject of Jesus’ death, by virtue of which he shifts his focus to an analogy of Jesus as “Light” in the third quatrain. At this stage, although the natural progression of the poem is to draw a comparison between the Father and “Sound”, Bradburne asks, instead, and enigmatically, “[what] of Sound?” (l. 12). The response to the question is implicit in the song of Mary, now re-introduced into the poem, singing of her relationship with the crucified Jesus, symbolised by the “Host” (l. 14), whom she presents as the King and the soul’s “true bliss”. By the time Bradburne composed his later poems on the Trinity his heat-light-sound analogy was far more convincingly thought out and coherent.

1-2 *She... Word.* The “Sound” theme is introduced obliquely right at the start with Mary (“She”) hearing the Voice. Mary has full knowledge of the Holy Spirit (“the Voice”), since it is by His power that she conceived Jesus (the “Word”), as explained by the angel at the annunciation: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee” (Luke 1.35). “[W]ho bore/The Word” is ambiguous since both Mary and the Holy Spirit “bore” Jesus in different senses. The Spirit may be seen as the Voice who bore God’s tidings to Mary; the Spirit also bore Jesus to Mary by bringing about the Immaculate Conception; and Mary bore Jesus in her womb.

2-4 *which...gained.* Cf. “De Spiritu Domini” ll. 13-14 (BA 29) and “De Verbo Dei” ll. 13-15 (BA 17).

3 *thitherto.* “Up to that time; until then” (OED “thitherto” adv. 1).

5-7 Of...be. Bradburne does not explain his association of heat with the Holy Spirit. It may be that he is recalling the occasion when the Spirit of God spoke to Moses from out of a burning bush in the desert (see Exod. 3). He may also be thinking of the day of Pentecost, where the Spirit descended on Jesus' disciples in tongues of fire, "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting" (Acts 2.1-4). Here, as elsewhere, the Spirit is also associated with wind or breath. He may manifest himself as sweet, gentle breath or as a mighty wind or fire, inspiring terror (as indicated by the word "terrible"): cf. "De Spiritu Domini" ll. 5-8 (BA 29). This is reminiscent of Elijah's experience in the wilderness, where, after a mighty wind and an earthquake, God appears to him as "a still small voice" (1 Kings 19.12).

6 Paraclete. A title for the Holy Spirit. The Greek word, *parakletos*, meaning "advocate", is "traditionally translated 'Comforter'" ("Paraclete", *ODCC*, 1030) – as in Jesus' words:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever... (John 14.16)

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. (John 16.7)

8 Although...Inquisition-death. Although it is unclear why Bradburne raises this point, he is alluding to the trial of Jesus before he was crucified, during which he was questioned in the fashion of an inquisition; see Mark 14.53-65. Although the idea of death by fire is congruent with the sense of the surrounding lines, it seems unlikely that Bradburne would refer here to the burning of "heretics" at the stake, at the orders of the Spanish Inquisition during the Counter-Reformation, and yet the word – particularly when spelt with an initial capital – is strongly associated with it. Perhaps Bradburne is deliberately disassociating the Holy Spirit from these inhumane practices with the phrase "not His was Inquisition-death".

9 Light of...Father. See note on 5-7 "God...Voice" in "De Voce Patris" (BA 30). The phrase "Light of light" is a description of Jesus found in the Nicene Creed.

9-12 *that...crowned*. This may be rephrased as: “Our praise is made acceptable to God through Christ, since he was sacrificed so that we might be crowned with everlasting life” (see Jas. 1.12, Rev. 2.10). Cf. Eph. 1.3-7. The metaphor of Jesus as radiant and radiating Light is extended in “our rays of praise transmitted are”. Bradburne imagines the praise of his worshippers as rays of light, transmitted to the Father through the Son.

12 *cross the bar*. “Bar” may indicate a “bank of sand, silt, etc., across the mouth of a river or harbour, which obstructs navigation” (*OED* “bar” n.¹ 15a). To cross it is often perilous, but in “Crossing the Bar” Tennyson uses it as a metaphor for the process of dying, the passage into the afterlife, which for him holds the prospect of salvation: “I hope to see my Pilot face to face/When I have crost the bar” (*ll.* 15-16). Such bliss finds an echo in the final word of this sonnet. Bradburne uses “bar” ambiguously, though, to refer simultaneously to a “barrier or counter, over which drink (or food) is served out to customers” (*OED* “bar” n.¹ 28a).

13-14 *And...bliss*. Bradburne imagines the Virgin Mary as a barmaid. From behind the bar, Mary sings of Jesus, naming him her “Host the King”, as though he were the proprietor of the inn: “mine host”, as it were. At the start of the poem, Bradburne describes her as the one who has “full knowledge of the Voice” of God; here, the reference to her singing revives that sound-image. In a Roman Catholic context, the word “host” usually signifies “the consecrated Bread in the Eucharist, regarded as the sacrifice of the Body of Christ” (“Host”, *ODCC*, 670). In this instance, Bradburne is also playing on God’s title of “Lord (God) of Hosts”, used frequently in the Old Testament, particularly memorably in Isaiah’s vision of God’s throne room where the prophet hears the seraphim cry “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6.3), words always recited as the “Sanctus” in the celebration of the Eucharist. Here, Mary the barmaid presents or serves the Host, or Eucharist, an action which brings about true bliss.

[32] **Of earthworms**

“Of earthworms” is dated 22 February 1970. It echoes Bradburne’s dramatic defence of the worth of worms in “Sumer is i cumen in” or “Prelude” (58.08):

Then the earthworm replied: “Yes, and (isn’t it strange?)
 The work of the worm
 Is simply to manage the mission of change,
 Corruption to turn:
 Yet often we’re treated as creatures unclean
 (Of nothing in worth)
 Whilst, through our endeavour, the grasses so green
 Grow over the earth:
 If only to man it could clearly be shown
 For what we are made,
 The garden would be a far happier home -
 I speak of the spade!’

He speaks of the spade, you scalded jade!
 O hark to the wisdom of worms!
 You hardly can hark to the song of the lark
 But consider the worm that turns -

Consider the worms that eat the firms
 Of fibre and hair and flesh!
 Which squirm to confirm your only concern
 In turning to grass afresh!

Bradburne’s primary objective in “Of earthworms” is similar. In asserting their everlasting quality, he seeks to challenge misperceptions about the worth commonly ascribed to these lowly creatures. He positions them in their natural social order, and demonstrates their value to creatures more readily esteemed by humankind, namely birds. He states that while humans may find birds more attractive than worms, they need to bear in mind that birds, in turn, love and feed on worms. Bradburne’s moral is clear: everything has its place in God’s creation, the order of which should not be interfered with. Even earthworms imitate an aspect of God (his eternity) and should be admired for their resilience, and for their capacity for self-renewal.

1-2 *It...may*. It seems to Bradburne that earthworms have no rear and no head. Both ends look so similar that neither end is readily distinguishable from the other. Alternatively, he may mean that earthworms as a species do not appear to have a beginning or an end.

“[N]o end and no beginning” is also an allusion to Jesus, the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (Rev. 22.13), a title derived from the “first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, used in the Christian Church to denote God’s eternity and infinitude” (“Alpha and Omega”, *ODCC*, 39). By association, Bradburne suggests that earthworms possess their own perpetuity.

4 *His horde*. In reference to their numbers and ubiquity, Bradburne names earthworms God’s “horde”, though the connotations of this word are often intentionally negative. Bradburne himself more commonly applies “horde” to Satan’s company of demons, as in “Lucifer’s hordes” (“*Foederis Arca*” l. 18; 77.49), hence his disclaimer of not intending to be blasphemous in this case. The purpose of stating that earthworms are His horde seems to indicate the earthworms’ possession by God and thereby their divine blessedness.

5 *worm*. “A human being likened to a worm or reptile as an object of contempt, scorn, or pity; an abject, miserable creature” (*OED* “worm” n.10a).

7 *If only*. Here the phrase has the meaning “provided that”, or, “on condition that”, rather than the sense of despondently wishing for the unattainable.

7-8 *recall...out*. Birds are firm in that they are steadfast as well as determined in their task of extracting worms from the ground. This is necessary since earthworms can cling onto burrow walls with their setae (bristles) (see Day par. 6-7), and thus be quite difficult to remove. Bradburne playfully declares that anyone who feels insulted at being compared to a worm should take comfort in the knowledge that earthworms are both desirable (to birds) and resilient creatures.

8-10 *best...meal*. Bradburne indirectly furthers his argument in favour of the worth of earthworms by pointing out that birds, which are widely acclaimed for their singing, feed off worms. The phrase “in better fettle” is a variation on “in fine fettle”, meaning “to be in a good state or condition” (see *OED* “fettle” n.² 1). He thus implies that birds, the favourite food of which is worms, are in a better fettle than humans, who dislike worms

(insinuated by their actions of squirming at being compared to worms and of slaying them).

9 *bard*. Applied to the bird who sings for his meal (*l.* 10), implying its skilful or artistic minstrelsy. Cf. note on 14 “bard’s” in “Of Angels and of Birds” (*BA* 12).

11-13 *And so...appealing*. Since birds take such delight in eating worms, it is a pity (and heartless) to kill them (senselessly) before the bird feels the need to catch them for food. The phrase “earlier than bird” is a light-hearted play on the proverb “the early bird catches the worm”, meaning “It is the early riser or one who acts promptly who attains his objective” (“Bird: ’Tis the early bird that catches the worm”, *Brewer*, 116).

13-14 *world...mend*. In this concluding couplet, Bradburne returns to the opening of the poem by alluding to worms’ perpetuity. Both at the start of the poem and at its conclusion, almost as a demonstration of his central assertion about earthworms, Bradburne uses expressions which incorporate the words “beginning” and “end”: “no end and no beginning” (*l.*1) and “without an end/And from beginning” (*ll.*13-14). He claims that from the beginning of time earthworms have been able to mend themselves, and that they will continue to do so until the end of the world. There is some truth in this claim that earthworms have the ability to regenerate. If, for example, “a bird pulls off the first 7 or 8 rings of the worm’s body, new segments will grow. If a worm is pulled in half, the head end will grow back” (*Day* par. 7). “[W]orld without an end” recalls the phrase “world without end”, a standard liturgical formulation, as in: “Through Our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son who with Thee liveth and reigneth in the unity of the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen” (“Prayer”, *CE*, par. 5). In this instance, Bradburne uses the phrase to justify his attribution of timelessness to earthworms.

[33] **Of Melchisedech**

“Of Melchisedech” is dated 22 February 1970. Bradburne’s spelling of “Melchisedech” is that used in the Roman Canon of the Mass, although the more familiar

form is that of the Authorised Version of the Bible: Melchizedek. Bradburne's spelling may signify the context out of which the poem springs: the parallel between Melchizedek and Jesus. In the Mass, Melchizedek's offering of bread and wine is seen typologically as a prefiguring of Jesus' sacrifice of his body and blood.

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.
(Gen. 14.18-20)

As both King and Priest, Melchizedek "is pictured by the author of [the book of] Hebrews as a type of Christ, the great High Priest" ("Melchisedec", *NCE*, 9: 626) (see p. 62). Zechariah prophesied that the Messiah would be both a king and a high priest (see Zech. 6.12-13). Since the priests of Israel descended from the tribe of Levi, and the kings from Judah, the Messiah would have to claim descent from both tribes. However, as the author of Hebrews explains, Jesus, who "sprang out of Juda" (Heb. 7.14), is "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5.6; Ps. 110.4), not of Levi. He goes on "to prove the superiority of the priesthood of Christ, prefigured by Melchizedek, over that of Aaron and the Levites" ("Melchizedek", *ODCC*, 899) (see Heb. 7). In the poem, Bradburne traces the impact of Melchizedek's brief appearance in Christian history, alluding to all three biblical references that make mention of him. In both "Of Melchisedech" and "Of Wine" (*BA* 34), Bradburne parallels Melchizedek with Jesus.

1 King...Salem. Melchizedek is translated as "King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace" (Heb. 7.2). Salem is probably "a shortened form of Jerusalem" ("Melchisedec", *NCE*, 9: 626), which Bradburne uses here to fit the metre of the line. Cf. "King of Jerusalem" (*I.* 7). Considering Melchizedek's prefiguring of Christ (see introduction above), "King of Shalom" ("Shalom" meaning "peace be with you" – see *OED* "shalom") is probably intended to parallel the title "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9.6), commonly attributed to Jesus.

2 bread and wine. Since roughly the year 200, Melchizedek's "offering of bread and wine has been regarded as a type of the Eucharist", and thus "the name of Melchizedek has been introduced into the Roman Canon of the Mass, where his offering is mentioned

together with those of Abel and Abraham as an acceptable sacrifice typifying that of Christ on the Cross” (“Melchizedek”, *ODCC*, 899). See note on 13-14 “Melchisedech...array”. Cf. “Of Wine” *l.* 5 (*BA* 34).

2-3 *three...away*. See Gen. 14.18-20. Apart from Melchizedek’s brief appearance in Genesis, he is only mentioned once in the Old Testament, in Ps. 110.4. However, his role in the book of Hebrews is central to the revelation of Jesus’ joint priesthood and kingship. See Heb. 7.

4 *Leaving...sheep*. Bradburne is probably using “mount” to characterise Abram’s upward spiritual progression as a result of his encounter with Melchizedek (but his word choice is unfortunate). Cf. Isa. 40.31. Counting sheep, on the other hand, may epitomise humankind’s more mundane tasks, such as shepherding sheep.

5 *Was...dream?*. Bradburne wonders whether there has ever been anyone else whose story was so full of mystery. He is probably referring to the sudden, brief and mysterious appearance of Melchizedek for a few verses in Genesis. On the strength of this encounter and the consequent mythologising of it, the writer of the book of Hebrews is able to present Melchizedek as a major figure in salvation history, typifying Jesus’ dual kingship and priesthood.

6 *Was...told?*. The line may be paraphrased as: “Has anything like this ever been said about anyone else?” or “Does this story have any parallel?” Bradburne alludes to the uniqueness of Melchizedek’s character and the strength of the myth surrounding him.

7-8 *King...gold*. Melchizedek was the King of Jerusalem long before King David, the “first king of the Judaeian dynasty” (“David”, *ODCC*, 377), but it is David who provides the link between Melchizedek and Jesus. David, to whom the writing of the Psalms is traditionally attributed, is pictured singing psalms and playing his harp. One that he sings is Psalm 110:

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in

the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. (Ps. 110.1-4)

This psalm is later interpreted to explain Jesus' dual priesthood and kingship. See Heb. 7. Thus, it is David who, using the figure of Melchizedek, sings of Jerusalem's unifying "theme" of the Messiah on his harp of gold (symbolic of the splendour, radiance and merit of his subject). This musical imagery is continued in the concluding couplet.

7 King of Jerusalem. Cf. note on l "King...Salem".

9-12 "*Bless-ed...dearth*". A paraphrase of Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham (then still called Abram): "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand" (Gen. 14.19-20). Bradburne's modification of "which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand" to "by whose rod/The enemies of faith are brought to dearth" may be inspired by "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" (Ps. 110.2), the relevance of which is explained in the note on 7-8 "King...gold".

12 *dearth*. "A condition in which food is scarce and dear; often, in earlier use, a time of scarcity with its accompanying privations, a famine" (*OED* "dearth" n. 3).

13-14 *Melchisedech...array*. Bradburne uses "array" to mean "adorn" (*OED* "adorn" v. 9b). "Knight" refers to Jesus – cf. "Of Mortification" l. 13 (*BA* 6) and "Of Death" l. 13 (*BA* 7). Melchizedek is adorned in a gale of love by those who are "in that Knight" – participants in, and partakers of, the life of Jesus. The "melody" sung "today" continues the theme played by David (see note on 7-8 "King...gold"). Although "with melody today" could refer to an actual tune, it is more likely intended in the sense of "we sing Melchizedek's praises". Bradburne may be referring specifically to the Mass, in which Melchizedek is adored by virtue of his association with Jesus. During the Mass, after the consecration of the bread and wine, the priest prays:

Wherefore, O Lord, we Thy servants...offer to Thy supreme Majesty from Thine own gifts bestowed on us, a pure Victim, a holy Victim, an unblemished Victim, the

holy Bread of eternal life, and the Chalice of everlasting salvation. Upon which vouchsafe to look with a propitious and serene countenance, and to accept them, as Thou wert graciously pleased to accept the gifts of Thy just servant Abel, and the sacrifice of our patriarch Abraham, and that which Thy high priest Melchisedech offered to Thee, – a holy Sacrifice, a stainless Victim. (*Daily Missal* 947)

Thus, “we” may include those who take part in the Mass, since it indirectly glorifies Melchizedek.

14 *gale of love*. Cf. note on 13 “gale of Love” in “Of Mortification” (*BA* 6).

[34] Of Wine

“Of Wine” is dated 23 February 1970. As the title suggests, “Of Wine” records and interprets certain Biblical references to wine, thereby illustrating its different uses. Noah brings sorrow on his household by drinking too much wine; Jesus demonstrates his power at Cana by turning water into wine in his first miracle; Melchizedek presents wine in celebration of Abram’s victory in battle; and the Psalmist (to whom the name of David is attributed) refrains from drowning his sorrows in wine after the Israelites have been exiled to Babylon. Finally, wine attains its ultimate religious significance at the Last Supper, described in the climactic concluding couplet of the poem. A common thread of wine connects these events and affords the poem a theme of celebration and sacrifice. The six-line postscript which Bradburne adds to the usual sonnet form, makes this poem unique among his *Assays*, although elsewhere in the corpus he often adds a short envoi to a poem. The postscript is evocative of the fanfare and bliss that Bradburne envisages will herald Jesus’ Second Coming. As in “Of Melchisedech” (*BA* 33), Bradburne draws on stories from the Old Testament in order to reveal Jesus’ role in history (see p. 62). The figure of Melchizedek, introduced in the previous poem, provides a further link between these two poems.

