

SOUTH AFRICAN ART, THE ROMANTIC PRINCIPLE AND THE

GRAHAMSTOWN GROUP

An Essay
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the
requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF FINE ART
of
RHODES UNIVERSITY
by

G.P.H. CLARK

October 1976

PREFACE

The purpose of this essay is to examine the "rumblings in the belly of Leviathan from which we are able to diagnose his disease" (Comfort). Adopting a cyclical idea of art, it aims to point out that South African art has degenerated to a state where the much publicised so-called leaders of art are simply using charm techniques to woo the consent of a society whose metaphysics are derived from twentieth century collective materialism.

The South African situation is examined, as is the Romantic principle underlying all genuine artistic activity. It is proposed that the cure lies in a reinstatement of this principle and in a readjustment of the concepts of reality and unreality.

Finally, the Grahamstown Group is propounded as an embodiment of the Romantic principle with its implicit concept of artistic reality.

PART I

SOUTH AFRICAN ART

During the 1950's leading South African artists attempted to bring South African art into line with 20th Century developments and rushed headlong along the path that leads to an ultimate void; a void epitomised by some of the contemporary works in the Hester Rupert Collection at Graaff-Reinet. Creation is innocent of any intellectuality and the deliberately intellectual attempts of trend-setters such as Laurence Scully, Cecil Skotnes and Gordon Vorster to assimilate European trends and conventions marked the beginning of a decline in creativity and an acceleration away from life and reality. It was a process concerned with decadence. Artists became conscious of audiences outside South Africa and attempted to identify themselves with the international scene, failing to realise that art is not concerned with audiences or scenes of any kind.

A justifiable reaction set in, and in the 1960's new leaders went in search of their own identities up the cul-de-sac of the African ethos that was so stylistically imitated in the work of Alexis Preller and Walter Battiss. South African artists set out to discover their particular identities as South Africans and retraced their steps through Cubism and Expressionism in an attempt to "strip Africa of its mystique and come to grips with unromanticised reality".⁽¹⁾ In actuality what these artists were seeking was a romantic unreality - a contradiction that can only end in tautology. The quest was certainly romantic in that it arose out of the individual volition of the artists concerned and represented an attempt to return to those

primeval forces that are at the root of all creativity. But to approach one's identity via stylistic imitations, to ally oneself with the past and strip the instincts of their mystique can only result in an art form that is derivative, artificial and entirely denatured. In the manner of the Italian Renaissance, instead of rebirth and growth, we are faced with the miscarriages of those such as Skotnes and Cattaneo, members of the Amadlozi Group - 1963. (Ills. 1 & 2).

At about this time, sparked off by the Op and Pop explosion in the United Kingdom and America, the leaders indulged themselves in the visual distortions that were derived from commercial advertising.

In 1969 Artlook Magazine (a South African journal of fashionable art) applauded the unison of art and advertising and rejoiced over the fact that the gap between art and advertising was lessened to the point where it barely existed.

A drug manufacturing syndicate commissioned leading South African artists to interpret the action of the company's products in their own styles. Silkscreen prints of the end results were distributed to doctors across the country. The magazine claims that this is a unique method of advertising of benefit to South African art and industry generally. That art and industry are joined is significant. We are faced with an art industry. Other South African



(1) C. Skotnes
"Head & Ancestors"



(2) G. Cattaneo
"Different Worlds"

artists were commissioned by the same syndicate to produce signed lithographs and original sculptures depicting the actions of a range of drugs, the products again being distributed to doctors across the country.

Comments on the Sash, Meerkotter and Skotnes products were as follows:

"In the Nethaprin tile (Ill. 3) Cecily Sash was faced with interpreting the complex action of an asthma preparation. The vigorous curving lines of Sash's Minoan style deal with the problem of bronchospasm, while the vivid reds and pinks set a mood to complement her expressive use of line.

Dirk Meerkotter, on the other hand, was required to depict the calming and pain alleviating properties of Syndette - a product for childhood ailments. (Ill. 4). In a style reminiscent of Miró, Meerkotter has combined the abstract with the representational, so that a charming and slightly humorous, as well as an understanding depiction of childhood emerges. The accoutrements of childhood - the soft green background, the kites hanging in infinite space and the yo-yo which spells the name of the product - combine to produce an effect of calm coolness and a release from pain.

In the Kolantyl tile (Ill. 5) Cecil Skotnes has given a precise definition to the problems of ulcer management. The dark figure writhes in pain on an acid-ochre background



(3) C. Sash
"Nethaprin"



(4) D. Meerkotter
"Syndette"



(5) C. Skotnes
"Kolantyl"

through which the name Kolantyl appears. The strong contrast between the tortuous black and white lines contained within the figure, and their violent distortion, make a forceful expression of pain and spasm. All trivia have been eliminated and only the fundamental forms emerge with full emotional impact. The searing red of the ulcer site radiates from the focal point in needles of pain. Colour, rhythm and line have been intellectually used to convey a strong emotional impact and we are left with a clear experience of reality so that we are better able to sympathise with the ulcer sufferer". (2)

That these commentaries say nothing about the nature of art is indicative of the non-art function of such exercises. It is the idea behind a work of art that makes it art. When the idea becomes one of reconciliation between art and advertising, between artist and business, the artist is metaphysically and creatively enslaved. He is no longer solitary and in consequence can no longer act according to his own volition. He sets himself up as a prostitute whose livelihood depends on being seduced by and seducing the art-business and is no longer concerned with the business of art. F.D. Roosevelt pointed out that the businessman is a crook. He is, by definition dishonest. He concerns himself always with some essentially dishonest device for putting more money in his pocket. Manufacturers discuss ways in which they may cheat the public - to make the public pay the same price (or more) for an article composed of less valuable ingredients. As Wyndham Lewis

points out, "This must involve a progressive deterioration of everything we buy. So it is with the art-business".⁽³⁾

That Sash, Meerkotter and Skotnes are given the titles of leaders points to an end where art will be concerned with such things as asthma cures, bronchospasms, and ulcer management; an end where art is faced with interpreting the analgesic properties of pills; where leaders are required to place themselves in the hands of exploiters and where the "abstract" combines with the representational, and art becomes charming and slightly humorous. Colour, rhythm and line are used intellectually, lose their innocence and die in unnatural surroundings. Reality becomes synonymous with sympathy for the ulcer sufferer.

An article in the Natal Mercury (June 9, 1976) begins with the heading: "TRETCHIKOFF GIVES RODIN A 4 TO 1 THRASHING". The fact that the attendance figure at an exhibition of works by Rodin and his contemporaries was 11,000, whereas Trechikoff's attendance figure was "heading for 40,000 and still going strong" is irrelevant. What is pertinent is the need to count numbers in order to place artists on the appropriate rung of the ladder to the top of the producer/consumer hierarchy. The critic (with the pen-name "The Idler") decries the fact that money appears to talk louder than art critics. Let us be glad that money does talk louder than art critics. The art critics have nothing to say. This "Idler" claims that art is thinking, feeling, wondering, marvelling, being stimulated,

being fired with enthusiasm and beginning to understand, but continues with an advocacy that art should concern itself with the greater, wider world of the passions and emotions, the torture, the misery and the ecstasy of human existence. Words such as passion, torture, misery and ecstasy are concerned primarily with a metaphysics that is involved with human weakness and decay. They are mass-man's justification for his own depravities and have nothing to do with art. Artistic inspiration comes from within and has no concern with communicating the passions, tortures, ecstasies and miseries of the inhuman condition to those who seek a salute to their betrayed self-esteem.

Nature forbids such irrationalities in art. If the observer should find these tortures and miseries in art that is his affair but it is an affair that is anti-man. "Man's proper estate is an upright posture, an intransigent mind and a step that travels unlimited roads".⁽⁴⁾

Parallel with the limited road of mainstream consumerism, art has been introduced into the realm of mathematics and science to become a laboratory art in conjunction with supermarket art. The leaders here are artists like Armando Baldinelli, Laurence Scully, George Boys and Bettie Cilliers-Barnard.

Painters of the late 1960's and early 1970's had been exploring the visual and emotional possibilities of media; properties such as texture, colour, opacity and translucency.

At the same time microphotography and investigations into the structure of matter as well as the accelerated developments in space technology had fired their imaginations. The resultant idea is a quasi-scientific one.

Baldinelli is inspired by the female figure and the South African landscape. The recurrence of a circle in his compositions is said to derive from the images of a female breast and the fiery sun. The derivative aspect of the "Baldinelli circle" causes his paintings to fail in their function as art is not derived from mathematical symbols. In addition to laying claim to the circle, Baldinelli asserts that whereas an artist's medium can help in some ways, and occasionally may influence the result, it must always remain subservient to the artist. This is an outright denial of the essential duet between the artist and his medium calling for mastery and submission at the same time. In imposing categorical thinking on paint and refusing to allow the medium to speak for itself, that essential eloquence and vitality that makes the medium a living thing in itself is nullified. The results of Baldinelli's stylistic abstractions can be seen in his lithograph "The Discovery" (Ill. 6), a picture that reflects the artist's abhorrent metaphysical viewpoint and places art on the level of the peeping Tom.

Another result of the laboratory process resulting in geometric abstraction, that abstraction that has nothing whatsoever to do with art, can be found in the work of



(6) A. Baldinelli
"The Discovery"

Bettie Cilliers-Barnard (Ill. 7). In exploring media, more particularly the acrylic medium, and at the same time attempting to evolve new idioms from the basic visual elements of line, shape and colour, she arrived at the same developmental impasse as Baldinelli - the circle symbol. The circle dominated her compositions and her paintings retreated further from the realm of reality through her intellectual use of colour. She uses colour as a vehicle of light and shade - a retrogression and a negation since the real value of colour is destroyed by using it as a means to create an illusion; an illusion that is opposed to that true reality that is the essence of art.

What has been described as the "zenith of her artistic career"⁽⁵⁾ was reached in such paintings as "Visions of the Being", and "Generations of the Universe" (Ills. 8 & 9) where, as a result of medium dictates and the restrictions of a repetitive circle-symbol, her work developed into the meaningless rectangle or cube. Her work becomes a stylistic display of charm-techniques in which separate flat areas of colour are utilized to accentuate a mode of expression which stems from her desire to express mass-man's anonymity.