1 *Noah...Flood*. Bradburne refers first to the sacrifice of gratitude made by Noah after the Flood: “And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (Gen. 8.20). (However, Noah’s

gratitude at surviving the Flood finds a second expression in his getting drunk on new wine, and his joy falls flat – see *l. 3.*)

2 *waters...wine.* Bradburne next alludes to Jesus' first miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana, recorded in John 2.1-10. This contrasts with Noah's experience, in which water is only figuratively "changed" into wine. The wine of Noah's new vineyards (see Gen. 9.20) symbolically replaces the water of the flood: the means of celebration replaces hardship and the threat of destruction.

3-4 *Drank...morrow.* After the Flood,

...Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. (Gen. 9.20-25)

Bradburne refers here to the sorrow that wine can cause. This is exemplified in the curse which Noah (suffering the after-effects of his overindulgence) laid upon his son Ham, progenitor of the Canaanites. His former alcohol-induced joy fell flat. "Thud", the dull sound of a heavy object hitting the ground, is suggestive of what followed after his drunken folly.

4 (*Cana, shine!*). At Cana Jesus miraculously transformed water into wine (see note on 2 "waters...wine"). In contrast to Noah's abuse of wine, Bradburne now calls on Cana to "shine!" and thus to demonstrate the appropriate use of wine as something which "maketh glad the heart of man" (Ps. 104.15).

5 *Melchisedech...God.* See introduction to "Of Melchisedech" (*BA 33*). Unlike Noah, Melchizedek uses wine to glorify God and to bless Abraham. His offering prefigures the Eucharist – see note on 2 "bread and wine" in "Of Melchisedech" (*BA 33*).

6 *Abram...become*. This may be paraphrased as: "Abram, who at that time had not yet become Abraham". When he met Melchizedek, Abram's name had not yet been changed. This event took place years later: see Gen. 17.1-5. It was after this event that three angels appeared to Abraham simultaneously ("as one"), as indicated in line 7.

7-8 *three...Mambre*. The event referred to here took place in Mambre (also spelt Mamre) after God's promise to Abraham about becoming the father of many nations (see Gen. 17.1-5).

And the Lord appeared unto [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground... (Gen. 18.1-2)

8 (*trumpet...drum*). In contrast to the fanfare described in the postscript, no trumpet blast heralds Abraham's visitation. Cf. "Of Death" l. 7 (*BA* 7). It occurs unannounced in the course of Abraham's ordinary routine, to indicate, perhaps, that God is omnipresent. Cf. Heb. 13.2, where Christian hospitality is encouraged, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares".

9 *Sang David*. Most of the Psalms are conventionally attributed to King David, even when they were composed centuries after his death, as in this instance, where the reference is explicitly to the Babylonian exile of the Jews.

9-11 "*If...good!*". Bradburne reads into the words of Psalm 137.5 ("If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning") a reference to drinking, and so imposes the interpretation: "If I should forget thee, Zion, by turning to drink, then let my blithe right hand, used to play on the harp, forget how to do so". See Ps. 137.1-6. By introducing wine into the psalm, Bradburne is able to address another potential abuse of the substance. The Psalmist determines not to turn to drink at a time of tragedy, when the Israelites have been forced into exile in Babylon.

10 *blithe*. "Joyous, gladsome, cheerful" (*OED* "blithe" a. 3).

12 *Holy Land*. Israel.

13-14 *Jesus...shed*". During the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist, using the elements of bread and wine:

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matt. 26.26-28)

Having illustrated the use and abuse of wine through various examples in biblical history, Bradburne concludes the poem with the example Jesus sets. Jesus, whose first miracle was turning water into wine, now transforms ordinary wine into sacrificial blood: Roman Catholic doctrine teaches that, by the miracle of transubstantiation, the Eucharistic wine is converted into the blood of Jesus. This sacrificial ceremony, prefigured by Melchizedek both in the poem and in the Bible, presents the ultimate celebratory use of wine. Jesus, who "gave thanks" for the cup, sheds his blood for the everlasting joy ("bliss") of humankind. Bradburne omits a word in line 14 to maintain his ten-syllabic line: "This is My Blood *which* shall for your bliss be shed" is clearer.

15-16 (*Trumpet...within*). Trumpets sounded out of doors ("without") are associated with military victory. The shofar, sounded inside ("within") the Jewish temple (presumably), is associated with exuberant praise of God, and with the call to worship him. With trumpets sounding outside and shofars inside, the celebratory atmosphere, resulting from Jesus' offering of salvation, is all-inclusive.

16 *Shofa*. A misspelling of "shofar" (or "shophar"), the name of an "ancient Hebrew musical instrument usually made of a curved ram's horn, still used in Jewish religious services" (*OED* "shofar"). Its use is recorded in Josh. 6.4, for example.

17-18 *Gentiles...win*. Bradburne asserts that with trumpets outside, shofars inside and Gentile believers all round ("about") them, the conversion of the Jews is assured, and they will become "true Jews", those who accept Jesus as their Messiah.

19-20 *In...bliss*). Bradburne imagines the second coming of Jesus occurring "In such a night as this" (see note on 13 "in...this" in "Of Death" (*BA* 7)). The phrase also recalls the liturgy of Holy Saturday, in which the night of the Jewish Passover is remembered:

For this is the Paschal Festival, in which that true Lamb is slain, with whose Blood the doorposts of the faithful are consecrated. This is the night in which Thou didst lead the children of Israel, our forefathers, out of Egypt, and made them pass over the Red Sea dry shod. This, therefore, is the night which dissipated the dark gloom of sin by the pillar of light. ... This is the night in which, destroying the chains of death, Christ arose victorious from the grave. (*Daily Missal* 598-99)

Interpreting Jesus' sacrifice as the ultimate fulfilment of the original Passover, Bradburne sees perfect joy being restored to the Jews, now newly delivered ("Judah New"). Since Jerusalem is the capital city of Judah, "Judah New" may also allude to the Second Coming in the "new Jerusalem", as described in Rev. 21.1-2:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The ultimate consummation of God's redemptive intervention in the salvation of the Jews was something to which Bradburne remained passionately committed (see pp. 16, 17, 22, 62).

[35] **Of Dignity**

"Of Dignity" is dated 23 February 1970. It appears to be a reaction against the appellation "Boss" automatically given to white men in Rhodesia by blacks. Perhaps Bradburne was motivated more specifically by the Shona lepers among whom he worked. His sympathies are with black people's struggle for the recognition of their worth. The ideas he expresses in "Of Dignity" are inspired by a prose poem by the radical nineteenth-century French poet, Charles Pierre Baudelaire, entitled "Assommons les pauvres", meaning "Let us pulverise the poor", taken from the collection "Petits poèmes en prose". In the piece, the narrator tires of his facile and sentimental books, so full of simple recipes for making poor people "happy, wise, and rich, in twenty-four hours" (Zeleny). He ventures out into the street to seek refreshment. There he is so angered by the subservience of a beggar he meets, that he proceeds to beat him severely, in the hope of restoring the beggar's dignity:

For a fortnight I had confined myself to my room, and had surrounded myself by books in fashion at that time (sixteen or seventeen years ago); I am speaking of books that treat of the art of making the people happy, wise, and rich, in twenty-four hours. Thus I had digested, – I mean, swallowed, – all the lucubrations of all these entrepreneurs of public good, – of those who counsel all poor to become slaves, and of those who persuade them that they all are dethroned kings. – No one will be surprised that I was then in a state bordering upon vertigo or stupidity.

It appeared to me only that I felt, confined to the lower depths of my mind, an obscure germ of an idea superior to all these ladylike proposals of social reform whose dictionary I had recently traversed. But it was no more than the idea of an idea, something infinitely indistinct.

And I walked out, overcome by thirst. For the impassioned taste for trashy screeds engenders a proportional need of open air and refreshments.

As I was about to enter a tavern, a beggar held out his hat, with one of these unforgettable looks, which would overthrow thrones, if the spirit could move matter, and if the eye of a magnetizer could ripen grapes.

At once, I heard a voice whispering in my ear, a voice that I recognized unfailingly; it was the voice of a good Angel, or a good Demon, which accompanies me everywhere...he whispered to me: "Only he is the equal of another, who proves it, and only he is worthy of liberty, who can conquer it."

Right away, I leapt upon my beggar. With a single punch, I busted his eye, which instantly puffed out like a ball. I broke a fingernail while knocking two teeth out of his mouth; and, not feeling sufficiently strong, having been born dainty and not being accustomed to boxing, to make short work of crushing this old man, I grabbed his collar with one hand, seizing his throat with another, and I bashed his head energetically against a wall. I must admit that I had previously made sure that in these desolate outskirts of town I found myself, for a long enough time, out of the reach of any policemen.

Having then thrown this enfeebled sexagenarian to the ground by kicking him in the back hard enough to break the shoulder-blades, I picked up a stout tree branch that was lying on the ground, and I pounded him with the stubborn vigour of a cook tenderizing a beefsteak. All of a sudden, – o miracle! o joy of the philosopher who verifies the excellence of his theory! – I saw this ancient carcass turn around, straighten himself with an energy that I would never have suspected in a machine so singularly shattered; and, with a look of hatred that appeared to me as a *good omen*, the decrepit bandit threw himself upon me, blacked both of my eyes, broke four of my teeth, and with the same tree branch beat me into pulp. – Thus by my energetic medicine I had restored to him pride and life.

Then I made him many signs to make him understand that I considered the discussion finished, and rising up with the satisfaction of an Attic sophist, I said to him: "*Sir, you are my equal!* kindly grant me the honour of sharing my purse with me; and remember, if you are really a philanthropist, that you must apply to all your colleagues, when they ask you for alms, the theory that I had the *anguish* of trying out on your back". He swore to me that he had well understood my theory, and that he would obey my advice. (Zeleny)

Bradburne's moral in "Of Dignity" is clear: if the Shona people he addresses do not claim their human dignity by fighting back against discrimination, they will remain inferior in the eyes of those who treat them as subservient. Baudelaire implies that a person is only the equal of another if he/she demonstrates his/her equality. Bradburne's poem should not be read as supportive of the violent uprising by the African nationalists of the time, since he repeatedly expressed his abhorrence of the violence used by terrorists in Rhodesia (see pp. 41-43). He uses the same unusual rhyme scheme here as he does in "Des Histoires" (BA 2) – see introduction to "Des Histoires".

1-2 *Hear...scorn.* Rhodesia was, at this time, a colonial society dominated by a white minority. Black people found themselves in a position of subordination to whites, often played out in a paternalistic or condescending master-servant relationship, as alluded to here. Discrimination against blacks occurred at various levels in society:

Africans were only served in shops after every white had been served. Shop assistants were themselves always white. There were separate entrances and counters for Blacks and Whites in post offices. There was rigid separatism in state schools, hospitals, hotels, restaurants, transport, swimming baths and lavatories.

(Verrier 84)

It was as common a practice for blacks to address a white man as "Boss" (Master), or the Afrikaans equivalent "Baas" – regardless of whether the individual was in fact their employer – as it was for a black man to be "called 'boy' whether he was six, sixteen or sixty" (*loc. cit.*).

1 *Shona.* The Shona are the majority tribal grouping in Zimbabwe, found predominantly in the northern and eastern parts of the country.

3 *a poet, French.* Charles Pierre Baudelaire (1821-1867).

4 *to...born.* The phrase "to the manner born" denotes being "naturally suited for, or taking readily to, a given role or task" (*OED* "manner" n. 3b). However, the phrase is more commonly encountered in the form "as to the manner born", with the implication that the assumption of, for example, freedom, is based more on self-confidence than on inherited entitlement. In this instance, Bradburne emphasises the (perhaps only assumed)

carefree nature of the poet, who claims for himself the freedom to take a stroll to clear his mind, in contrast to the beggar who is characterised as “a cringing shape” (l. 5).

7-8 *no...dines*. While the poet had no chance of escaping this beggar, the latter would not escape the treatment the poet had determined to mete out to him either. Bradburne foretells the good deed the poet will do before he has supper: he will restore dignity to a man who has lost the will to claim it (see l. 14).

9-10 *Seeing...soul*. Observing that the beggar is not lame, and that his body is far more “whole” than his soul, the poet realises that the beggar’s problem is not physical but spiritual. Setting aside sentimental feelings of charity and pity, the poet adopts unconventional tactics to force the beggar to abandon his attitude of self-pity and dejection, and to claim his human dignity and sense of self-worth.

11-12 *not...soul*. The poet strikes the beggar’s open palm with his cane, not hard enough to break the hand, but not too softly either, since his aim is to rouse the beggar’s soul or his spirit of resistance.

13-14 *ruffled...man*. The poet’s plan, “to toss/Away his cares” (ll. 3-4), has been “ruffled”, like the feathers of a fowl, but it has been worthwhile since, instead, he has “raised a man”. He has restored pride and dignity to a beggar initially described as subhuman: “a cringing shape”, and who was previously seen “whin[ing]/For alms” (ll. 6-7). Afterwards, when the beggar is no longer such a miserable, whining figure, the poet is able to view the man as an equal.

[36] **Of Woman**

“Of Woman” is dated 23 February 1970. In it, Bradburne describes a favourite French hymn tune as emblematic of all the strengths and beauties of womanhood: grace, wittiness, whimsicality, mercifulness, winsomeness, wantonness and ardour. He then proclaims himself, like a troubadour of old, Mary’s champion, her fool and her fervent

follower – the Virgin Mary being for him the archetypal woman. In a description reminiscent of Eugène Delacroix’s painting *Liberty leading the People* (which shows a bare-breasted “Marianne” on the barricades of Paris, tricolor in hand, at the head of a ragged troop of insurgents, her “gallants”), Bradburne equates his exuberant, chivalrous devotion to Mary with the fervour of the French revolutionaries.

1-3 *I know...Grenoble*. Bradburne refers to a hymn tune called “Grenoble”, also known as “Deus Tuorum Militum”. Its lyrical melody and subtle harmonies may account for his description of it as fitting the grace of womanhood. It is likely that he first encountered it as a young boy in the Anglican Church, hence its cherished status among his favourite tunes. The number of different hymns that can be sung to this melody makes it difficult to be sure of the words Bradburne might have in mind. Some possibilities are “Awake! Awake! Fling off the night” and “O God, thy soldiers’ crown and guard”. The poem’s Marian theme seems to imply that Bradburne knew (or set) the tune to the words of a Marian hymn, but there are no obvious examples. Poem 56 in his collection “In Calicem” gives a clue: “A song is made around The Rose to Grenoble’s Melody,/Throughout we call her Miriam bar twice we sing Marie...” (*ll.* 1-2; IC.64). However, it has not yet been possible to establish which hymn Bradburne may be denoting. It is also unclear why this tune should bear the name Grenoble. The city of Grenoble in south-east France was of particular interest to Bradburne on account of its connections with the Carthusian Order, which he had tried to join in 1950. St. Bruno, founder of the Carthusians, established the order in the eleventh century outside the city of Grenoble, in what became the *Grand Chartreuse* (Grand Charterhouse). Bradburne may even have visited it while hitchhiking through France in 1952 (see p. 19).

4 *France...minstrelsy*. Minstrelsy, the art of minstrels, was very popular in Europe between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries. Minstrels were professional entertainers, whose skills included singing, storytelling, playing musical instruments, juggling and performing acrobatics (see “minstrel”, *NEB*, 8: 171). As singers and musicians they were well known for singing heroic or lyric poetry, accompanying themselves on stringed instruments (see *OED* “minstrel” n. 2a). While they could be in the permanent employment of particular noblemen, they were often itinerants, wandering across the face

of mediaeval Europe, performing, and often bearing news, which they incorporated or encoded in their songs. More specifically, Bradburne has in mind the troubadours of southern France, who “sang in Provençal, chiefly of chivalry and gallantry” (*OED* “troubadour”) and “flourished from the late 11th to the late 13th century” (“troubadour”, *NEB*, 11: 946). Their “social influence was unprecedented in the history of medieval poetry” (*loc. cit.*), and their verse inspired the traditions of courtly love.

5-7 *Therein...glee*. Bradburne characterises the tune Grenoble, in association with the minstrelsy of France, whose songs also fit his description. The characteristics he lists, such as “wit and whim and filigree”, are descriptive of the “grace of womanhood” (*l.* 2), which he claims the tune Grenoble embodies. “Mercy and winsome wantonness and flame” alludes to the sympathetic, playful, passionate nature of women. The joyful exuberance he feels is evident in “up to the hilt in glee”, while “lilting” describes the buoyant, cheerful rhythm of the song.

5 *wit*. “Quickness of intellect” and “talent for saying brilliant or sparkling things, especially in an amusing way” (*OED* “wit” n. 7).

5 *whim*. “A sudden, passing, and often fanciful idea; impulsive or irrational thought” (*Collins* “whim” n. 1). Apart from alluding to the nature of women, Bradburne may be referring to the improvisations which minstrels were able to insert into their performances at will.

5 *filigree*. A kinaesthetic image, where sound (specifically, the music of the tune Grenoble) is interpreted visually. In this instance, Bradburne compliments the “fanciful delicate ornamentation” (*Collins* “filigree” n. 2) of Grenoble’s music.