The apex of the South African laboratory approach has been reached in the work of Laurence Scully and George Boys.

"Laurence Scully's quiet modest manner and the sensitivity with which he works belie the fact that (he) is quite the



(7) B. Cilliers-Barnard
"Cycle 67"



(8) B. Cilliers-Barnard
"Visions of the Being"



(9) B. Cilliers-Barnard
"Generations of the Universe"

largest figure on the South African art scene. 203 cm. tall he towers above his fellows; but never in his painting or in his personality has there been evidence of aggressiveness relating to his imposing size; indeed until quite advanced in his career he continued to compose his pictures on the relatively small formats which were customary in South African art".⁽⁶⁾

Scully prepared himself spiritually by attending orchestral concerts, reading Shakespeare and studying mathematics. As a result of post-war travels through Africa with T.V. Bulpin - lasting a period of six weeks - he became enthusiastic over tribalism and his experiences crystallized seventeen years later in his painting "Maletsunyane", which is now in the Hester Rupert Collection at Graaff-Reinet. African symbols became the foundation of Scully's oeuvre. These symbols were distilled, multiplied, synthesized, extended to include the circle and enlarged to contain a jewel or a crucifix. To absorb Africa in six weeks and have one's impressions crystallize seventeen years later constitutes a gross failure to grasp the art process. The reverse would be nearer the truth - seventeen years to absorb and six weeks to crystallize. In addition, it is pretentious and trivial to assume the artistic dress of a society to which you do not belong. A painter affirms his uniqueness in his paintings. Any imitation, any conscious and intellectual adoption of deliberate symbols negates the value of the artist, a value which lies in his ability to have an idea. Symbols adopted from tribalism

have none of the unique qualities of the tribe. They approximate tribalism and resemble nothing. It is a retrogression to the Negroid qualities of early Cubism. It is not the role of art to retrogress. Such art contains nothing of experience, either inward or outward. It rests midway between the subjective and the objective and is neither one nor the other. An artist's work is to some extent affected or modified by the artistic terrain which he has crossed. Scully appears to have avoided the artistic terrain since he turns to the mathematics which he used to prepare himself spiritually for his role as an artist. He distills, multiplies, synthesizes, extends, includes the circle and indulges in mathematical/scientific processes which have nothing to do with art.

In 1966, Scully entered a "blue" period. "The Window" (Ill. 10) became the forerunner of a series of paintings in which the idea became the image of looking out at the world through a man-made environment. Instead of looking inward to the unity of the artist and the universe, the artist's role is reduced to peering through windows. Scully starts playing space-games as opposed to the perspective-games of the Cubists. Horizontals become balanced by verticals which are cut by parabolas. In these space-games, space becomes non-space, not even two-dimensional space. They are the meaningless meanderings of a point moving to nowhere.

This inevitably led to an increased stylization where his



(10) L. Scully
"The Window"



(11) L. Scully
"The Golden City"

painting became imitative of pure science. It became geometrically abstract.

At an exhibition in Johannesburg in 1965, what Esmé Berman has described as Scully's sparse brushwork and cool expanses of restrained, romantic colour sparked an immediate response among the viewing public. Suddenly the reticent artist had broken through.

Influenced by four panels by Ellsworth Kelly at the Venice Bienalle in 1966, it took Scully two years to absorb this startling presentation. Each panel was a single colour - red, yellow, green, blue. As a result Scully produced such paintings as "Golden City" (Ill. 11) and exhibited his mastery of medium in such paintings as his "Lunar Landscape" (Ill. 12) in which an additional gimmick appears, the central source of light.

He now combines his painting and his teaching with the demands on his time by committees, broad-casting, the Joint Matriculation Board, and the University of Stellenbosch.

The superficial virtuosity epitomised by Scully is echoed in the work of yet another leader of fashion, George Boys.

The courting of material alone - the type of technical abstract in which Boys indulges himself - promises only another cul-de-sac. His colours have been described as deep and rich, tinged with atmospheric overtones.



(12) L. Scully
"Lunar Landscape"



(13) G. Boys
"Solar Symbol"

His work, it is said, is definitely romantic. He has been described as phlegmatic. His technical resources are considerable and he employs them with seductive charm.

In the same way that Scully plagiarized the tribal totem, Boys converts themes into metaphysical symbolic abstracts - the Egyptian pictograph for creation, the Chinese Ts'ung symbol of earth and the Early Christian halo. The derivative function of all this symbolism only amounts to the exploitation of the ideas of others.

During the late 1960's his characteristic colour of dark, rich green gave way to gentler tints of blues and mauves. Esmé Berman claims that this is appealingly romantic - a quality which she says is responsible for attracting additional viewers to the ranks of his extensive public following. These seductive charm techniques, the theatricality of wooing the public by means of colour-games, are neither romantic nor are they appealing.