6 *winsome wantonness*. Charming playfulness, capriciousness or amatory passion.

6 *flame*. Ardour; used figuratively to symbolise intense passion or burning feelings of love, like those of a courtly lover.

7 *Lilting...glee*. This line exhibits Bradburne's playfulness, in which words are often chosen for their sounds (in this case the assonance of "Lilting, tilting...hilt in") rather than for their meanings.

7 *Lilting*. "Lilting" describes the buoyant, cheerful rhythm of the song.

7 *tilting*. Given the chivalrous theme of the poem, "tilting" most likely refers to jousting: "charging on horseback with a lance against an opponent, or a mark" (*OED* "tilting" vbl.n.¹ 1a). Bradburne may be alluding to the heroic deeds a courtly lover would engage in to prove his love to his lady or to defend her honour.

7 *up...glee*. Full of glee to the furthest degree possible (see *OED* "hilt" n. 3). Although the phrase "up to the hilt" means "completely", or "thoroughly", the word "hilt" (a sword handle) is carefully placed to fit in with the chivalrous imagery of the poem.

8 *there...my Dame*. Bradburne alludes to the famous "Notre Dame de Paris" cathedral in Paris, France ("there"), which is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, as are so many cathedrals in France. Bradburne distinguishes between "Notre Dame" ("Our Lady") and "my Dame" – my Lady. Mary is not just "Our" Lady, but *his* Lady. Bradburne viewed his relationship with the Virgin Mary as more intimate than is suggested by the collective "our", but rather as a "marriage": see p. 20. As a courtly lover lived to serve his lady, so Bradburne sought to serve Mary exclusively, and to voice his dedication to her in his poetry. He frequently describes himself as Mary's chivalrous lover. Cf. note on 13 "fling...aground" in "Of No Thing" (*BA* 9).

10 "*Au lait!*". The French phrase means literally "with milk", or "to the milk", but here it seems to be an instruction or an invitation to be suckled. Bradburne also puns triumphantly on "Olé", a Spanish exclamation of approval, praise or encouragement, "usually associated with Spanish music and dance and with bullfighting" (*OED* "olé" int. A). He declares his desire for nothing more than Mary's approval. Bradburne often used "Au lait" to allude to the nurturing, motherly nature of Mary, as in "Trixy Sixes":

Our Lady is won in no easier way
Than praying the Rosary: saying AU LAIT

She freely invites you to pray at her breast
Or else at her knee or upon it at rest... . (ll. 83-86; 77.66)

“Of life and death” further describes the reciting of the rosary in terms of this image of Bradburne being suckled at Mary’s breast. It concludes:

Thus, every bead I pray
Is a suckling’s, so to say
And, Oh, she does: “Au Lait!”. (ll. 19-21; 78.147)

He also uses the phrase in the acrostic, “LAIT MARY”, which occurs in the last eight lines of the sonnet.

11 *idiot-boy*. Instead of describing himself, in the conventional terms of chivalry, as a foolish lover, Bradburne extends the image of Mary as a motherly figure (implied by “Au lait” in the previous line) and sees himself in relation to her as an idiot-boy. In light of her perfection, his self-deprecation is two-fold: he is both idiotic and diminutive – a boy not a man. His expression of absolute contentment, at only ever (“for aye” (l. 12)) being Mary’s foolish boy, further elevates her.

13-14 *Red...tricolor*. Bradburne names red, white and blue as Mary’s colours. This is in keeping with the tradition of courtly love, in which a lady was often identified by certain colours, which a knight would wear when going into battle. Red, white and blue are the colours of the tricolor, “the national flag of France adopted at the Revolution, consisting of equal vertical stripes of blue, white, and red” (*OED* “tricolour, tricolor” n. 2a), and which represents the French national motto of liberty, equality and fraternity. Bradburne appears motivated to choose these colours by virtue of the strong association between France and Mary, whose public veneration, through cathedrals named after her (“Notre Dame...”), is alluded to in line 8. Associating Mary with the colours of France, home of the troubadours, is also appropriate within Bradburne’s overarching metaphor of courtly love. He also associates Mary with these colours elsewhere:

In red and white and blue of France
Entrancing she might surely be... . (“Tricolor, Tricolor, Tricolor”, ll. 7-8; 78.227)

Rippling with laughter slips my Ave-Belle
Smoothly into the water: daughter true,
Immaculate in red and white and blue... . (“Historia Salutis”, ll. 434-36; 77.14)

It is unclear what exactly inspired this colour symbolism, and whether Bradburne used it exclusively to represent Mary. Attached to the zip of his Bible, Bradburne had a chain of three plastic rings – one white, one red and one blue – previously used as identification tags around the legs of chickens. It is plausible that these three interlocking rings represent the eternal Trinity and that the colours represent Mary, herself inextricably linked to the Trinity, but Bradburne does not explain their presence. The only clue he gives is an inscription of the words “BLUE, WHITE, RED” in the margin of his Bible, next to Numbers 4.5-10. The passage records Aaron’s instructions for the care of the Ark of the Covenant and related holy objects, when these needed to be transported. These include wrapping of items in blue or scarlet cloths (one such item is the showbread, which Bradburne may have thought of as white). It is likely that here again Bradburne relates the passage to Mary, so often associated with the Ark of the Covenant in his poetry. For example, he writes of Mary: “And she is Ark of Jesu’s Covenant,/Within her is The Word whom she’ll uphold” (“The Ark of the Covenant”, *ll.* 10-11; 78.499).

14 *gallants to alert*. As in “Of No Thing” (*BA* 9), where Bradburne flings his gage aground in defence of Mary’s honour and virtue, he warns all other gallants (chivalrous, brave lovers) who might rival him in his devotion to his Lady, to be on their guard. It is also an assertion of his conviction of her virtue above any other woman.

[37] **Of Religion**

“Of Religion” is dated 9 April 1970. Its late insertion into the sequence appears to be an attempt to use up the last few inches of space on this particular piece of paper (see pp. 52, 66). The physical restrictions may account for the unfinished sense of the poem. It begins like a sonnet, with the first quatrain rhyming abba, but, without much progression of thought, stops short after two subsequent rhyming couplets. As a result, the last two lines do not conclude satisfactorily, but appear to have ended in mid-sentence.

1 *Religion...taught*. True religion is not taught, but is caught – an idea Bradburne put into practice in his life (see p. 37). He envisages a person catching religion in the same way as

they might catch a contagious disease, for example. He emphasises that learning about religion is not the same as catching its fire, thus stressing the need for the soul to respond to God personally. This is in contrast to a merely cerebral or willed acquisition of knowledge about religion.

2-3 *Thrice...religion*. This may be paraphrased as: “the contagion by which many a soul may truly get religion is extremely fortuitous and makes those who catch it very happy”. See notes on 2 “contagion” and 3 “get religion”.

2 *contagion*. Bradburne uses “contagion” figuratively to denote the “contagious or ‘catching’ influence or operation” (*OED* “contagion” 5) of religion.

3 *get religion*. The phrase “to get religion” originated in the United States and means “to be converted” (*OED* “get” v. 12d), or to be filled with religious emotion. To “truly get religion” also suggests gaining deep understanding of religion.

4-5 *Many...love*. Bradburne elaborates on the struggle of “many a soul” who has tried to “get religion” through labouring over books (hoping to be “taught” (*l.* 1) by them). The problem is that books cannot transfer an experience of love to the reader. They are fraught (or laden) with labour more than with a record (“score”) of love. “Score” may also refer to a musical composition, a “score of music”; in this case, love is likened to music, which is more powerful when enacted than when it is read.

6 *Unhomely tomes*. A “tome” is a “book, a volume; now usually suggesting a large, heavy, old-fashioned book” (*OED* “tome” 2). The suggestion is that studying such works is hard labour and possibly joyless as well.

7-8 *On...merit*. Bradburne relies on the Holy Spirit as the revealer of truth in books. He states this as a concluding piece of advice to all those who may be labouring over “unhomely tomes” (*l.* 6) without the Spirit’s direction. He believes that books which are bright with merit are further illuminated by God’s light as a sign of their inherent worth.

[38] Of Familiarity

“Of Familiarity” is dated 23 February 1970, and precedes the contrasting poem “Of Friendship” (BA 39), placed directly after it. The proverb “familiarity breeds contempt” rests on the general assumption that the better one knows someone the less respect one will have for that person. Bradburne dismisses this by asserting that it applies only to those who are contemptuous of other people or those who are themselves contemptible. For the rest, he suggests, familiarity marks nothing more sinister in the individual than “a mind unkempt” (l. 3). He characterises such people’s interpersonal relationships as having a lack of depth, which he sees as the result of casual association rather than lasting friendship. Such superficial behaviour may be regrettable since it prevents the person from enjoying more enduring satisfaction, but does not qualify as “contempt”. Pursuing the theme further, Bradburne then asserts that when God’s bellows blow life into the embers of the spirit, mere camaraderie is transformed into the fellowship of souls. Both individual thoughtlessness and superficiality in social relationships are transformed. To illustrate his belief that this occurs more convincingly among more sophisticated minds than in crude or brash people, Bradburne contrasts the more refined and mellow sounds of the violoncello with the less subtle sounds of the double-bass. This image leads him on to characterise the trombone as the stereotype of contemptuous and contemptible (“over-bold and brassy” (l. 14)) familiarity, described at the start of the poem. He uses the same unusual rhyme scheme here as he does in “Des Histoires” (BA 2) – see introduction to “Des Histoires”.

1-2 Familiarity...contemptible. Bradburne dismisses the universality of the age-old proverb, “familiarity breeds contempt”, by claiming that it only applies to certain types of people. Bradburne suggests that it is only true in the case where the person in question is disdainful or despicable in nature. The implication is that contempt will not be bred between two people unless there is just cause for it.

3-4 Otherwise...crucible. Otherwise, familiarity will only identify (“mark”) a mind that is unkempt (in the sense of being crude or coarse), one which lacks refining in life’s crucible. Bradburne implies that this may be the case because these people have not

experienced suffering (alluded to by “life’s crucible”). His mixed metaphors convey a common sentiment: that people who lack refinement may be inappropriately familiar with others. This type of familiarity is different to that indicated in the opening lines. Bradburne may be referring to refinement in terms of elegant behaviour, but it is more likely that he is concerned with moral behaviour – see note on 4 “life’s crucible”.

4 *life’s crucible*. In the same way as an earthenware crucible or melting-pot withstands great heat while it is used to refine metals, for example, so the crucible of life refines people through severe testing or suffering. Bradburne probably has in mind a process of moral purification, whereby the individual grows and develops ethical sensitivity and strength through a series of trials, and is thereby raised to a higher spiritual and social state. Several passages in the Bible utilise such imagery, with God imaged as the Refiner of humankind. See Job 23.10, Zech. 13.9 and Mal. 3.3.

5 *apt*. Quick to and inclined to (see *OED* “apt” a. 4b).

5 *slap...backs*. The action of slapping each other on the back, in this instance, indicates over-familiarity due to shallow interaction, perhaps as a result of avoidance of commitment or real friendship. Bradburne suggests that this type of familiarity accompanies those (frequently males) who are at a loss as to how else to behave.

6-7 *Simply...much*. Bradburne suggests that people who are dulled by their own lack of thinking compensate for this with overt gestures, such as slapping each other on the back, implying familiarity where it does not exist.

6 *vapid*. Empty, vacant (see *OED* “vapid” a. 2).

8 *well-tempered...sport*. People who engage in such demonstrative familiarity (indicated in line 5), lack the well-balanced, disciplined, refined (“well-tempered”) mental temperament suited to more mellow pastimes. The use of “well-tempered” initiates the series of musical references that follow. As a musical term, “well-tempered” refers to the tuning (tempering) of an instrument (*OED* “tempered” a. 1e).

9-11 *Fellows are...sweet.* Where God's sweet Spirit breathes on people his gentle bellows are applied, and people change towards each other, from being merely fellow humans into being fellow-souls. Fellow-men interact with the sort of familiarity expressed above, but fellow-souls are, by God's Spirit, capable of deep, spiritual communion with one another, and therefore of true intimacy.

10 *Yahweh's.* Yahweh is "The usual form, among scholars, of the personal name of God in the Old Testament, representing the most likely vocalization of the 'sacred tetragrammaton' *YHWH*" (*OED* "Yahweh").

10 *bellows.* Like material bellows, which breathe life into a fire by supplying it with oxygen, God's "gentle bellows" breathe life into the human spirit. The Holy Spirit is often associated with breath or wind. See Acts 2.2. Cf. note on 5-7 "Of...be" in "Of Heat and Light and Sound" (*BA* 31).

11-12 *denied...cellos.* Bradburne implies that the sound of a violoncello is more divinely inspired (God-breathed) than that of a double-bass. This is presumably because of the cello's refined, mellow, sonorous quality, as opposed to the rough, gravelly sound of a double-bass.

13-14 *trombones...tones.* Trombones hold "over-bold and brassy" tone qualities better than do cellos or double-basses. Bradburne uses "brassy" in the sense of "impudently confident, or forward" (*OED* "brassy" a. 3b) or "over-bold". The word is also used figuratively to denote "Harsh and feelingless in tone, like a brass instrument; having a strident artificial tone" (*op. cit.* 3d). Bradburne may be punning on the idiom "bold as brass", meaning "downright impudent, without modesty" (*Brewer*, "Bold: bold as brass", 136). The loud, confident tone of the trombone, as compared to the cello, may induce Bradburne to think of it as "over-bold". The connotation of both descriptions is that the sound of a trombone is offensive. This reference to the crude sounds of a trombone returns thematically to the "contemptuous" and "contemptible" (*l.* 2) familiarity discussed in the opening lines, although, as Bradburne himself acknowledges, the mixing of metaphors here does not satisfactorily or clearly conclude the poem.

[39] Of Friendship

“Of Friendship” is dated 23 February 1970, the same day as the contrasting poem “Of Familiarity” (BA 38), which appears just before it. Although the sonnet follows the Shakespearean rhyme scheme adopted in most of *Bradburne’s Assays*, its internal structure deviates from the usual three quatrains and couplet. The natural divisions fall, instead, after lines 5, 9, 11 and 13. In the poem Bradburne states his beliefs about the nature of true friendship. His ideas echo Scriptural teaching on selfless love and friendship, such as commanded by Jesus:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matt. 22.37-40)

This passage underpins the qualities of true friendship that Bradburne stresses, namely selfless giving, desiring the best for the other person, disregarding personal gain, seeking mutuality rather than dominance and supporting the other in times of trouble. Such friendship has a supra-rational, even heavenly, element in it – a divine brotherliness. It is, like virtue, its own reward (see *ODQ* 633: 36). Cf. Cicero’s *Laelius, On Friendship*:

All that I can do is to exhort you to rank friendship above all other things in human life. There is nothing so natural, nothing so beneficial either in favourable or in unfavourable circumstances... Friendship is in fact nothing other than a community of views on all matters human and divine, together with goodwill and affection... (Cicero 37)

1-5 True...loss. True friendship comes about when two people desire the best for each other in all circumstances, irrespective of any possible public reaction to their relationship. Bradburne highlights the selfless nature of true friendship. As opposed to mere acquaintances or business partnerships, where careful alliances are made to ensure maximum personal gain, true friendship disregards both gain and loss, whether material or social. Cf. *l.* 10.

6-8 Neither...reward. This may be rephrased as: “Nor does the true accord of deep friendship desire ascendancy of one above the other, since friendship is its own reward”. Bradburne extends his definition of “true” friendship here, by examining power dynamics. He argues that mutual agreement or consent is the “true accord” that lies at the

heart of friendship. At a deep level, therefore, friendship is free of power play, since domination of one over the other goes against this fundamental mutuality. Both persons, it would seem, place a higher value on giving to each other (as stated in the opening lines) than they do on gaining personal benefit from the association.

7 *Ascendancy*. “Dominant control” or “domination” (*OED* “ascendancy”).

9 *Linked...Brother*. The reward of true friendship is connected to Jesus, “our Brother”, as he is often called by Bradburne – see “Of Envy” l. 14 (*BA* 14). The link between Jesus and friendship probably lies in Jesus’ teaching on the subject, as well as in the example which he set by befriending the outcasts of society, not those who would elevate his status. He gives explicit instruction that human friendship should imitate his example:

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. (John 15.12-14)

Thus, Jesus may be understood to be “enchanting” friendship (“it” is ambiguously placed in the line, but seems to refer to friendship), in the sense that he exerts a powerful supra-rational influence over it (see *OED* “enchant” v. 2).

10 *Acquaintance...dross*. To become an acquaintance with someone in order to advance oneself is a base practice. Bradburne compares it to scum to indicate how contemptible it is in his opinion.

10 *goaled on*. Deliberately targeted on, set on, directed at or motivated by (cf. *OED* “goal” n. 2b).

10 *dross*. “The scum, recrement, or extraneous matter thrown off from metals in the process of melting” (*OED* “dross” n. 1). “In general: Refuse; rubbish; worthless, impure matter” (*op. cit.* 4). This is in contrast to pure metals, such as gold or silver.

11 *Again...itself*. Bradburne has already stated that true friendship is its own reward. Now he asserts that, in a different context, the same is true of selfish or base behaviour. The implication is that immoral practices bring about their own punishment, the bad effects

being inherent in the action itself. As George Farquhar wrote, “Crimes, like virtues, are their own rewards” (*ODQ* 315: 19). Bradburne is here reiterating the sentiments of the following Scripture: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6.7).