Boys claims to extend his vision beyond the common horizon and assess the more meaningful aspects of the contemporary idiom. His extended vision led to his opening a school of art which served as a centre to refresh people in advertising agencies.

Starting from an acknowledgement of the value of chance in medium, Boys turns to the deliberately controlled environment of the laboratory where he contrives techniques

that approximate growth patterns in nature, as in his "Solar Symbol" (Ill. 13). His style becomes dependant on the differing viscosities of solvents and pigments together with changes in temperature and gravitational flow. He becomes more concerned with process than with painting. "Art and science are becoming more interwoven, and when in the future an artist wants to make a statement it may well be a man with engineering or some sort of scientific training who will have to help him execute his idea".⁽⁷⁾ In this way artists become inarticulate beings relying on middlemen to interpret whatever they have to say.

In his most recent involvements with environments, Boys drags art into the Carnival atmosphere and throws it into the street. He turned a lecture on art and the man-in-the-street at the Johannesburg City Hall on the occasion of the 15th Transvaal academy, into a "happening". He introduced a filming unit, plaster figures, a life-cast of himself, tape recordings and bandaged students, creating an art event which involved the man-in-the-street. These circus tricks have turned art into an amusing sideshow; the type of anti-art event that is publicised in articles such as the following, which appeared in Artlook Vol. 5 No. 5, May 1972.

PAVEMENT ART

"When 17 well-known South African artists began painting pavements (Ill. 14 & 15), you will know that they have



(14)



(15)

been invited to do so and that they have a sense of fun. The pavement was the Hyde Square shopping Centre's North Road and each artist was given his own 3 x 1½ metre section of slab. The date was March, 11 and the artists had 6½ hours to finish the job. That most of them took it seriously was probably due to the prize - well wouldn't you? - a free trip to Paris by U.T.A. Airlines. Anyway there were some terrific effects, some disappointing ones and many that were amusingly appropriate.

The first prize went to Leonard Matsoso. His work always poses questions instead of merely answering them, which is what Dubuffet says art is all about".

Among those present were Cecil Skotnes, Bettie Cilliers-Barnard, Dirk Meerkotter, Cecily Sash. Possibly Scully was busy absorbing impacts while Boys was distilling in his laboratory.

It would appear that the demands of collective materialism and the dictates of scientific processes are the leading South African artists' only key to reality. They feel that they cannot exist save by harnessing what to them seems to be the mysterious power of society. They extort society's unaccountable consent. Each fakes the "reality" that he feels society expects him to fake and few have the courage to break this vicious circle.

They are indulging in what Wyndham Lewis has so aptly

termed the "exploitation of the innovating impulse".⁽⁸⁾
In bowing to the demands of science and technology, these unsolitary individuals have spurred art to its undoing. The natural changes in nature have nothing whatsoever to do with the rapid changes in technology. There is no problem of mechanical improvement in art. In the hands of Scully et al, art becomes sustained on novelties. A line should be drawn; a line which separates the individual's volition from the dictates of middleman promoters and sensation-seekers who make seductive attempts to woo the artist away from his contemplative and natural isolation from fashion and consumerism. He who is seduced is destroyed by "that contagion that hurries an artist to zero and to the death of talent - that ultimate advance of all advances, where there is no more advance because there is nothing".⁽⁹⁾
South African art has become stylistically abstracted into nothing to satisfy some sort of collective vanity.

It is the vanity and stupidity of these impostors which is reducing art to a state where only zero is tolerated. If fashionable South African art retains its popularity a stage is likely to be reached where there will be no visual arts of a serious kind at all. The foolery of the trend setters is becoming stabilized. At the other end of the scale is the academy type of painting to be found in the works of people such as Nerine Desmond, May Hillhouse, and Alexander and Marianne Podlaschuc - painters who are trying to be a little go-ahead here and there, but still remain the market place for people who heed the advice of Esmé Berman and wish

to buy original paintings as a symbol of the purchaser having "arrived".

The so-called leaders have become womanly. Women are obedient to the annual dictates of fashion and these leaders have no more originality than has a woman, whose only desire is to conform to fashion. In their hands art has become arbitrary, fashionable, charming, fanciful and irrational. The artist's freedom has become theoretic, his originality nil. He is spurred on by promoters who push him to the limits of technical advance. The absurd things which are happening in the visual arts in South Africa are what must happen when art becomes totally disconnected from reality; when it no longer has any direct function and can only exist as a plaything of dilettante intellectuality. "The artist no longer possesses any eloquence. He has instead a kind of persistence, a dogged conviction that the road to zero is the right road".⁽¹⁰⁾ He is struggling to oppose, negate and contradict the facts of his own existence. Any artist who indulges himself in the type of advances which are so far removed from sensuous and sensual experience, is alienating himself from art. Should he have roots in the sensuous realities, he would be too absorbed to listen to aesthetic excursionists like Herbert Read who assert that an artist depends on the community and takes his tone, his tempo, his intensity from the society of which he is a member.

The metaphysical illogicalities embodied in fashionable

South African art point to the need for a reinstatement of the Romantic principle in art and a readjustment of the concepts of reality and unreality.