12-13 *Memories... limb*. True friendship will not toss aside pristine memories (of happy times spent together in the past) simply because of heaviness of fortune, adverse climatic conditions or weak limbs (a possible reference to the lepers of Mutemwa). A true friend (as opposed to a mere acquaintance) will not disregard the good memories as soon as times are hard, or the burdens of life heavy. “Heavy” is often used to denote difficulty or gravity, as in “heavy demands” or “heavy going”. Bradburne probably intends “heaviness of fortune, wind or limb” in this vein: having difficulty due to ill fortune or bad weather, or having great weariness of limb.

12 *twill*. Contraction of “it will” (*Collins* “twill”) in order to conform to the ten-syllable line restriction.

14 *It... hymn*. Instead, true friendship soars above mere sensory experience and beyond human understanding and rationality. To “soar o’er sense” implies that people’s spiritual perspective allows them to transcend their friends’ earthly difficulties (such as “heaviness of fortune, wind or limb”), and to support them in such times. From this perspective (“thence”), true friendship is elevated to the heavenly realm. Cf. Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 29”:

Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think of thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven’s gate... . (*ll.* 9-12)

“[H]eaven’s hymn” is also a possible reference to the vision in the book of Revelation of heavenly beings repeating the words “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Rev. 4.8). Like the hymn of heaven, Bradburne states that true friendship glorifies God – by following Jesus’ teaching on selfless love. See note on 9 “Linked...Brother”.

[40] Of Benevolence

“Of Benevolence” is dated 23 February 1970. In a hybrid of the Shakespearean and Petrarchan forms, this sonnet starts with two self-contained quatrains rhyming abab cdcd, which are followed by a volta and a sestet rhyming effegg. Claiming inspiration from the Virgin Mary in the acrostic, MARY TOLD ME THIS, Bradburne voices his scepticism about apparent benevolence. The central burden of the poem is his observation that overt benevolence is not in itself evidence of spiritual health. He demonstrates that many outwardly benevolent people may be able to charm the public (and even to deceive themselves) into believing in the virtue of their own magnanimity, while their own inner spiritual poverty is revealed by their private immorality, or “secret sin” (l. 14). In contrast, the apparently worthless rabble may be outwardly smelly, sweaty and cowed, but inwardly spiritually healthy – a belief Bradburne had about the lepers for whom he cared, whom many believed to be worthless. Bradburne’s stance in the poem echoes Jesus’ teaching, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5.3), as well as his parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector:

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

(Luke 18.9-14)

Bradburne’s moral is similar: “Be careful not to judge, merely by the outward appearances of righteous behaviour, who is spiritually blessed and who impoverished”. He also emphasises that what matters is inner spiritual health, not material wealth. Cf. Matt. 6.19-21. He encourages a shift in perspective from the material world to the spiritual one, from what appears important to what he believes to be essential.

1-4 *Most loveable...worth.* While being lovable and displaying affection are often equated, Bradburne draws a distinction between them. He states that while these qualities are often considered to be of equal worth, like partners in a marriage, they are not equally

valuable. If marriage is the sacrament which joins two separate individuals into one, then these traits are dissimilar for a further reason: the two are not necessarily combined or united within one person. For example, as he goes on to explain, the benevolent wealthy man may outwardly display affection towards a crowd of poor people, but may be unworthy of love. On the other hand, those in the crowd may not appear to be affectionate, but may be more deserving of love.

5-6 *The...hung*. The scales of fortune, which are hung on eternal hooks, fail in terms of time. Bradburne appears to be conflating the “scales of justice” with the “wheel of fortune”. Whereas the “wheel of fortune” betokens vicissitude (see *OED* “fortune” n. 1a), the “scales of fortune” suggests justice. The scales fail because, in the fullness of time, fortune is not at all just, as Bradburne goes on to demonstrate. Fortune is, rather, a matter of luck or chance – it is careless of justice or equality. Also, fortune does not last, as indicated by the symbol of a turning wheel; as time passes so good fortune fails. In what follows, Bradburne implies that one should not be smug about one’s own fortune (in the sense of either wealth or luck). Not only is good fortune sometimes undeserved, but it does not necessarily generate that which Bradburne believes to be essential: spiritual wellbeing.

6 *that*. “[T]hat” may be read as “such that”. What follows demonstrates that fortune is not just and is a poor criterion for the assessment of true worth.

6-8 *wishing...hell*. Wishing people well, such that one looks down on them from a position of sublime elevation, does not actually remove one from the origins of hell. The (patronising) act of smiling benignly on people who are less fortunate than oneself may have the appearance of great benevolence. However, Bradburne uses imagery to emphasise the distance between the fortunate well wisher, in his “height sublime”, and the object of his pity below him (in “lowness”). He implies that fortunate people, such as these, are so self-satisfied with their own apparent benevolence, and are so far removed from those in need, that they do no good at all. This is because merely wishing people well has the veneer of an excuse not to help them actively. Bradburne goes so far as to claim that, in fact, this type of benevolence may be the very antithesis of what it appears

to be: it “Does not debar itself from springs of hell”. Hell is the source (“spring”) of wickedness and immorality. Bradburne insinuates that the people he is describing draw from similar wells. He thus warns of the dangers of looking down on those to whom fortune has been less kind, since that is not where true value lies. Bradburne also plays with the imagery of a “well” and a “spring”, both water-sources. The first, a “wishing well”, is used by superstitious people to obtain unmerited good luck, while the “springs of hell”, from which “benevolent” people draw, may be a source of spiritual degradation.

6 *debar*. “To exclude or shut out *from* a place or condition” (*OED* “debar” v. 1a).

9 *lacking...wealth*. Stated positively, “are excessively wealthy”.

10 *Entrance...crowd*. Bradburne suggests that these wealthy people are hypnotised or transported out of reality (“entranced”) by their own benevolence (characterised by their “beaming”). This implies that they are blinded by the disparity between their own superfluity and the comparative poverty of others.

11-13 *despite...Indwelling*. Bradburne inverts the assumed sense of superiority that ostensibly benevolent people might feel after an act of “generosity” to those less fortunate than themselves. The crowd may seem inferior, because of their humble appearance (their “aspect bowed”), and repulsive, because of their “smell of sweat”, but they “may have more spiritual health/Indwelling” than those who entrance themselves with their own benevolence. (“[M]ore” (*l.* 12) simultaneously refers to “the man” described in the following lines. See note on 13-14 “man...sin”.) In fact, the very characteristics which give them the outward appearance of lowliness, their “smell of sweat and aspect bowed”, may reveal the source of their spiritual wellbeing: hard work and humility.

12 *Haply*. “Perhaps”, “maybe” (see *OED* “haply” adv.).

13-14 *man...sin*. Bradburne further characterises those described earlier as “beaming on the crowd” (*l.* 10). He distinguishes between appearance and reality, between their

publicly displayed “outward grin” and their concealed inner “secret sin”. In contrast to the lowly crowd, who, Bradburne states, have more spiritual health, these hypocritical men are like whited sepulchres, whose “fair outward semblance conceals inward corruption” (*OED* “sepulchre” n. 1b), emphasised by the sibilant alliteration in “So oft goes softly off for secret sin”.

[41] Of Philanthropy

“Of Philanthropy” is dated 23 February 1970. It is the last of the poems dated between 19-23 February (which make up eighty-five per cent of the sequence). “Of Philanthropy” shares Bradburne’s sceptical attitude towards public charitableness, as expressed in the previous poem, “Of Benevolence” (*BA* 40). Philanthropy is defined as “practical benevolence towards men in general; the disposition or active effort to promote the happiness and well-being of one’s fellow-men” (*OED* “philanthropy”). In considering philanthropy, as with benevolence, Bradburne offers satirical interpretations of actions which might otherwise have appeared virtuous. In these two poems his underlying moral is that truly virtuous actions cannot stem from corrupt motives. In “Of Philanthropy”, he scorns outward actions of charity because of what he perceives as the inner motivation of those performing them. He suggests that philanthropy which merely consists of benevolent actions towards humankind, without knowledge of God’s will, becomes a foolish display of vanity, characterised by a hypocritical performance of out-giving others. The acrostic, MFP PILES OF CASH, embodies his scornful attitude.

Philanthropy, whose generosity should stem from a genuine love of humankind, is reduced, in this case, to a woman giving away more piles of cash than anyone else in order to elevate her own status. Bradburne does not offer any clues as to the identity of the woman in question, although the unexplained “MFP” in the acrostic could, plausibly, be her initials.

1-2 *Must... God?* The essential question Bradburne appears to be asking is: “Am I then obliged to demean or cheapen the essential spiritual gift of charity, by giving it the name of a highly esteemed profane public virtue, philanthropy?” Bradburne objects to the sort

of philanthropy he describes here, since he believes it to deface that which is meant for God: the human spirit. “Mettle” refers to a person’s spirit (spiritedness, inner strength and inherent character), which, Bradburne believes, is primarily intended to be used for God. The thrice repeated syllable “name”, in the first line, climaxes in the word “maim” (*l.* 2), aurally emphasising what Bradburne regards as a sacrilegious diminution of a divine attribute. Bradburne may also be using “mettle” as a pun on “metal”, for coins, or money, that should rather be used for *God’s* purposes than for philanthropic ones.

3-4 *Pathetically...nod.* Following on from the ideas of the previous line, Bradburne’s scathing characterisation of philanthropy as being “pathetically ignorant” probably refers to what occurs when it is misdirected. What arouses his contempt is the *misuse* of philanthropy: philanthropy which ignores God and tries to give to others what is intended to be given to God. He also scorns the sort of philanthropy that is obsessed with misguidedly forcing (“press[ing]”) possessions onto other people (who may be far better off, spiritually speaking, without them). Such philanthropy is reduced to the giving of mere material possessions, as opposed to anything of lasting value or real worth. “Pressing a claim” suggests urging or insisting on the acceptance of a gift in an imposing manner (see *OED* “press” v.¹ 11). “Obsession”, personified, is in control, driven by the desire to out-give others (see *l.* 6). Bradburne suggests that, in the case of such “philanthropy”, competitive obsession is the driving force rather than genuine generosity, love of God or love of man.

5 *mortal.* Although “mortal” is synonymous with “person” here (and, in this instance, a particular but unidentified woman, as revealed in line 8), it also emphasises this individual’s mortality and, thereby, her inferiority and dependency on God, perhaps not obvious to herself due to her material prosperity.

5 *country-seat.* A “country-seat”, also referred to as a “country-house”, refers to the inherited mansion and large country estate “in which a county family is seated or established; the residence of a country gentleman or nobleman” (*OED* “country-seat”). It serves to indicate the status and wealth of the woman in question.

6-7 *Lost...else.* Bradburne reveals this woman's seeming generosity to be nothing but vanity. Her primary concern is to give more than everyone else, and thus to be perceived by others as the most philanthropic person. Her yearning is so strong that it causes her to become "lost in...contemplation". This mesmeric state, induced by her own self-conscious philanthropy, is akin to those individuals in "Of Benevolence" (BA 40) who "Entrance themselves" (l. 10) with their own apparent benevolence.

7-10 *whose...charity.* According to Bradburne's description, the only time this woman was sweet tempered was when she managed to produce public lists of her donations or beneficiaries – an action aimed at proclaiming or augmenting her altruistic image in the community ("forthtelling" of her charity). Given that the money she donated was derived from her comfortable style of living (as suggested by "easy living"), these "savings" clearly did not inconvenience her much. Bradburne foregrounds this piece of information to emphasise how insignificant her gift is in comparison to what she could have given, and also in comparison to what others may have given relative to their fortunes. His moral echoes Mark 12.41-44:

And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

It also calls to mind Jesus' injunction to his followers to keep their charitable giving confidential: see Matt. 6.1-4.

8 *Save when.* Except for when.

9 *Ousted themselves.* Forcefully expelled themselves. "Ousted" indicates forceful expulsion of this woman's "savings" (l. 8), and echoes Bradburne's earlier image of philanthropic people "press[ing]" (l. 4) their possessions on others.

10-11 *she...speaking*. Having portrayed this woman in a bad light thus far, Bradburne admits that, in all honesty, her actions did not make her bad person. He gives no evidence of her being wicked, malicious or cruel – merely conceited and vain.

11-12 *she 'd...others*. Bradburne immediately qualifies his concession that “she was not bad” (*l.* 10) with this tongue-in-cheek statement. He highlights this woman’s indignation at and willingness to fight against “all hypocrisy in others”, with a strong emphasis on “others”. What might have been a virtue in the woman (had she been more humble) is a vice, since she is evidently unaware that her own actions are also hypocritical.

12-13 *clad...splendour*. As further proof of this woman’s hypocrisy, Bradburne describes her display of wealth, in the form of pearl jewelry and fine clothes, which is shamelessly (if unconsciously) flaunted. The image of the lady issuing from her country seat exquisitely dressed and wearing the customary string of pearls is incongruous for someone engaged in charitable pursuits. Her retention of so much personal wealth adds evidence to Bradburne’s view of her as a pretentious philanthropist rather than a genuine lover of humankind.

13-14 *O she...repent*. Bradburne’s conclusion is open to several interpretations, due to the ambiguity of “hence”, “Heavily” and “sense” in this context. “Hence” may be understood as “for this reason; therefore” (*OED* “hence” adv. 7). In this case, Bradburne humorously suggests that the woman is being weighed down by her heavy pearls and splendid attire: as a result of her “pearls and splendour” (*l.* 13) “she went [forth]/Heavily”. “Hence” may also refer to place: either “away from this place” (see *OED* “hence” adv. 1), meaning her immediate surroundings (that is, away from her usual luxurious lifestyle to the sphere of the poor), or “From this world, from this life” (*op. cit.* 3). The latter is more likely, and humorously suggests that even in death she was weighed down by her wealth. Bradburne may also be suggesting that having to part with all her material possessions, in death, made her feel sad and dejected (see *OED* “heavy” a.¹ 25a). “[W]ith sense not to repent” may be intended sarcastically, meaning that she had the sense not to repent of her vanity because she knew her behaviour was wrong. It is more

likely, however, to mean that she had no sense of the need to repent because she did not feel her actions to be reprehensible in any way.

[42] Of Misanthropy

“Of Misanthropy” is dated 3 May 1970. Its late insertion into the sequence appears to be an attempt to use up the last few inches of space on this particular piece of paper, as in “Of Religion” (*BA* 37) (see p. 67). “Of Misanthropy” is written as a companion piece to the previous poem, “Of Philanthropy” (*BA* 41). It is Bradburne’s last contribution to the *Assays*, and also the shortest poem in the sequence. Unlike his scathing social commentary in “Of Philanthropy”, here Bradburne simply prays for patience and tolerance, in the light of his tendency to lose his temper. His earnest desire for solitude (see Biography earlier on), resulting in his frequent withdrawal from society, is reiterated in “De Beata Solitudine”:

Bereft of solitude my spirit stands
 At point of being murdered by its lack,
 My breathing bursts for freedom from the bands
 Of converse binds my being front and back;
 Being alone to me is company
 With Love the Fount of life in all that lives,
 The Triune Lord accords in unity
 Of solitary God as good He gives... . (*ll.* 1-8; 74.221)

In “Of Misanthropy”, he reveals his fear of appearing to dislike company altogether. Cf. “Of Solitude” (*BA* 11).

1 *embody this*. Embody or personify misanthropy, “hatred of mankind” (*OED* “misanthropy”).

2 *when they come*. Bradburne is probably referring to visitors in general, although possibly to the lepers in particular, who were his most regular visitors at the time. He often complained of being disturbed while he was writing poetry, and anyone who interrupted him was likely to witness his fiery temper. Dove recounts an incident at Silveira House in which Heather Benoy discovered just how seriously Bradburne took his

poetry-writing. “She took him by surprise one day when he was in the middle of a line: he leapt up and swore!” (Dove 172). Afterwards, they “didn’t speak to each other for at least three weeks” (*loc. cit.*).

3 *Shattering...bliss*. For Bradburne, solitude was tantamount to “sovereign bliss”.

5 *stricken dumb*. Any interruption while praying, meditating or writing poetry, almost certainly caused Bradburne to lose his train of thought and thereby silenced his spiritual or inspirational communion.

[43] **Of The Lord’s Prayer**

“Of The Lord’s Prayer” is dated “Lady Day 1970”, 25 March 1970. “Lady Day”, also known as the Feast of the Annunciation, is celebrated nine months before Christmas Day. It “commemorates the announcement of the Incarnation by the angel Gabriel to the Virgin and the conception of Christ in her womb” (“Annunciation of the BVM”, *ODCC*, 60). “In the Middle Ages and later 25 March was reckoned the first day of the civil year” (“Lady Day”, *ODCC*, 792). Although the annunciation does not feature in the poem, the date of composition is significant because, in 1970, Lady Day occurred on the Wednesday of Holy Week. The proximity of Easter and the season of Lent influence Bradburne’s themes, which include forgiveness, salvation, heaven, the Church, the Eucharist and the restraint of the human body (“brother ass” (*ll.* 5, 47)) for the sake of the soul. Bradburne employs the Lucan version of the Lord’s Prayer (see Luke 11.2-4), the one most widely used by Roman Catholics:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven: Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. (*Daily Missal* 25)

It does not include the concluding doxology contained in Matt. 6.13: “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen”.

Bradburne’s meditation on the Lord’s Prayer is itself a prayer, the natural conclusion of which is an “Amen”. His reflections on each phrase of the Prayer form the

central structuring device of the poem, with eight of the stanzas opening with successive phrases from the Prayer. This poetic form of regular six-line stanzas, rhyming ababcc, is unique in *Bradburne's Assays*. He justifies its length in the opening two stanzas, which express his wish to commemorate the "Prayer of the Lord" (l. 11) properly in a poem.

1 purple-crested lourie. Purple-crested louries are fairly common in eastern Rhodesia, where Bradburne lived. Their call includes "a series of loud, explosive 'krooks', which precede shrill wailing notes" (*Roberts* 231). Both the sound of their call and the colour of their crests are relevant here, since the wailing reflects the lamentation of Passiontide and purple is the colour of the penitential season of Lent in the Roman Catholic Church. As Good Friday approaches, Bradburne hears the sound as a call to arms.

2 goings...Passiontide. Passiontide constitutes the last two weeks in Lent. Lady Day in 1970 fell on the Wednesday of Holy Week, near the end of Passiontide.

3 relinquish earthly charms. Bradburne imagines the lourie's call as an invitation to renounce attachments to earthly goods and pleasures in order to concentrate on spiritual matters, as is appropriate during Lent.

4 Tenebrae. The name given to the "special form of Mattins (sic.) and Lauds provided for the last three days of Holy Week. Until 1955 it was sung by anticipation on the three preceding evenings" ("Tenebrae", *ODCC*, 1349): Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Bradburne's reference to the "Wednesday of Tenebrae", therefore, is an indication that he probably followed the old way of celebrating Holy Week. During Tenebrae services, "candles lighted at the beginning of the service are extinguished one by one after each psalm, in memory of the darkness at the time of the crucifixion" (*OED* "Tenebrae").

4-6 bestride...Mass. Following St. Francis of Assisi, Bradburne (himself a Franciscan Tertiary) nicknames his body "brother ass", as in "Of Mortification" (*BA* 6) – see note on 3 "brother ass's". His soul or spirit rides his body, directing and controlling it by using the grace of God as a bridle. See notes on 3-4 "Yet...goal" and 4 "with grace" in "Of Mortification" (*BA* 6). Such grace enables him to restrain his bodily appetites in order to

be properly prepared for Mass on Easter Sunday, when his Lenten fast will be broken. He describes himself as riding the season (of Lent) with legs astride, as on a donkey.

4 *bestride*. “To sit upon with the legs astride” (*OED* “bestride” v. 1).

7-9 *High...point*. At the time of writing this poem Bradburne was forty-eight years old. At this age he believes it is high time he composed a poem, or meditation, on the Lord’s Prayer, which he sees as the focal point of meditation, since it was given by Jesus himself. For this reason, “it has always been regarded by Christians as uniquely sacred” (“Lord’s Prayer”, *ODCC*, 836). The poem appears to be the first meditation on the Lord’s Prayer in Bradburne’s corpus, as he implies in the text.

9-10 *the stroke...oraison*. An awkward phrase, which may be interpreted as the stroke of a clock, facilitated by its gears or cogs. As such, Bradburne indicates that it is the Lord’s Prayer that sets in motion all worthwhile prayer.

10 *oraison*. A variant spelling of “orison”, meaning a “prayer” (see *OED* “orison” n. 1a).

12 *measured*. Traversed (see *OED* “measure” v. 6a) or paced out, step by step.

12 *help...sword*. Bradburne asks for the Holy Spirit to strengthen him for the task ahead by means of his “sword”. He is referring to the letter in which St. Paul instructs the Ephesian Christians to put on the armour of God, including “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6.17). Thus, Bradburne expresses his desire to be strengthened by the Bible – not surprisingly, since Scripture forms the basis of his poem. Here he is heeding the *lourie*’s call to arms.

15 *befall*. “Happen, occur” (*OED* “befall” v. 4).

16 *each and each*. Bradburne reiterates that, spiritually speaking, every single person (“each and each”) is either his brother or sister, because God is the Father of all of humankind: *Our* Father.

16-18 *shines...mend*. Jesus, as “the bright and morning star” (Rev. 22.16), points to the Father (the “One”), who, being all-knowing, has the power to forgive all sin and thereby to heal and restore people. Jesus is associated with light throughout the poem (see *ll.* 20, 30 and 51), an image suggestive of his radiance, holiness, purity and the illumination that his presence brings. Bradburne’s choice of “mend” indicates his sense of the world and human beings as being broken.

19-22 *Who...presence*. Bradburne plays with the idea of God the Father residing in heaven, implied by “Who art in heaven”. He wishes the Father to reveal himself more clearly (to “will well [his] presence”) in the world and thus “make a heaven” out of earth, to make a state that is free from evil (“clear/Of ill”). He reasons that since the Father is in heaven as well as on earth, there need not be such a disparity between his two abodes, especially since his presence on earth is combined with that of Jesus, who “abides” on earth. Cf. Matt. 28.20: “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”.

22-24 *times...Eucharist*. In this context, “Give way” means “yield”, rather than “collapse” or “break down”. Still addressing God the Father, Bradburne urges him to make a heaven out of earth. By way of encouragement, Bradburne acknowledges the power of the Father’s presence, noting that, in the face of eternity, times and seasons lose their relevance, yielding to the combined presence of Father and Son (“to where [the Father] walkest with [his] Christ”). Bradburne justifies his earlier suggestion that Jesus “abides” on earth more palpably than the Father does, by recognising Jesus’ tangible presence in the Eucharist, through the miracle of transubstantiation – see note on 13-14 “Jesus...shed” in “Of Wine” (*BA* 34). He is “Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matt. 1.23).

22 *tides*. Times, occasions, ages or seasons in the course of the year (such as Christmastide, Eastertide, or Passiontide) (see *OED* “tide” n. 3a, 4b).

25 *Hallowed*. Consecrated, holy, blessed (see *OED* “hallowed” ppl.a.).

26 I AM. The name God gave himself when speaking to Moses from the burning bush. See note on 14-15 “forgot...Flame” in “Of Sex-Appeal” (BA 19).

27 Him. Jesus.

27-28 Thy...Word. According to Bradburne’s model, Jesus, the Word, is the expression of God the Father’s thought. See “De Voce Patris” (BA 30). Cf. John 1.1.

28-29 true...manward. Bradburne sees Jesus, the Word, as the embodiment (or, metaphorically, the true dwelling place) of the Father’s will in relation to humankind. “[A]ll Thy willing manward” may be interpreted as all the Father’s actions of exercising his will towards humankind. Cf. “will well” (l. 22).

29-30 shown...Light. The Father’s good will towards humankind is evidenced by the blessedness of Jesus, who is described as the embodiment of that will earlier, and now as “the Way, the Truth, life’s Light” – a variation on John 14.6. Cf. l. 51.

30 Jesus Blest. This parallels “Hallowed be Thy Name” (l. 25), a subtle affirmation of the holiness of God the Father and of God the Son.

31-36 Christendom...rat. Christendom refers to “Christians collectively; the church” (OED “Christendom” 3a), and, more generally, to all Western countries. Bradburne has previously expressed his desire for a fuller realisation of the kingdom of Heaven on earth. Here he acknowledges that the Church is already a visible manifestation on earth of God’s eternal kingdom. He immediately qualifies this statement by adding that the Church is not (or should not be) tyrannical and worldly. He also emphasises that it is not subordinate to the kingdom of the devil, and should, therefore, not bow to demonic powers or do the bidding of those who plot to overthrow God’s kingdom. Here Bradburne uses St. Peter, on whom Jesus declared he would build his Church (see Matt. 16.18), as a symbol of the Church. He refers to Jesus’ address to Peter at the Last Supper:

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not... .

(Luke 22.31-32)

Thus, the Devil's plot is to make so many trials for the Church that eventually Christ's kingdom on earth will appear to be little more than a "groundless, shifting rat". See note on 36 "groundless, shifting rat".

31 *even now*. Cf. Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity":

...When at the world's last session
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his throne.

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
But now begins; for from this happy day
Th' old Dragon under ground,
In straiter limits bound
Not half so far casts his usurpèd sway... . (ll. 163-70)

34 *subterranean*. "Existing under the earth; belonging to the lower regions or underworld; infernal" (*OED* "subterranean" a. 2).

36 *groundless, shifting rat*. This peculiar image of the Church as a (popularly despised and easily victimised) rat reveals Bradburne's concern that if the Church is not properly grounded in God, it may become rootless and relative ("shifting"). He implies that it is the striving of demonic powers to disengage Christians from their rootedness in Christ, and thus render them defenceless, like vermin.

37-38 *Thy...heaven*. Again Bradburne emphasises his hope that earth will become more like heaven, this time longing for God's will to be done on earth as *well* as it is in heaven. Cf. stanzas 4 and 6. He fleshes out his hopeful vision in the rest of the stanza.

38-39 *seven...His*. Bradburne extends the image in the previous stanza of Peter's wheat as representative of the Church. Here the Holy Spirit showers gifts on the Church like rain watering and cleansing a "growing harvest", which "shall be His" in time. Bradburne is drawing on the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares: see Matt. 13.24-30. The harvest, symbolic of the kingdom of God, is sanctified by the Holy Spirit with his seven gifts.

The gifts of the Holy Ghost are of two kinds: the first are specially intended for the sanctification of the person who receives them... . Those of the first class are

accounted seven in number, as enumerated by Isaias (11: 2-3)...
 (“Holy Ghost”, *CE*, par. 32)

These seven (see Isa. 11.2-3) are understood to be the gifts of “wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety (godliness), and fear of the Lord” (“Holy Ghost”, *CE*, par. 32).

40-42 *Whose...free*. Bradburne combines two biblical images: that of the human body as a temple of the Holy Spirit (“your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you” (1 Cor. 6.19) – cf. 1 Cor. 3.16), and that of heaven as a new, holy and everlasting city – the New Jerusalem referred to in the book of Revelation (see Rev. 21.1-4). Thus, Bradburne envisages all God’s people as individual temples in heaven, each one filled with God’s praises and forming part his glorious new city.

43-46 *Give...blent*. In asking for his daily bread, Bradburne distinguishes between the needs of the soul and of the body, both of which need to be fed. He emphasises the importance of the soul’s receiving spiritual food. In acknowledging the purpose of the body to help the soul reach its eternal goal in heaven (cf. Phil. 3.14), he recognises that the body and soul are forever intertwined (“immortally...blent”), and, as such, the body also needs careful attention. Cf. “Of Mortification” *ll.* 1-4 (*BA* 6).

46 *blent*. Mingled (*OED* “blent” ppl.a.).

47-48 *Wherefore...him*. As a result of the body’s key role in the progress of the soul, Bradburne advises that it not be indulged but rather kept trim in order that it may not weigh the soul down. This is advice that he personally followed quite strictly. See introduction to “Of Mortification” (*BA* 6).

47 *brother ass*. See note on 4-6 “bestride...Mass”.

49-50 *Forgive...debtors*. For the purpose of his metre, Bradburne conflates Matt. 6.12, “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”, with the version of the Lord’s

Prayer to which he would have been most accustomed: “And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us” (*Daily Missal* 25).

50-51 *love...Son*. Apart from desiring God’s forgiveness, Bradburne gives additional motivation for forgiving others: the love of Jesus, through whose death and resurrection forgiveness is made possible.

51-54 *Thy Light...Mass*. The purity and holiness of Jesus is again emphasised by his association with “Light” and “Truth” (the capitalisation of which indicates totality). Cf. note on 16-18 “shines...mend”. Jesus is the embodiment of God’s Light that is “shown forth” for all to see. He is also God’s Truth, which sets people free: see John 8.31-32, 36. Bradburne states that this Truth frees humankind from “carefulness regarding what shall pass”. Here, “carefulness” denotes anxiety, caution, wariness and watchfulness, indicating that without Jesus people worry overmuch about what might happen to them. This is emphasised in the imagery of line 52 – see note on 52 “(As...trod)”. Bradburne implies that Jesus frees people from worrying about their lives because they can be sure of their ultimate destination in him. In the final line Bradburne puns on “pass”, using it in the additional sense of “to pass away”, or to cease to exist. He thus presents the Eucharist (the “Mass”), in which Jesus’ atonement for and victory over sin is celebrated, as something permanent on earth to which people can cling amidst insecurity, since, as he argues, it “surely” shall never pass out of existence. Cf. *l.* 24. The Eucharist provides food for the soul – the need for which is addressed in the previous stanza.

52 (*As...trod*). The freedom which God’s Truth brings is likened to the lilies in Galilee where Jesus walked. This is a direct reference to Jesus’ teaching on trusting God for all one’s needs:

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:
And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one
of these. (Matt. 6.28-29)

Thus, the lilies, full of joy and free from worry, exemplify the freedom that Jesus offers.

52 *gay*. Full of joy and mirth (see *OED* “gay” a. 1a). In this case, also denoting the carefree disposition granted as a grace through the soul’s acceptance of the Christian faith.

54 *nevermore*. Never (see *OED* “nevermore” adv. A).

57-59 *sword...cause*. The “sword” is earlier attributed to the Holy Spirit, and used to denote the “word of God” – cf. note on 12 “help...sword”. Here, Bradburne extends the image, drawing on another passage of Scripture:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4.12)

The “sword”, (the “word of God”) that Bradburne describes, functions similarly. It helps believers to discern between right and wrong, and thus to demonstrate “great prowess in [God’s] cause”. “Prowess” denotes “bravery” or “valour” (*OED* “prowess” n. 1a), and is a continuation of the military imagery introduced by the *lourie*’s call to arms (*I*. 1).

59-60 *but...goodwill*. Bradburne admits that even when people are equipped with the tools to know right from wrong, they still need deliverance from evil. He therefore pleads for God’s continued goodwill towards humankind, and for goodwill between people. He concludes this prayer-poem with the customary “Amen”, thus reiterating that what he has prayed for should indeed be so.

[44] **Of Deicide**

“Of Deicide” is dated “Good Friday 1970” (that is, 27 March 1970) at the bottom of the page. The Crucifixion is foremost in Bradburne’s mind, as intimated by the subject of the poem: “deicide” – “the killing of a god” (*OED* “deicide²”). The underlying question Bradburne seeks to answer is “Can God be killed?” or “Is there such a thing as deicide?” His answer is an immediate, emphatic “No”. Instead of delving into the theological questions that ensue from the paradox of Jesus’ death, Bradburne focuses on the work of the Cross, and on Jesus’ divinity in the midst of his suffering. The conclusion

sidesteps the original question by asking “Who is responsible for Jesus’ death?” By this Bradburne really means, “Who killed Jesus’ human body?”, since he has already established that Jesus’ godhead, being eternal, could not die. Once more the answer is emphatic, as Bradburne lays the blame on all humankind, not only on the Jews in the crowd who cried “Crucify!” (l. 5).

1-3 *Oddly...snuffed.* By “it” Bradburne means “deicide”. He points out the oddity of the word “deicide”, since, he states, the action it describes is impossible. He reasons that since God is Light itself he cannot be “put out”, or “snuffed”, like a candle. He further emphasises God’s immortality by describing him as “Uncreated” – as stated in the Athanasian Creed (see introduction to “De Voce Patris”). His logic is that if God was never created, he cannot be destroyed. By “God”, Bradburne refers particularly to God the Son in the form of Jesus, the member of the Trinity who suffered a human death and who is repeatedly described as the “light of the world” in St. John’s gospel (see, for example, John 1.1-9, 8.12, 12.35-46).

3-4 *against...shout.* Once more, Bradburne asserts humankind’s inferiority in comparison to God, this time using sound imagery. Paradoxically, not even the loudest shout of any mortal can “prevail” against the soft piping of Jesus, the God ever-present in his creation, whom Bradburne represents as “Great Pan” (see notes on 10 “Great Pan” and 10 “pipe” in “Of Purgatory” (BA 16)). “Prevail” here means to triumph over or to “be superior [to] in strength or influence” (see *OED* “prevail” v. 2). In other words, no amount of human exertion can match God, who is superior in all things, and effortlessly so. The contrast between God and his creation is apparent in Bradburne’s description of Jesus as piping softly, while humankind shouts loudly. As in the Biblical description of the crowd baying for Jesus to be crucified, Bradburne characterises Jesus as gentle and in control, while humankind is easily angered and bad-tempered.

5 *But...prevailed.* Bradburne refers to the crowd in Jerusalem who shouted “Crucify him” to Pilate, regarding Jesus’ sentence: see John 19.5-6. Having firmly asserted humankind’s inferiority to God, exemplified by the statement that “no loudest shout” (l. 4) can prevail against God, Bradburne now cites the example of Jesus’ crucifixion, where the shouts

from the crowd did indeed prevail – not ultimately, but successfully enough to cause Jesus’ immediate death. Bradburne later resolves this paradox by suggesting that while humankind may have seemed, in this instance, to prevail over the will of God, in fact, the opposite is true. See notes on 7-8 “Christ...always” and 9-10 “Moreover...Limbo”.

6 *They...away*. See Matt. 27.24-31.

7-8 *Christ...alway*. Bradburne makes the point that even as Jesus submitted to the humiliation and pain of the events of Good Friday, carrying his cross to death, he was God eternal, immutable and absolute, signalled by the unalterable present-tense title: “I AM” (l. 8) – cf. “Of Sex-Appeal” l. 14 (BA 19) and “Of The Lord’s Prayer” l. 26 (BA 43). Bradburne implies that in fact no act of deicide was committed, since only Jesus’ human body was killed (and that only temporarily) – his divinity could not be destroyed.

7 *flailed*. Scourged, whipped, thrashed (see *OED* “flail” v. 1); a reference to Jesus’ scourging by Roman soldiers prior to his crucifixion: see Matt. 27.26.

8 *alway*. An archaic form of “always”. Bradburne omits the “s” to rhyme “alway” with “away” (l. 6).