PART II

THE ROMANTIC PRINCIPLE

"The destruction of Romanticism in aesthetics - like the destruction of individualism in ethics or of capitalism in politics - was made possible by philosophical default In all three cases, the nature of the fundamental values involved had never been defined explicitly, the issues were fought in terms of non-essentials, and the values were destroyed by men who did not know what they were losing or why".⁽¹⁾

A semantic difficulty arises in this context. A premise is needed to discover what fundamental values are embodied in the term Romanticism. The distinction between Romanticism and Classicism apart from being the crude device of art historians is totally irrelevant. The pathetic Romanticism of Géricault or Delacroix concerns itself primarily with a style of expression. A fundamental value should surely involve the life force; "Romanticism which is one with the universe".⁽²⁾

The premise needed is that the artist is fundamentally mobile. That is to say able to act according to his own volition and not tied down by any stylish doctrine. He finds realism or naturalism inadequate because of a penetrating vision that has nothing to do with anyone or anything other than the primeval forces of nature - forces whereby visions are translated into the true, first-order reality.

A romantic would disagree with Paul Klee or Herbert Read, that art needs its public; that isolation is not a characteristic of art. One of the primary characteristics of art is that it

can only be made by the artist who lives in isolation. This is a prerequisite of his acting according to his own volition. A deliberate rejection of social dictates or social mores - a fashionable dropping out - does not result in isolation. If isolation is deliberate, it is not isolation at all. This action-reaction involves association, a negation of the principle of acting according to free will, the Romantic sense of life. Association is involved insofar as the Romantic instinctively and archetypically recognizes his own kind but in order to support his own volition, he does not owe them any allegiance.

What is emerging is that:

The Romantic does not recognize style.

The Romantic acts according to his own volition.

The Romantic is one with the primeval forces of nature.

The Romantic sees the true reality.

The Romantic is isolated from society.

The Romantic instinctively recognizes his own kind but does not owe them allegiance.

A Studio magazine published in 1905 mentions two Austrian painters, Karl Mediz and Emilie Mediz-Pelikan who are "both so fond of rich colouring that they seek those parts of the earth where Nature is most profuse in her gifts". Both painters have endured physical hardship, sleeping in the open and working in complete isolation in the Dolomites. The article relates how the woman lived in a cave and how in order to get the right reflex from above she climbed a hill over

thirteen hundred feet twice a day. She spent five weeks in an empty little hut on the mountain and slept on the ground. Karl Mediz "goes his own way and is influenced by none". In terms of this essay's definition of a romantic, these two painters are typical.

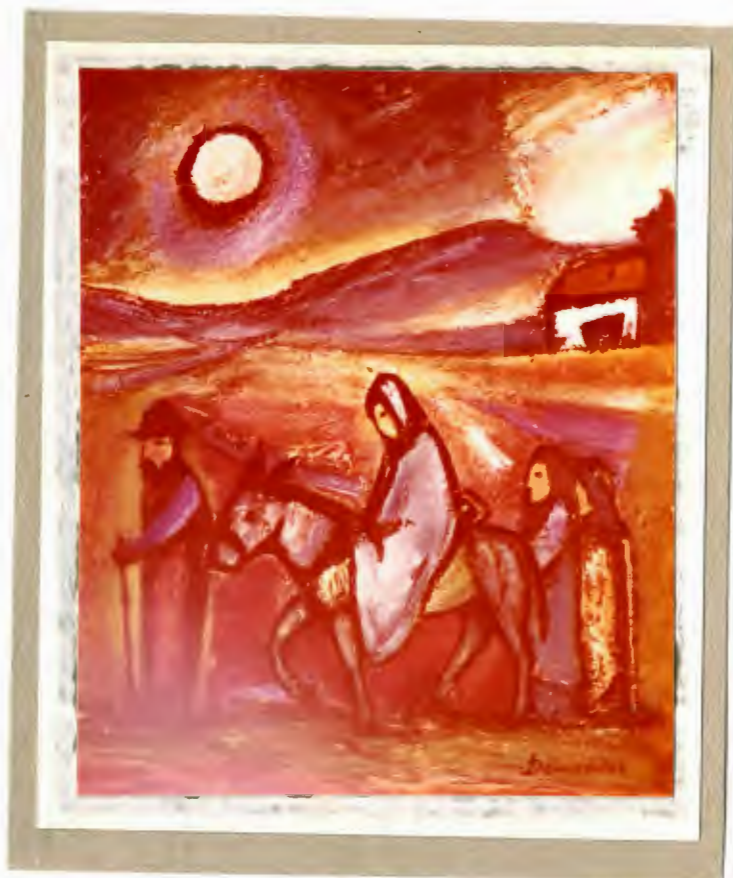
But what of Romantic art itself? One characteristic is that it has nothing whatsoever to do with the social construction of reality. It is to do with the nature of man's natural consciousness and unconsciousness and is applicable to all men. A work of art should serve no practical end. It is associated primarily with personal contemplation and the needs of an artist's persona. Any attempt to pigeonhole him, to classify his painting according to this or that style constitutes an attack on his identity and a threat to his survival. In many ways the romantic is constantly at war - at war with social moralities and collective materialism. No connection should be made with materialism and capitalism. A man can only act according to his own volition in a capitalistic society. Art does not serve a material need but the needs of the artist's consciousness and sense of life. Only the anti-artist-anti-romantic will allow material needs to dictate his modus operandi and destroy his free-will.