9-10 *Moreover...Limbo*. Not only was Jesus not destroyed in death, but after he died his “soul”, or spirit, descended into Limbo with the purpose of freeing those imprisoned there. In Roman Catholic theology, “Limbo” is a temporary place “supposed to exist on the border of Hell as the abode of the just who died before Christ’s coming, and of unbaptized infants” (*OED* “limbo¹” 1a).

In literary usage the name is sometimes applied in a wider and more general sense to any place or state of restraint, confinement, or exclusion, and is practically equivalent to “prison”... (“limbo”, *CE*, par. 3)

Bradburne refers to the belief as stated in the Apostles’ Creed that after Jesus was crucified and buried “He descended into hell” (*Daily Missal* 26), an idea which in turn is derived from 1 Peter 3.19: “he went and preached unto the spirits in prison”. Bradburne seems to use “Limbo” in the broader sense outlined above. His point is that while people

thought they had killed Jesus, he was actually still in control and was, paradoxically, active in conquering death and in giving new life to all humankind.

10-11 *blent...whom.* Bradburne's use of "blent", meaning "mingled" (*OED* "blent" ppl.a.), is awkward and ambiguous. He could mean that when Jesus went down to Limbo, he was "setting free/Those" who were mingled there together. Alternatively, having mingled there with those in Limbo, Jesus liberated them. Another possible meaning of "blent", past participle of "blend", is "to blind: to dazzle: to obscure" (*Chambers* "blend" v.). Bradburne may mean that in the gloom of Limbo, Jesus, "the light of the world" (John 8.12), dazzled those confined there and then liberated them.

11-12 *through...He.* Bradburne is thinking of those people who died before Jesus was incarnated, and who were thus denied the opportunity to know Jesus, believed to be "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14.6). Bradburne sees the need for a unique standard of judgement for the salvation of these people, one which he names as their integrity to Truth itself. The logic is that if they were true to Truth then they were true to Jesus, because he is Truth. However, Bradburne stresses that the souls in Limbo are not crowned with everlasting life (see note on 7-8 "crown...life" in "Of Intuition" (*BA* 13)) through any merit or virtue of their own, but because of the merit of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. This accords with the Christian doctrine of salvation by grace and not by works, as stated in Tit. 3.5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us".

13-14 *Rather...they.* In order to bring home the gravity of the matter, Bradburne goes so far as to assert that it would be better to call Jesus' crucifixion "suicide" than to blame only the Jews for slaying him. His point echoes St. Paul: "There is none righteous, no, not one... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3.10, 23). As fellow sinners, therefore, all humankind is equally responsible for the murder of Jesus. The shocking suggestion that Jesus committed suicide demonstrates the strength of Bradburne's conviction all the more powerfully, since suicide is an act condemned by the Christian Church as an atrocious sin.

[45] Of Suicide

“Of Suicide” is dated “Good Friday 1970” (that is, 27 March 1970) at the bottom of the page. The poem is written as a companion piece to “Of Deicide” (BA 44), in which Bradburne alludes to suicide in the final couplet. Still concerned with the (topical) events leading up to Jesus’ crucifixion on Good Friday, Bradburne focuses on Judas’ betrayal of Jesus and later suicide. Bradburne’s stance on suicide remains unclear. The lack of connections between the three quatrains and the final couplet makes the meaning of the poem as a whole difficult to locate. In the first quatrain Bradburne describes suicide as an unpardonable sin. In contrast, signified by “Yet” (l. 5), the second quatrain appears to express sympathy with Judas by alluding to Jesus’ temptation by Satan. However, even this interpretation requires a stretch of the imagination. Especially towards the end, the quatrain digresses and becomes very difficult to follow. The third quatrain and concluding couplet relate more easily to the topic at hand. Overall, the lack of coherence in Bradburne’s thought-pattern makes the poem largely inaccessible, although it adheres perfectly to the form of a Shakespearean sonnet.

1 *Judas*. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve apostles, betrayed Jesus by leading the Jewish Sanhedrin to arrest him in the Garden of Gethsemane under the cover of darkness and out of sight of the crowds. See Mark 14.43-45, Luke 22.47-48, John 18.3-5.

2-4 *On Haceldama...flood*. This may be rephrased as: “Jesus’ healing flood never flows on Haceldama, that field of blood”. By this Bradburne means that Jesus’ blood, which cleanses humankind of sin (see 1 John 1.7, 1 Pet. 2.24), never flows on the so-called “field of blood”, because, in traditional Christian thinking, suicide is unforgivable. The parenthetical insertion in lines 3-4 appears to qualify “never”, emphasising that under no circumstances – neither by wisdom nor due to knowledge or understanding (perhaps of the crime) – is God’s sympathetic mercy bestowed on suicides. The Roman Catholic Church has traditionally considered suicides to be damned and thus refused to give them a Christian burial in consecrated ground. “Catholic moralists are generally agreed that direct suicide [the intentional killing of oneself] is intrinsically evil, and they hold therefore that no circumstances can ever justify it” (“Suicide”, *NCE*, 13: 782).

2 *Haceldama*. *Haceldama*, also known as *Aceldama*, is the name of “a potter’s field located... south of Jerusalem in the Valley of Hinnom” (“*Haceldama*”, *NCE*, 6: 885), otherwise called the “field of blood”. According to the book of Acts, the field is “connected with the blood of Judas, who committed suicide there” (*loc. cit.*):

Now this man [Judas] purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, *Aceldama*, that is to say, The field of blood. (Acts 1.18-19)

According to St. Matthew’s account “the name is connected with the blood of Jesus, since the field was bought with the 30 pieces of silver, ‘the price of blood,’ that Judas had received for betraying his Master” (“*Haceldama*”, *NCE*, 6: 885):

And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. (Matt. 27.6-8)

3 *wit*. Knowledge, reasoning or understanding (see *OED* “wit” 2a, 11a).

5-8 *Yet...reign*. The sense of these lines, and their connection to the previous quatrain, is difficult to understand. “Yet” signifies that what follows is in contrast to the previous quatrain, although how this is so is unclear. The “summit height” is probably related to the city of Jerusalem, situated on a high plateau between the Judean desert to the east and the Mediterranean sea to the West. It is possible that Bradburne has in mind Jesus’ temptation by the Devil on the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem: see Luke 4.9-12, quoted above in the note on 9-10 “With...had” in “Of Ambition” (*BA* 18). If this is so, then Bradburne might be making a connection between Jesus’ temptation to throw himself off the temple and the act of suicide. He may even be punning on “Juda’s”, meaning that Jesus stood in the manner of Judas, tempted to force the hand of God. Here “style” is interpreted as meaning “in the manner of”. Alternatively, Bradburne may be using “style” to refer to a column or pillar (from the Greek *stulos*), like those used by Christian Stylites. (Bradburne was particularly fascinated by the Stylites – see Dove 212-13.) The “style of Juda’s”, ostensibly a focal-point, may thus refer to the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem, part of the territory of the tribe of Juda (a variant spelling of Judah). Whatever the case, the emphasis of line 5 appears to be on “stood”: Juda’s “style” is set

firm between vast, untamed stretches of desert and sea. Its express purpose is that of the clan of King David: to reign over both domains in might. Bradburne may be alluding to Jesus' spiritual dominion over Judah, like the material dominion of his ancestor King David, the "first king of the Judean dynasty" ("David", *ODCC*, 377), whose "lion clan" was dominant among the twelve tribes of Israel (see Gen. 49.9-10). The kingship of David, "the 'lion of Juda'" ("Juda", *CE*, par. 3), is fulfilled in Jesus, "the true lion of the tribe of Juda" (*loc. cit.*) (see Rev. 5.5). As such, perhaps Bradburne is alluding to a further temptation of Jesus – to reign in might in Jerusalem as an earthly King, like his ancestor. Bradburne does not make it clear.

6-7 *main/Mediterranean*. The Mediterranean Sea (see *OED* "main" n.¹ 5a).

9-12 "*What's...broad*. Bradburne alludes to *Romeo and Juliet*:

What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet. (2.2.43-44)

In a poem about suicide, Bradburne may have viewed a quotation from this play, in which both lovers kill themselves, as particularly appropriate. "What's in a name?" probably refers to the name of Judas, as he goes on to explain: although Judas is seen as the archetypal traitor, it could have been anyone who betrayed Jesus. Bradburne deliberately chooses "John", his own first name, as an alternative to Judas. "John" could refer to either John the Baptist, or to the apostle John, but also demonstrates Bradburne's own identification with Judas. Bradburne appears to be warning Christians not to look down on sinners like Judas (significantly, one of Jesus' chosen disciples), since any of his followers could have turned on Jesus. Like Judas, who chose to "tryst" with the Sanhedrin (probably derogatorily referred to as "dross"), Christians face the temptation of leaving the strait and narrow in order to follow worthless endeavours ("dross"), which seem more inviting (because the road is more "broad" – see note on 12 "broad").

10 *Belov-ed...Lord*. The apostle John frequently refers to himself in his gospel as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13.23, 19.26, 20.2, 21.7, 20), and is thus referred to as the beloved disciple.

10 *Belov-ed*. See note on 13 “Belov-ed” in “De Spiritu Domini” (BA 29).

12 *tryst*. To meet or agree to meet, especially secretly (see *Collins* “tryst”).

12 *dross*. See note on 10 “dross” in “Of Friendship” (BA 39).

12 *broad*. Bradburne alludes to Matt. 7.13: “broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction”. He also uses “broad” to mean “liberal” or “tolerant”, “Characterized by breadth of opinion or sentiment” (*OED* “broad” a. 11).

13-14 *Ita...pessima*. Bradburne incorporates two famous Latin quotes: “sic transit gloria mundi” (the last two words of which he inverts for the sake of the rhyme), meaning “thus passes the glory of the world” (*ODQ* 22: 4), and “corruptio optimi pessima”, meaning “corruption of the best is the worst” or “the worst kind of corruption is corruption of the best” (see *ODQ* 669: 9). Here, Bradburne refers to Judas, whose corruption and betrayal of Jesus was worse than that of an ordinary man on the street, since he was chosen specially by Jesus to be one of his closest friends. Bradburne implies that when “we [the] would-be chosen” (*l.* 11) people do likewise, the glory of the world passes away. Bradburne introduces the lines with “Ita” (“so” or “thus”) to indicate a causal link on the one hand between Judas’s betrayal, David’s political power, and humankind’s general tendency to compromise with evil, and, on the other, the consequence of these, namely the corruption of the best and the transience of earthly glory.

[46] **Of Pomp and Circumstance**

“Of Pomp and Circumstance” is dated “Good Friday 1970” (that is, 27 March 1970) at the bottom of the page. The poem is set in St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome at the coronation of a Pope, possibly that of Pope Paul VI, since his was the most recent papal coronation (30 June 1963) at the time Bradburne wrote the poem. Following a Pontifical Mass in the basilica, Pope Paul VI (like both his immediate predecessors) was crowned on the balcony of the basilica in front of the crowds (see *ll.* 2, 11) assembled below in St.

Peter's Square. Bradburne had visited St. Peter's while in Rome in 1950, so could describe the scene of the coronation fairly accurately. He may even have watched the previous Pope's coronation on television in England in 1958.

The poem is aptly titled to describe the splendour of the coronation ceremony. ("Circumstance", here, refers to "formality, ceremony" (*OED* "circumstance" n. 7a).) It was probably inspired by Edward Elgar's set of five marches for symphony orchestra, called "Pomp and Circumstance" (see "Pomp and Circumstance", *Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 557). Elgar in turn derived the title from Shakespeare's *Othello*:

Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, th' ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance, of glorious war! (3.3.355-58)

Elgar adapted a tune from the first of his "Pomp and Circumstance" marches for the famous finale of his *Coronation Ode*, "Land of Hope and Glory" (see "Land of Hope and Glory", *Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 397), which has achieved the status almost of a popular national anthem in England. While Elgar's music celebrates human ostentation, Bradburne's poem subtly warns of the ephemeral nature of all earthly "pomp and circumstance".

The atmosphere of the celebration is one of transcendent joy – emphasised by the "golden tones" (*l.* 1) of the music in the basilica, by the glowing light streaming in through the East Window (*l.* 7) and by the long vowel sounds in "tones" (*l.* 1), "goes" (*l.* 5), "flows" (*l.* 6) and "glows" (*l.* 7). The last three words resonate especially strongly owing to their parallel placing in consecutive lines. Over the first ten lines Bradburne steadily builds up this atmosphere, especially through sound imagery. The ceremony begins with the glorious music of Palestrina, accompanied by the elated acclamation of the crowds; then follows exalted music by Victoria (Vittoria), in harmony with angelic voices. The strains of the even earlier Gregorian chant are heard from time to time as the ceremony proceeds.

The cumulative effect of all this music is a climax in line 10 with the "sheerest acclamation" – "sheerest" in the sense of absolute, purest and unadulterated. The simultaneous upward direction, implied in Bradburne's images and in words like "rarefied" (*l.* 3) and "zenith" (*l.* 8), contributes to the exhilaration of the occasion. For example, the angels are situated, literally and figuratively, "on the mountain-tops of

song” (l. 4); and the “great East Window” (l. 7) is high above the ground “like a star” (l. 7), pointing towards the zenith of its climb, and ascending “Up, up” (l. 9). The euphoria of the occasion reaches its climax here where it is suddenly broken in the last three lines.

1 *Palestrina*. Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594), Italian Renaissance composer, was “a master of contrapuntal composition” (“Palestrina, Giovanni Pierluigi da”, *Grove*, 14: 120). He was “one of the towering figures in the music of the late 16th century”, “primarily a prolific composer of masses and motets” (*op. cit.* 14: 118). He served as musical director of the Julian choir at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome from 1571-1594 (see “Palestrina, Giovanni Pierluigi da”, *NEB*, 9: 83). Given his great influence over Roman Catholic music, it is likely that Palestrina’s masses would be used during papal coronations.

3 *rarefied*. Exalted in nature or character; lofty (see *Collins* “rarefied” a. 1).

3 *accords*. Bradburne uses “accord” in the archaic sense of “compose, sing, or play (something) in harmony” (*OED* “accord” v. 4). Here, Bradburne states that Victoria’s music is composed, sung or played in harmony with angels, by way of highlighting its exalted state and divine inspiration.

3 *Vittoria*. Tomás Luis de Victoria (1549-1611), “the greatest Spanish Renaissance composer” (“Victoria, Tomás Luis de”, *Grove*, 19: 703).

From 1565 for about forty years he held various important posts in Rome, which accounts for the common Italianization of his name as ‘Vittoria’. He was one of the greatest of the contemporaries of Palestrina (of whom he may have been a pupil) and like him a composer of unaccompanied church music in the contrapuntal style, then at its climax; but whereas Palestrina’s music is serene that of Victoria is charged with passionate mysticism.

(“Victoria, Tomás Luis de”, *Oxford Companion to Music*, 1077)

5 *triple might’s tiara*. The papal tiara, or triple tiara, to which Bradburne refers is “a beehive shaped headdress, high and round, made of cloth of silver, with three diadems, usually enriched with precious stones”, also “with two lappets...hanging down the back” (“tiara”, *NCE*, 14: 148). It “has been used, since its early days, to crown the newly elected pope” (*loc. cit.*). Bradburne describes the tiara as triply powerful, because its

three crowns symbolise the tri-partite authority bestowed on the Pope upon receiving it. As the dean of the cardinal deacons places the tiara on the Pope's head, he says:

Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns and know that you are the father of princes and kings, ruler of the earth, and earthly vicar of our Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom is honour and glory forever. Amen.

(“Papal ceremony and vesture”, *NCE*, 10: 972)

Although Bradburne did not know this at the time, Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) was the last Pope to be crowned with a tiara.

6 *Gregorian*. Gregorian Chant, the “monophonic, or unison, liturgical music of the Roman Catholic Church, used to accompany the text of the mass and the canonical hours, or divine office” (“Gregorian chant”, *NEB*, 5: 476). Alternatively, Bradburne may be referring to Gregorian Tones, the “eight plainsong melodies prescribed for the psalms in the Roman Catholic Church, one in each of the eight modes” (“Gregorian Tones”, *Oxford Companion to Music*, 427).

7-8 *There...climb*. Bradburne refers to the stained glass window in the apse of St. Peter's, above Bernini's *Cathedra Petri*, or Chair of St. Peter. The circular golden window has the symbolic dove of the Holy Spirit at the centre of a sunburst, surrounded by gilt and stucco angels, cherubs and surging clouds (see Bergere 94-97, 110). As the window catches the sunlight it glows like a star. Bradburne was awed by the window, as he noted in his 1950 diary:

The vast splendour of St. Peter's Basilica overwhelmed me, until I saw the East Window which thenceforth dominated the scene for me in its beautiful simplicity: the Dove, all gold in silver light, sweet symbol: ‘Come, O Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Thy Love.’ (Dove 65)

Like the star in the East that directed the wise men to the infant Jesus in Bethlehem, this glowing star in the East Window points upwards, directing pilgrims to their final destination in heaven.

8 *zenith*. “The point of the sky directly overhead; the highest point of the celestial sphere as viewed from any particular place” (*OED* “zenith” 1).

9-10 *Up...joy*. The star ascends on the rungs of a metaphorical ladder of “sheerest acclamation”. This image implies that the rising euphoria – “clearest joy” (*l.* 10) – is driven by the exultant shouts of enthusiasm from the crowd.

11 *multitude of tongues*. Bradburne refers to the sound from the massive crowd, earlier described as the “shouts of thousands in a throng” (*l.* 2).