The purpose of art is that it is tied to man's survival. The preservation of his consciousness is paramount. Without it he is dead and those artists who allow themselves to be absorbed into the fashion-factory - an assembly belt of popular journalistic catchwords and the meaningless utterances

of fashionable art dictators - are succumbing to philosophical default and are already wrapped up in the funeral shrouds of their own impotence. Hence the usual social rejection of the true romantic. The function of his art is non-social. He selectively recreates first order reality according to his metaphysical value judgements. He presents a fundamental view of himself and man's existence. Man shapes and re-shapes his physical world according to his needs and his needs are determined by his metaphysical values. Such values need definition and concretization. The heroic ideal calls for a concrete image in whose likeness we may reshape the world. Romantic art is that image. "Art is man's metaphysical mirror; what a rational man seeks to see in that mirror is a salute; what an irrational man seeks to see is a justification - even if only a justification of his depravity, as a last convulsion of his betrayed self-esteem".⁽³⁾

What an artist chooses to paint and how he paints it are crucial factors in determining the value of his work. His choice of subject is indicative of his metaphysical views. The contextual definition of the Romantic states that he is one with the primeval forces of nature, sees the true reality and is isolated from society. In this light it is more than likely that the romantic artist will turn to that part of his physical world which is best suited to the externalizing of his ideals - landscape.

Similarly the way in which the artist applies his medium is



(16) P. Domsaitia
"Flight into Egypt"



(17) J.H. Pierneef
"Ntabeni"

either romantic (Ill. 16) or naturalistic (Ill. 17). Since art and consciousness are inextricably linked with each other, the painter who is fully aware of his own identity will use his medium with a clarity, ruthless precision and cleanliness that shows a mental state that is in full focus. An artist who moves around in the miasmic fog of his out-of-focus feelings will create a blurred and indefinite murk where outlines dissolve and entities flow into one another. A parallel can be seen in the way Berlioz uses an orchestra and a pop "musician" uses the fuzz pedal on his electronic guitar in a complete annihilation of high fidelity.

Part of the philosophical default gained momentum with the Renaissance drive towards illusionism - a humanistic paradox - and accelerated through the visual distortions of Rembrandt, via Courbet to the inane disintegrations of the Impressionists, eventually coming to rest in the completely destructive phenomenon of the perspective games of Cubism. To present an object from several perspectives at once suggests an abnormal mental state that is totally out of focus (Ill. 18).

Herbert Read aligns Surrealism and the romantic principle. He refers to Surrealism as "a strange and not too intelligible thing". No support can be found for Read's argument in terms of the definition of romanticism proposed in this essay. By and large the surreal world is one where outlines dissolve, objects flow into one another and lose their identities and objects float without weight (Ills. 19 & 20). It is indicative of a sub-level of awareness where nothing is certain



(18) J. Gris
"Still Life"



(19) S. Dali
"The Invisible Man"



(20) R. Magritte
"Chateau Des Pyrénées"

and nothing much is demanded of one's conscious selection of reality. It is not super-real as Read would have us believe. If we bear in mind the clarity of vision made concrete by precision and cleanliness in the use of medium, then the Surrealists present us with a paradox. Salvador Dali or René Magritte for example, possess a luminous clarity in their techniques but their subject matter is indicative of a rationale which is based on a murky metaphysics. Romantic art does not allow this dichotomy. There should be no paradox.

In an effective diatribe against Classicism, Read claims that the principles embodied in the movement represent the forces of oppression and are the intellectual counterpart of political tyranny.

One cannot help but agree with Herbert Read about the anaesthetic effect of Classicism and its contradiction of the creative impulse. It is a direct antithesis of all that is embodied in the romantic spirit - a spirit that does not recognise style; that does not owe allegiance to any pre-determined doctrine of aesthetic behaviour and, above all, is a justification for the artist's acting according to his own volition.

Herbert Grierson is quoted as saying that "The work of the classical artist is to give individual expression, the beauty of form, to a body of common sentiments and thoughts which he shares with his audience, thoughts and views which have for his generation the validity of universal truths".⁽⁴⁾

Classical art therefore, denies the non-social function of art and the artist's right to create reality according to the metaphysical value judgements which he derives from his oneness with the primeval forces of nature. In romantic art, there is no body of common sentiments and no thoughts are shared with an audience.

The relationship between an observer and a painting is effectively demonstrated by Ayn Rand when she says that the essential statement of a painting (apropos the artist) is:

That is the way I see it,

whereas the empathetic observer says,

That is the way I see it.

The romantic instinctively recognizes his own kind but does not owe them allegiance.

Art should not moralize. It shows. Those who refuse the price of admission (the rational acknowledgement of the true value of romantic reality) and miss the show are the whining possessors of a disintegrated consciousness and a distorted metaphysics.