12 *Cries one*. Bradburne instantly deflates the euphoria built up in the sonnet so far, with the sound of one voice, which, figuratively, stops the entrance to that which hinders humankind’s journey to God – in this case, their being enraptured with their own pomp and circumstance. The solo voice is deliberately pitted against the “throng” (*l.* 2), as it rises above the “multitude of tongues” (*l.* 11) in admonition and caution. Its solitariness emphasises the importance of its message, to a crowd who might otherwise be caught up in endless euphoria.

12 *bung*. “To stop, close; to shut up” (*OED* “bung” v.¹ 2).

12 *portals*. Entrances or doorways (see *OED* “portal” n.¹ 1a); means of access.

12 *alloy*. Used figuratively to denote “anything that detracts from, impairs, or sullies” (see *OED* “alloy” 7); adulterated substance.

13-14 *In...us!*”.

In the ceremony of coronation, three times during the procession to the altar for the celebration of pontifical Mass, a cleric sets fire to a ball of coarse material atop the silver cane he holds and, facing the pope, sings ‘Pater sanctae, sic transit gloria mundi’ (Holy Father, thus passes the glory of the world).

(“Papal ceremony and vesture”, *NCE*, 10: 972)

The flax is burned “to represent the transitoriness of earthly glory” (*ODQ* 22: 4). This quotation directly echoes the concluding couplet of the previous poem – cf. *l.* 13 in “Of Suicide” (*BA* 45). While wholeheartedly celebrating the coronation of the Pope, and believing in his authority on earth, Bradburne makes his reader aware that even the Pope, endowed with a triple-crowned tiara, symbolic of that authority, is mortal. He adds “and

us” onto the end of the quotation as a reminder that all of humankind is included in this symbol of impermanence. He warns people not to be too caught up in humankind’s “pomp and circumstance”, or in “the glory of this world”, for only the glory of God is essential and everlasting.

[47] **Of Glory**

“Of Glory” is dated “Good Friday 1970”, that is, 27 March 1970. It concludes *Bradburne’s Assays*. This final assay takes the form of a song of praise, similar in nature to the last of the psalms, Psalm 150:

Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

Like the psalmist, Bradburne suggests that the best means of bringing glory to Jesus is not (as one might have expected) in verbal devotions, but through music and dance. The poem thus affirms Jesus’ delight in beauty and artistry, an aspect which is emphasised in Bradburne’s light-hearted, joyful tone. The sonnet is more clearly Petrarchan than most of its predecessors. It follows the same unusual rhyme scheme as “Of a District” (*BA* 21): *abbacddceffegg*. Its octave has a theme of instrumental music, and is followed by a sestet which highlights the glory of dancing.

1-2 *Bring...lead*. Bradburne calls on musicians to bring glory to Jesus, the “King of Glory”, through their instruments, beginning with the brass band. He places the trumpet in the lead, a suitably triumphant instrument. Cf. Ps. 24.10.

3-4 *But...hand*. Bradburne’s primary motivation for advising all reed instruments to be handed over to Jesus is revealed in line 8. See note on 8 “pipes...was”.

3 *clarinette*. French for “clarinet”, a single-reed woodwind instrument. It is unclear why Bradburne chose the French spelling when the pronunciation of the English word is so similar and when the number of syllables is equal in both.

5 *For...do*. Bradburne alludes to the last line from verse three of the hymn “All people that on earth do dwell”, the words of which are appropriate to this poem’s praise theme:

O enter then his gates with praise,
Approach with joy his courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless his name always,
For it is seemly so to do. (*English Hymnal* no. 365)

This phrase and the overall theme of the poem echoes Psalm 33.1-3:

Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.

6 *Of...since*. Bradburne refers to the mockery of Jesus during his trial and crucifixion, now long past (“long since”). See Matt. 27.29-31, 41-42. He implies that, whereas anyone else’s musical skill might be mocked, nobody would mock Jesus for his piping because it is infinitely superior.

7-8 *Prince/Of Peace*. To Jesus’ kingly title (“King of Glory”), repeated twice in the poem, Bradburne adds a princely one, inspired by Isaiah:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isa. 9.6)

8 *pipes...was*. Jesus is once more depicted as the god Pan playing on a reed pipe. See notes on 10 “Great Pan” and 10 “pipe” in “Of Purgatory” (BA 16). The metaphor implies that Jesus’ musical skill on the reed pipe cannot be surpassed. It is thus proper, or “seemly” (l. 5), to give him all reed instruments to play.

10 *reed dance*. In keeping with the reed theme, Bradburne calls on the Swazis to perform a reed dance before Jesus. The reed dance, called “Unhlanga”, is performed in August by thousands of maidens from across Swaziland in honour of the queen mother. After gathering “to cut reeds for the annual repairs to the windbreaks of the queen mother’s

BRAIDUNN'S ASSAYS

70/82 ✓

Foreword

Of falsity, of sophistry, of wind
 Drawing to heaped-up watersheds of pride
 The random cloudbanks till they weep, I'd find
 E'en less to say than say I may, ain wide
 I shall of these ; let be my by and large
 Upon the better things or else the best
 Then let me leave my writs as in a barge
 Coasting towards oblivion for rest ;
 Forests there are and avenues and lawns,
 Flowers abounding, blossom'd orchard-trees
 Bowing with fruitfulness, and there are horns
 Echoing from the mountains to the leas :
 All these I'd make my song till strong's my rhyme
 In "the dark backward and abysm of time".

70/83 ✓

Des Histcires

Histories oft are complex twists of mind
 In mines of information on the past,
 This way and that they turn their learning, find
 A flaw for every walker in its cast ;
 Haphazard happily they make of plan,
 Intent on muffling truth (where beauty shouts)
 Softly they cover over as they can,
 They deal in treason's reasonable doubts ;
 Outlandishly assured of every word
 Then give they forth the titles on the books,
 Rapt are the buyers by their primal looks,
 Into the claptrap lowing goes the herd :
 Exquisite bandits thus are they who write
 Wronging their songs who can no longer fight.

(19/2/70)

Of Truth

70/84 ✓

Some histories there are that strike a note
 Melodiously true in all they sing
 And four or five of these to get by rote
 Calls for a mind where truth goes echoing ;
 "Kings" in the Bible might be such for sure,
 On all the Pentateuch I'd put my shirt,
 Narrowing matters down to that most pure
 Gives to the Gospels precedence aspart ;
 Acts of Apostles is a record bright
 Leading towards that Revelation last
 In which its Eagle soars from light to light
 Led up to fuse the future with the past :
 Entering then new heaven and new earth
 Enquiry's lost in wonder's deeper worth.

(19/2/70)

Of Gardens

Gardens are greensleeved thoughts fenced in with grace
 And wildernesses are their counterpoint,
 Readily one remembers each gay trace
 Drawing up gardens which our pasts anoint ;
 Earliest was for me in Cumberland
 Now hit by two and forty winters more,
 Sublimely stood the Fells as still they stand
 Giving it background from its Eastward door ;
 Another was in Norfolk for the nones,
 Lawngreen and lilac, copper-beech and yew,
 Laburnams gold, summers a-hum with drones
 And one with less than any else to do :
 No further gardens would I cite save that
 Trembling on Eden's haze, God's habitat.

70/85 ✓

(19/2/70)

Of Erudition

Art thou gone out from all those ranks so rude
 That have so much to occupy their minds
 Rightly by living in the rhyme and mood
 Of circumstance's edict ? whose finds
 Fools in his sight those wights that seem to lack
 Highflown preoccupation with a pile
 Yellowed by age, walks as a man in black
 Led by a blinder, heavily ! beguile
 Eruditely his every moment may
 A mortal man until that portal looms
 Auling his line of exit on a day
 Not known, nor shown by any from the tombs :
 Eruditex Sir, how mighty is the pen
 Divinely writing lives as live them men !

70/86
 ===== (19/2/70)

Of Mortification

Mortification is the art of slaying
 All that delays the progress of the soul,
 Yet, of consoling brother ass's braying
 By playing him with grace towards his goal ;
 Entering on the combat, like a Sancho
 Sitting his mount precariously, I
 Trust that the Lord my Light beside will go
 Instead of some Quixotic Might too high ;
 Move we a little forth, a little back,
 A trifle to the left or to the right,
 Till we arrive each evening with Alack
 Entire for sins which wins a restful plight :
 Dear Lord, bright Knight in gale of Love, how good
 Of Thee it is to lead us through the Wood !

70/87
 ===== (19/2/70)

Of Death

Road easier were any, if we trust ?
 Viand it comes, agleam, be seeming bread
 And this is Jesus risen from the dead,
 Let lack to me the trumpet, drum and bust !
 Dread is befitting but He bids it fly
 Entwining His bright being with mine own
 (Verily deep in black despair at tone
 Empowered unto doom, sans Him so nigh) ;
 Rapidly shall the agony be o'er,
 Bearing Five Scars that brave triumphant One
 Under the banner of Love's Troubadour
 Mightily shall describe the battle done ;
 Ye Lamb-led sheep, in such a Knight as this
 Dispelled is darkness, belled are we to blisse !

70/88
 ===== (19/2/70)

Of Possession

Possession is nine-tenths of all the Law
 And what remains but loving God alone ?
 That calls for graces, more and more and more
 Perhaps than many men might like to own ;
 And more's the pity too that men reject
 The constant invitation of our God
 Enjoining each to be His best elect
 Rept at the sport of being thought most odd ;
 Normality is better set aside
 On this consideration of The Good
 Supremely to be got, - e'en as a bride
 The soul should long to be possessed, she should :
 Enter we in to keeping All for ever
 Readily not, from rot it bids us sever.

70/89
 ===== (20/2/70)

Of No Thing

He is a gladness and he is a good,
 He is a sadness if he's not our God,
 Heavily up to Calvary the Wood
 He carried and he parried Ichabod";
 His is to empty all he ever was
 Happily into that which men despise,
 Honour was spurned and merit earned because
 He loved the earth enough to leave the skies ;
 Hit upon fact at last, ye bitter critics,
 Heave away doubt and be the scouts of hope,
 Hell is an expert upon politics,
 Heaven is what must ever preach the Pope :
 heyday I sing and fling my gage aground
 Hailing the Lady whence with grace is crowned
 Hilariously man, to nothing bound !

(20/2/70)

Of Education

Whatever tends to widen gaps between
 Men and their fellows is not education,
 Whatever makes more generous, less mean,
 Takes up a truly educative station ;
 Someone abounding in the goods of earth
 Will scarce resound upon the horns of fame
 Unless his exaltation from his birth
 Follows beyond the fetters of his name ;
 The getting of diplomas and degrees
 Sets premium on concentrative power,
 Under the hoods of academic ease
 Rarely the royal heads of lions tower :
 On might and main of brain depended not
 Divinest right of kingdom bright God got.

(20/2/70)

Of Solitude

Some solitude is needful to the soul
 as physic is for sickness, soil for food,
 Persons there are that feed on it for dole
 In melancholy, such abuse is rude ;
 Entered the night of infant Christendom
 Not otherwise than by those seeming fools
 The fathers of the desert, and the sum
 in all their hidden lives was "Silence rules" ;
 At zenith of example in this thing
 Messiah stands alone amidst His mount
 Attacked by wild temptation, being King
 Royally puts He down on every count :
 In sorrow deep and in exceeding joy xxx
 A solitary psalm dispels alloy.

(20/2/70)

Of Angels and of Birds

Angels are not imaginary things,
 Needs must thereon imaginative thought
 Go gadding gaily with its playful wings,
 Even abet and aid they in such sport !
 Lo and behold, those Arches biblical
 Standing as Angels principally three
 Are Michael, Gabriel and Raphael
 Nor may they fail to walk with you and me ;
 Divine I oft, aloft amongst the birds,
 Becalming glimpses of angelic charm,
 In owls by moonlight with their hooting words
 Read "Holy" thrice, trisagion's their psalm :
 Discern the quickness, brightness and precision,
 Sight of the birds is bard's delightful vision !

(20/2/70)

Of Intuition

Love at first sight is intuition, this
 Breaks through the walls within the wheels of time,
 Wildly arrives at that eternal kiss
 Implicit in intensity sublime ;
 For clearly time is but a gearing down
 Of Love's eternal lightning nature, so
 That slowly we are tested till the crown
 Of lasting life is won through strife below ;
 But generally love between a pair
 Is generated not so very fast
 As then at First Sight happening, thrice rare
 Are Romeos with Juliets re-cast :
 Naught need be said while all is indicated
 Where eyes of man and maid may meet pre-mated.

70/94 ✓
 ===== (20/2/70)

Of Envy

To envy someone is to criticize
 God's own allotment of the gifts he gave
 A certain man, with but a plan to save
 His soul for ever if he well replies ;
 The envy of your neighbour's goods is so
 Senseless as has compelled to fence them in,
 They that defenceless into warfare go
 With nextdoor's jealousy will scarcely win ;
 But what is best as fortress gainst this ill
 Which any day may set your soul at siege ?
 Having towards both God and man good will
 Makes sight of acres broad but hail their Liege :
 What hast thou, man, or what hath any other
 That has not been received from Christ our Brother ?

70/95 ✓
 ===== (20/2/70)

Of Popularity

This is a puffed up fraud, a fatted cow
 Bursting its flanks for fodder, this is that
 Which battens on a field, no matter how
 Broad, it falls short of wanted habitat ;
 Most profitable treatment of this brute
 Is, prick it quickly ! quickly will subside
 Its windy bulk and you will simply hoot
 With laughter when you've stripped it of its hide !
 Just look inside, it was not thick of skin
 Though so much flabby blubber swelled it out,
 This beast was vulnerable to a pin
 Pricking its thinness through : truly, a lout
 Which prospers only long enough to find
 All that it sought was fraught with pride and whined.

70/96 ✓
 ===== (21/2/70)

Of Purgatory

Purgatory lies less than ninety yards
 Along this avenue on which I dwell,
 It is a place for inspiration, bards
 Associated with it like it well ;
 On every side of it wide heaven spreads
 Beyond ~~xxxx~~ despond, coned near and on afar,
 Wilderness rolls, rise bosky knolls, sheer heads
 Grave granite hills lift up..... there's naught to mar
 In magnitude of panorama ; but
 Great Pan especially delights to pipe
 Amongst His own peculiars, each hut
 Of this His leper people keeps He ripe
 In vibrant expectation of His coming
 To lead them forth : grow mealies, bees are humming.

70/97 ✓
 ===== (21/2/70)

De Verbo Dei

A woman from the crowd cried out, How blest
 The womb that bore Thee, breasts that gave Thee suck !
 Our Lord's rejoinder rather manifests
 Than contradicts that statement, which has stuck
 Fast to the Roman Breviary since
 The "Sacrosanctae" (after Office said)
 Was placed urbanely there, us to convince
 Of Triune Love before we go to bed ;
 Our Lady fair gave suck to Him she bore, -
 The Word made flesh, reminded thus of this,
 Referred straightway to Prophets and the Law
 Which, having heard, we ought to keep, nor miss
 This fine combining fact : that Word is bound
 In Bibles whom Our Lady's womb enwound,
 Bore freely..... no divisions on a ground
 Inviolate, no rift is inx the lute
 Displaying gracefully uplifted Fruit.

70/98 ✓

===== (21st February 70)

Of Ambition

Where once one wanted but to drive a train
 Along a line as straight as railways go
 Or else to navigate an aeroplane,
 Later ambitions rocket into woe ;
 Where is the seat of sweet ambition then ?
 Whence is it sullied o'er by bitter springs ?
 Is it not, Lord, most laudable for men
 To try to breast the tapes that vie with kings ?
 With wings one might fly up to such a height
 As pinnacles of temples never had,
 Unless to climb the mount of life as light
 Of lust as love allows may make more glad :
 But what is lust ? my keen ambition now
 Is reconciling it with love, but how ?

70/99 ✓

===== (21st February 1970)

Of Sex-Appeal

Female and male, Yahweh created them
 And therefore fount of sex-appeal is ~~Ma~~ Three
 In One whose life is Love, above the stem
 Rising created must Creator be ;
 Entrancing are the Shembe dances, come,
 See for yourself the Spanish dames aflow,
 There lacks not fair attraction to the Sun,
 Midst beauties beauty's Maker means to glow ;
 Indeed than seed's inherent fire there leaps
 Rarely more sweetly in the mortal frame
 Aught, yet the saint of God is one who steeps,
 Counting it deep fulfilment, in a Name :
 Less than the loveliness He made is not
 (Entwined with Miriam's name) her Lamb, forgot
 Surely too long is strong I AM, her Flame !

70/100 ✓

===== (

Of nothing

Lucifer low, that whilom morning star,
 Goes yawning to oblivion at last,
 Naught he can make, his sport is but to marr
 Marriage and carriage light and slow the fast ;
 Maker of nothing, breaker he would be
 Of every bond and lien with Our Lord, -
 The debt is paid, no let is made and we
 Are hindered not, but for his plot abroad ;
 Empowered only to subtract, distort
 And drive us to distraction from our goal,
 Lying he lies and lengthwise he is caught
 Into the net he set to get pet soul
 Of Christ Our Lady's Lamblord : Ichabod,
 Your glory's gone to hers preferring God.

70/101 ✓

===== (21st February 1970)

Of a District

Great Gable, Langdale Pikes, Scafell, the Screes
 And Saddleback, and wind a mere sweet balm
 On becks and lakes alike and light as charm
 On Eden, reaching Appleby with ease ;
 Fell by an apple Eve and Adam there
 Amidst a garden whence rose seven streams
 To water all the world and nurture dreams
 Until reality man made them, fair ;
 Crossfell rose over up behind the place
 Where I was born to be a parson's son
 Haunted by prayer where never made I one,
 Atop Crossfell stands Mary's Well in grace
 Of granite's crowning concave : looking down
 Sight Skerwith spire, admire her little town.