Any intellectual concepts which stress the static and inorganic, which repress the primeval instincts on which growth and change depend, will eventually bring creativity and volitional progress to a halt. Witness the High Renaissance and Cubism. It needs the romantic saviour to show where the sham ends and man begins. "There is a principle of life, of creation, of

liberation, and that is the romantic spirit; there is a principle of order, of control and of repression, and that is the classical spirit". (5)

Herbert Read points out that the universal truths so doggedly pursued by the classicist may merely be the temporal prejudices of a particular age whereas the universal truths of romanticism are concerned with the evolving consciousness of mankind; the static and temporary as opposed to the living and organic.

However, when he begins to extol the virtues of irrationality in the romantic principle he is entering the realms of the philosophical default that is under examination at the moment. To align classicism with the rational and romanticism with the irrational is absurd.

Admittedly there is the inevitable semantic question concerning "rational" and "irrational". It all depends on the state of reason. The pragmatic philosophy of Bertrand Russell, for example, is ridiculous. If this is reason, then the only acceptable rationality in art, the type of rationality that allows for change and growth, is unreason.

It is reasonable to align classicism with the temporary tastes and dictates of an epoch, but to say that this is aligned with the rational whereas that which is concerned with universal truths and the evolving consciousness of mankind is permanent and irrational does not make sense.

The implication in Read's argument is that the romantic looks past the immediate moment, past trivia and irrelevancies, repetitions and routines, and sees the essentials. Romantic art then becomes an expression of reality - a reality which is selected from metaphysical essentials and not the psychopathological irrationalities of Surrealism which is by no means the reaffirmation of the romantic principle that Read claims it to be.

The relationship between modern philosophy and art is a destructive one. Hegel has suggested that in order to produce a new situation (assuming the undesirability of the present situation) there must be two elements that are diametrically opposed to each other and yet are related to each other to the extent that a resolution is demanded. The resolution represents a new phase of development which is merely a temporary state of equilibrium.

Obviously there is a continual friction between the world of objective fact and the world of subjective fantasy, but it is the world of subjective fantasy that remains a fundamental necessity in the change/growth process of true creativity.

Reality is closely integrated with man's ability to form concepts and whereas the concepts change (of necessity must change if they are to involve growth), the ability does not change. Mass-man with his inability to form concepts, his lack of metaphysical convictions, who forever kneels in obedience to philosophical dictates - be they what they may -

is creatively dead and is totally separated from the life force which is the essence of Romanticism.

In other words Romantic art will in some way reflect the life-force which gives rise to concepts. Any attempt at a refusal to recognize this fundamental prerequisite of conceptual ability is a negation of the essence of creativity and results only in spiritual illiteracy.

Modern philosophy, the distorted offspring of Surrealistic anti-romanticism, attempts to destroy this conceptual level of man's consciousness and to reduce man's awareness to dream-sensations as opposed to fantasy-realizations.

To reiterate; change is essential, flux is vital if we are to avoid stagnation and it is the romantic spirit, untrammelled by any considerations of doctrine other than the doctrine of forming concepts according to the artist's free will, which will inevitably save us from the philosophical swamp of unreason.

Remember that the Impressionists (to use a convenient starting point), the Fauves, the Expressionists, the Cubists, the Surrealists, all adhered to a doctrine and found security in the group gestalt. Only a few - who were included under Fauvism or Expressionism for historical purposes but were not Fauves or Expressionists at all - lived and worked in isolation and it is these few, who owed allegiance to none, who brought about change.

When change however becomes exploited, when newness for newness' sake becomes a guiding principle and novelty becomes the sustenance of art, then rot sets in and the results are among the worst aberrations of the twentieth century's escapist quest for kicks of all kinds.

Save for some very rare exceptions, romantic art is virtually non-existent in today's culture. Formed as an affirmation of the romantic principle and a rejection of contemporary fashion dictates, one such exception is the Grahamstown Group.

PART III

THE GRAHAMSTOWN GROUP

"Professor Bradshaw said the sorry state of art in South Africa in general and the Eastern Province in particular, where there was no association or exhibition with a high enough standard to subscribe to, had been behind the move to form the Group". (Herald, September 5, 1968)

Historical Background:

The Grahamstown Group was formed on May 15, 1964 by Brian Bradshaw, Professor of Fine Art at Rhodes University. Professor Bradshaw was appointed to the chair of Fine Arts in 1960. Prior to his appointment, the Rhodes School had been producing the type of semi-cubistic, semi-surrealistic repetitions that are to be expected in an academic institution that had become immersed in traditionalism and divorced from artistic realities. The effect of the thirty-six year old Professor on the students was invigourating. The forceful style of his work and his independant outlook caused the student body to re-examine the established aesthetic viewpoint of the school and before long a group of painters who shared a similarity of outlook came into existence in Grahamstown.

Among the original members of the Grahamstown Group were:

BRADSHAW, Brian

1923 - b Bolton, Lancashire.

STUDIED. 1939: Bolton College of Art. Manchester Regional College of Art. 1948-51: Royal College of Art, London (ARCA).