70/101 /

===== (21st February 1970)

Of a District Commissioner

There once was one who always cried "Hats off !"
 On sight of any too reluctant black
 And straight away the fellow had to doff
 His headgear (forelock none to pull, alack) ;
 His district was commissioned everywhere
 To raise its hat in praise, both then and there !

70/103 /

=====

Of Position

Position which is high is very well
 Provided it is insulated by
 Buffers of less estate, the fiends of hell
 Are insulations to its majesty ;
 The man of great estate who rules alone
 Serenely must be humble to the Nth,
 Intent not on applauding of his throne,
 Not a displayer of its breadth and length ;
 Being a squire set squarely on a seat
 Extravagantly aced is all right
 Long as their forelocks, whenso'er you meet
 Fellows and country bumpkins, pulled on sight
 Rally around, augment your lion's mane :
 Yet it is Christ's example best will reign.

70/104 /

===== (21st February 1970)

Of Cocks and Hens

Ordinarily speaking we just cluck
 Friendlily or we chuckle as we scratch,
 Crowing's for such occasions as good luck
 On battling or on rattling for a match ;
 Cock stops to cry the time at dawn, at noon
 (Kindly remark, at former stops from sleeping),
 Shouts loudly out at midnight, finds full moon
 A wakeful influence, - try cock-clocks keeping !
 Not to forget the fretful broody hen
 Desperate with anxiety full oft,
 Happy she'll be as, hatched, her chicks in pen
 Enfolded safely feed on meal full soft ;
 Never enough mankind recalls which words
 Symbolize Christ's affection for us birds.

70/105 /

===== (21st February 1970)

Of Election

Esau, that hairy son, her suited not
 To point of plotting who prefigures well,
 Catholically speaking, La Plus Belle ;
 Hierusalem, let never be forgot
 Election blest of Jacob, pillows he
 Dreaming on stone of angels, pilose be
 Even as Esau if your Mother free
 Is Mary, than Rebecca fairer far
 O rarer too ! choose you the Morning Star.

70/106 /

Of Shaving

Almost one might insist that shaving is
 Waste of a time when Prime should be observed 70/107 ✓
 And orisons be made to Yahweh, - His
 So long He's worn as holds the shorn unnerved ;
 The steel, the manufacturing, the cost,
 Enter upon a contrast ever sharp
 Of sanity with madness, which is tossed
 Full carelessly aside ! I'd hate to carp
 Truculently for long about this thing,
 Indeed I need not, wears a beard my King :
 Messiah then shall say to me His knave
 (When I appear that is and if I fling
 Gaily upon God's highland as I crave),
 "Eternity finds never time to shave !".

----- (21st February 1970)

Of a Sunday in Lent

This morning many bees bore bourdon stiff 70/108 ✓
 Attendant on the tenor of our praise,
 These great ones did not come to sting, for tiff,
 Indeed their humming much augments our lays ;
 I think these bees are cenobites, and yet
 Meseems that each a solitary dwells, -
 Rather as people of Mutenwa, set
 Each in a hut mongst other brother cells ;
 These bees are larger than the worker-kind,
 Perhaps to contemplation is their call,
 They come as cloud of witnesses to find
 Whether we praise their Mighty Sun at all :
 We sung for our recessional that hymn
 Which hails Our Lady Queen of Lourdes, no whim.

----- (22nd February 1970)

Of the Ark (on every side)

Better begin with Noah's, that was huge,
 A bulky hulk indeed containing all 70/109 ✓
 Redeemed alive surviving, subterfuge
 Quelling wide water's onslaught with its wall ;
 Unless I too evade an issue, next
 Enters my mind that little barque wherein
 Our patriarchal Moses lay unvest
 For long enough a saving help to win ;
 Perhaps he thought thereon while Bezaleel
 Enacted with his hands what God had bid,
 That Ark was beautiful in its appeal,
 Regal, containing Truth on tablets hid :
 Only remains the Church and she is one
 Surely whose Word is God's and her good Son.

----- (22nd February 1970)

De Spiritus Domini

The Spirit of the Lord long since has filled 70/110 ✓
 The whole round world, and they that dwell therein
 Wonder or wander, rage, or else are stilled
 By cleaving to it and by leaving sin ;
 The Voice, which breaks the cedars when it storms,
 Which tells the hind where to bring forth her young,
 Besseems a mighty fire in ire but warms
 The hearts of men, makes ready pen my tongue ;
 While wondered Peter, James and John as one
 Shined as the Sun with garments white as snow
 Heaven displayed The Father's Voice to show
 (Over Elias, over Moses) Son
 Belov-ed, Sole : the whole wide world contained
 Not, as Christ's Mother, Paradise regained.

----- (22nd February '70)

De Voce Patris

70/111 ✓
 What is the Father's Voice and how defined ?
 The Father's Thought is what He thinks, His Word
 Is Christ His Thought expressed and so combined
 With Him as makes division quite absurd ;
 God spake His thought and what He said was Light
 Of Light which is Himself. and what He used
 To say it was His Voice - is it not right
 To call that Voice the Spirit He infused ?
 Wherefore we have the Thought, the Word, the Voice -
 Our thought should be related to the Father
 So closely as that happy word "Rejoice"
 Is to His apostolic song or, rather,
 May we not say the Father's Voice is so
 Musical as no dissonance will show ?

=====
 (22nd February 1970)

Of Heat and Light and Sound.

70/112 ✓
 She has full knowledge of the Voice who bore
 The Word, which all the world had not contained
 Completely thitherto because, before
 Christ, the whole Bible's content was not gained ;
 Of Heat I'd like to say that it is He
 Who is the Paraclete, so sweet of breath
 And yet so terrible if needs must be
 Although not His was Inquisition-death ;
 Of Light of Light our Father, that is Christ
 Through whom our rays of praise transmitted are
 Acceptable since He is sacrificed
 To see us crowned ; of Sound ? come, cross the bar
 And all the Maid behind it sings is this :
 "I bring Mine Host the King to you, true bliss !"

=====
 (22nd February 1970)

Of earthworms

70/113 ✓
 It seems they have no end and no beginning
 So far as either one distinguish may,
 It would not be a blasphemy or sinning
 Against the Lord to say His horde are they ;
 If someone terms you as a worm, you squirm
 Perhaps a little while and then recover
 If only you recall how very firm
 Birds are, about getting them out, - best lover
 Of worms the bird may be and he's a bard
 That sings in better fettle for a meal
 And so I'll add it's sad and very hard
 To slay them earlier than bird may feel
 His need appealing : world without an end
 And from beginning, worms themselves can mend.

=====
 (22nd February 1970)

Of Melchisedech

70/114 ✓
 King of Shalom, of Salem so to say,
 Brought bread and wine and ruled three verses deep
 In Genesis, and then he went away
 Leaving mankind to mout and count his sheep ;
 Was ever anyone so wound with dream ?
 Was ever matter like of any told ?
 King of Jerusalem, long ere her theme
 Was clearly David's at his harp of gold ;
 "Bless-ed be Abram of the most high God,
 Possessor both of heaven and of earth,
 And blest be He our Maker by whose rod
 The enemies of faith are brought to dearth" :
 Melchisedech, with melody today
 We in that Knight in gale of love array.

=====
 (22nd February 1970)

Of Wine

Noah made sacrifice after the Flood
 Whence waters changed through gratitude to wine,
 Drank he so heavily that joy fell thud 70/115 ✓
 To sorrow on the morrow (Cana, shine !) ;
 Melchisedech brought wine and bless'd high God
 Of Abram, not then Abraham become
 For whom as one three angels later trod
 To dine in Mamre (trumpet none, no drum) ;
 Sang David, "If in drinking-cups I should
 Forget thee, Zion, let my blithe right hand
 Made for the harp forget her cunning good ! ",
 And Zion heard it, glad was Holy Land :
 Jesus took wine and bless'd and drank and said,
 "This is My Blood shall for your bliss be shed".

(Trumpet without,
 Shofa within,
 Gentiles about,
 True Jews will win :
 In such a night as this
 To Judah New comes bliss).

===== (23rd February 1970)

Of Dignity

hear this, ye Shona people crying "boss"
 And hating him for condescending scorn ! (condescending)
 There was a poet, French, who strolled to toss
 Away his cares, free, to the manner born ;
 One eve he strolled there came a cringing shape
 Close up to him accompanied by whines
 For alms, with hand extended - no escape
 But well shall do this bard before he dines ;
 Seeing unlane and oh so far ~~xxxxxxx~~ more whole
 The body than the soul, straightway the bard
 Struck with his cane that palm, ah, not too hard
 And not too softly to awake the soul :
 That beggar boxed him ! ruffled was his plan
 At eventide, but, he had raised a man !

===== (23rd February 1970)

Of Woman

I know not any song so well to fit
 The grace of womanhood as melody 70/117 ✓
 Named of Grenoble, I have cherished it
 Highly as France has loved her minstrelsy ;
 Therein is wit and whim and filigree,
 Mercy and winsome wantonness and flame,
 Liltng, tilting, up to the hilt in glee,
 And there is Notre Dame and here's my Dame ;
 I would not ask for any brighter joy
 Than hearing her cry gaily out "Au lait !"
 Morning and noon and night, idiot-boy
 And happily I'd be of hers for aye :
 Red, white and blue, for girdle, blouse and skirt
 Yielding tricolor, gallants to alert !

===== (23rd February 1970)

Of Religion

Religion true is rather caught than taught,
 Thrice happy then is that contagion 70/118 ✓
 By which may truly get religion
 Many a soul to whom whole books are fraught
 With labour more than with the score of love :
 Unhomely tomes, better aside to shove !

On seeking Truth, I begged the Holy Spirit
 To shine His light on books where bright with merit.

===== (9/4/70)

Of Familiarity

Familiarity will breed contempt
 With the contemptuous or contemptible,
 Otherwise will but mark a mind unkempt
 Wanting refining in life's crucible ;
 Some folk are apt to slap each other's backs
 Simply to fill in vapid gaps for thought
 Which never occupies them much, there lacks
 Also well-tempered zest for mellow sport ;
 Fellows are fellow-souls not merely fellows
 Where Yahweh's gentle bellows are applied
 By breathing of that Spirit sweet denied
 Rather to double-basses than to cellos :
 There's a mixed metaphor indeed, trombones
 Hold better over-bold and brassy tones !

(23 February 1970)

Of Friendship

True friendship is the best in everything
 Willed by the other for the one, without
 Bothering aught on whether it will bring
 To either gain by being seen about
 With one another publicly or loss ;
 Neither desires deep friendship's true accord
 Ascendancy of one above the other
 Because within itself is its reward
 Linked with the Lord enchanting it, our Brother ;
 Acquaintance goaled on gain is only dross,
 Again, its whole reward is in itself,
 Memories pristine not aside twill toss
 For heaviness of fortune, wind or limb ;
 It scars o'er sense and thence to heaven's hymn.

(23 February 1970)

Of Benevolence

Most loveable and most affectionate
 Amongst the men and women on this earth
 Rank not together as of married state
 Yet oft are counted as of equal worth ;
 The scales of fortune fall in terms of time
 On hooks eternal hung, that wishing well
 Looking on lowness from its height sublime
 Does not debar itself from springs of hell ;
 Many there are who, lacking naught for wealth,
 Entrance themselves by beaming on the crowd
 That, despite smell of sweat and aspect bowed,
 Haply may have more spiritual health
 Indwelling : than the man whose outward grin
 So oft goes softly off for secret sin.

(23 February 1970)

Of Philanthropy

Must I then name it, naming it re-name
 For that which maims the mettle meant for God ?
 Pathetically ignorant, its claim
 Presses possessions at obsession's nod ;
 I've known a mortal in a country-seat,
 Lost in the contemplation of out-giving
 Everyone else, whose temper was not sweet
 Save when her savings upon easy living
 Ousted themselves in ostentatious lists
 Forthtelling charity ; she was not bad
 Candidly speaking, she'd put up her fists
 At all hypocrisy in others, clad
 She'd go in pearls and splendour : O she went
 Heavily hence, with sense not to repent.

(23 February 1970)

Of Misanthropy

Lest, Lord, I should myself embody this
 By showing irritation when they come
 Shattering solitude and sovereign bliss,
 Give me the grace to smile
 Even when stricken dumb !

(3rd May 1970)

70/124

Of The Lord's Prayer

A purple-crested lourie calls to arms
 Upon the goings out of Passiontide,
 Invites us to relinquish earthly charms
 This Wednesday of ~~T~~ Tenebrae : bestride
 The season I and ride my brother ass,
 Bridled by grace, to face for Easter Mass.

High time that, after eight and forty years,
 I make a meditation, still and deep,
 Upon the focal point, the stroke that gears
 All worthwhile oraison : I shall not sleep
 This night until that Prayer of the Lord
 I've measured - help me, Spirit, with Thy sword !

Our Father : since Thou Father art of all
 Including me, then all my brothers are
 Or sisters, whatsoever may befall
 Between us, each and each, shines high that Star
 Pointing to One who all can comprehend
 And therefore pardon all and heal and mend.

Who art in heaven : thus, if Thou art here
 Combined with Thy bright Son who here abides,
 Of earth then makex a heaven, that is clear
 Of ill, will well Thy presence; times and tides
 Give way to where Thou walkest with Thy Christ
 Ever Emmanuel ~~xxxxxxx~~ through Eucharist.

So Hallowed be Thy Name : whether it is
 Only I AM alone or whether ~~It~~ that
 Of Him who is Thy thought expressed in His
 Being which is Thy Word, true habitat
 Of all Thy willing manward, shown outright
 By Jesus Blest, the Way, the Truth, life's Light.

Thy kingdom come : Christendom even now
 Is kingdom of Thy Son on earth, though not
 Tyrannical and worldly bidding bow
 To powers subterranean that plot
 To see all Peter's wheat so sifted that
 Christ's kingdom ~~base~~ ^{seems} a groundless, shifting rat.

Thy will be done on earth as well it is
 In heaven : seven gifts Thy Spirit showers
 Over that growing harvest shall be His
 Whose every living temple He empowers
 That it may stand with praises filled and be
 Part of that lasting City, fair and free !

Give us this day our daily bread : for soul
 No less than for the body that is meant
 To be such help for getting to our goal
 Eternal as immortally is blent,
 Wherefore let brother ass be kept so trim
 That it may carry lightly her or him.

Forgive us too our trespasses as we
 Forgive our debtors for the love of God
 Thy Son, Thy Light shown forth, ~~Thy Truth~~ Truth to make free
 (As lilies gay in Galilee He trod)
 From carefulness regarding what shall pass
 As surely as shall nevermore the Mass.

And lead us not into temptation, Lord,
 Because Thou knowest well we are not strong
 Unless we are equipped with such a sword
 As can divide between the right and wrong
 And show great prowess in Thy cause, but still
 Deliver us from evil by goodwill.

Amen.

[25 March]

===== (Lady Day 1970)

Of Deicide

Oddly, it is impossible for man,
 God Uncreated cannot be put out,
 Light, like a candle, snuffed - against Great Pan,
 Who softly pipes, prevails no loudest shout ;
 But cried they "Crucify !" and that prevailed,
 They mocked Him, scourged Him, carried Him away,
 Christ carrying His Cross, whom they had flailed,
 Was not another than I AM always ;
 Moreover, Christ did die and went right down
 In soul to Limbo, blent there setting free
 Those whom, through merit of His Cross, He'd crown
 For being true to Truth and Truth is He :
 Rather call Jesus "Suicide" than say
 Only Jews slew Him - sinners, we were they.

70/125

Of Suicide

Judas assuredly committed it,
 On Haceldama, on that field of blood,
 Flows never (nor by wisdom nor by wit
 For feeling mercy) Jesu's healing flood ;
 Yet style of Juda's stood at summit height,
 Eastward the desert roared, Westward the main
 Mediterranean, - for David's might
 Whose Lion Clan began with plan to reign !
 "What's in a name ?", it could be that of John
 Or Baptist or Belov-ed of the Lord
 Whereat we would-be chosen turned upon
 Christ of the Cross, to tryst with dross more broad :
 Ita, sic transit mundi gloria,
 Corruptio optimi pessima.

70/126

Of Pomp and Circumstance

Amongst the golden tones of Palestrina,
 Amidst the shouts of thousands in a throng,
 Where, rarefied, accords Vittoria
 With angels on the mountain-tops of song ;
 There goes the Pope in triple night's tiara,
 There flows Gregorian from time to time,
 There glows the great East Window like a star
 Pointing towards the zenith of the climb ;
 Up, up it goes, ascending on the rungs
 Of sheerest acclamation, clearest joy
 And then, from out that multitude of tongues,
 Cries one, to bung the portals of alloy :
 In Latin, thrice, "O Holy Father, thus
 Passes the glory of this world and us !".

70/127

Of Glory

Bring to the King of Glory all the band,
 Tuba and horn with trumpet in the lead
 But let the clarinette and every reed
 Be duly set amidst the Saviour's hand ;
 For it is seemly so to do because
 Of mockery is rid Our Lord long since,
 He is the King of Glory and the Prince
 Of Peace who pipes as Pan He ever was ;
 Bring also up before His throne such girls
 As know the reed dance of the Swazix tall
 And let the Shembe dancers to His call
 Come gracefully : amidst those skirts awhirl
 Hers will be best embroidered who will come
 As Queen with "Nigra sed formosa sum".

70/128

(Good Friday 1970)

27 March

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