1951-53: British Academy, Rome.....[He] consolidated his

forceful style during a long phase of solitary work in Wales. Dark masses of Welsh landscape received sympathetic and emotional interpretation in [his] boldly structured compositions. His outlook remains independant.

BROOKS, Robert (Beverley)

1941 - b Springs, Tvl.

Studied at Rhodes Univ. 1961-65 (MA Fine Arts). Lecturer in Painting and Art History at P.E. Tech Art School 1966-67.

Lecturer at Rhodes Univ. 1967-[1972 whence he returned to P.E. Tech.] Works on a large scale, interested in photography and new images of reality which find expression in Pop-art. Began exhibiting with the Group in 1964. Included on Rep Fest Exhib, Pta 1966.

GRAHAM, Hilary

1943 - b Graaff Reinet.

Studied at Rhodes Univ 1963-67 (MA Fine Art). Teaching [at PE Tech Art School.] His early outlook was based on belief that nature is still the source of all artistic inspiration and he rejected as sterile the intellectualization of latter-day abstract art. [This is undoubtedly due to the influence of Brian Bradshaw.] Attracted to Pop idioms.

MALAN, Wendy

1945 - b Johannesburg.

Studied 1964-68 Rhodes Univ (Dip Fine Art & further study).

Began exhibiting with the Group 1964. Early paintings include portraits and semi-abstract 'instinctual' compositions.

Included on SA Breweries Art Prize Exhib 1968.

MATTHEWS, Thomas

1936 - b Jhb.

1956-59: travelled and worked in UK, Canada, USA and Australia.

1959-63: Studied at Rhodes Univ (MA Fine Art). 1964:

Appointed lecturer in Fine Art at Rhodes.

NELL, Josua ('Joos' Andries)

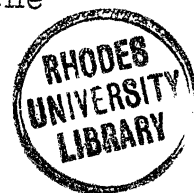
1935 - b SWA

Studied at Rhodes Univ 1956-59 (Dip Fine Art). Lecturer in art at Rhodes 1960-. Concentrates on landscape, preferably desolate and mysterious; also sometimes includes predatory animals to establish mood. Began exhibiting with Group 1964. Included on exhib, 'SWA Painters', SA Nat Gal, 1962.

(The biographical details and commentaries on the styles of the above-mentioned members of the Grahamstown Group have been extracted verbatim from Berman, E: Art and Artists of South Africa)

Other initial members of the Group were: H.F. Burger, S.W. Cowley, J.L. Crooks, M. Gauche, A.D. Louwrens, E. Marais, B.A. Mc Comb, J.G. Mc Kenzie, K.A. Persson, V.J. Prestwich, M. Romagnoli, A.F.M. Roux, A.E.W. Stone, P.M. Woods, E.W. Verwey, and E.L. Viljoen.

The emergence of a concerted group, formed as a vehicle for an artistic attitude, was unique in South African Art. The



uncompromising character of the Group has been kept consistent by its membership, which is by invitation only and is subject to constant revision. Because membership is based on consonance of attitude, its ranks have been enlarged only when a candidate has indicated a genuine affinity of outlook.

The aims and purposes of the Group were laid down in a manifesto and its mutual aesthetic philosophy achieved certain impact when its first exhibition as a group per se was held at Gallery 101 Johannesburg in October 1964. Since then it has held more than 20 shows throughout South Africa and Rhodesia.

Press and Public Reactions:

Commenting on the first Group exhibition in Johannesburg, Die Vaderland (Nov. 11, 1964) remarked that one of the striking things about the paintings was the absence of a typical South African atmosphere. The critic's first impression of the exhibition as a whole was one of paintings done in a vigorous, near-academic way, breaking with more traditional realism through a bold simplification of shape, and the rich lushness in paint usage. Behind most of the paintings, he said, was a stern regard for simplicity.

The Rand Daily Mail (Nov. 11, 1964) mentioned an insistence by the master on sound drawing, but the critic was disturbed by the difficulty he would find in hanging one of the paintings in a home. He remarked on the "overpowering", almost

"terrifying" strength of A.F.M. Roux's 'Double Portrait' and found it a relief to turn from what he termed "Bradshaw inspired work" to the 'Tropical Plants' by M. Romagnoli which he found charming if somewhat slight.

The first exhibition by the Group in its own Province occurred in the Arts Hall, Port Elizabeth, in April 1965. In his opening address Mr. George Adler said that the work was realistic rather than abstract and "should prove tremendously interesting". Once again the press reaction was varied.

The Evening Post (April 9, 1965) was impressed by what it called the "dash, verve and brilliant colour, completely contemporary in idiom" but felt the need to comment on the absence of "true abstract" which dominated so many modern exhibitions. In a later commentary (April 13, 1965), the Evening Post applauded the stimulating variety of style that existed within the homogeneity of the Group.

That there was considerable controversy over the early Group exhibitions was inevitable. Reaction appeared to divide itself into two extremes. On the one side were those who thought the work highly stimulating and full of a fresh and vigorous approach. On the other side were those who thought the work to be systematically bad because of narrow or limited aims.

In a retrospective view of the first Port Elizabeth exhibition, broadcast in "The Local Scene" April 24, 1965, Professor Bradshaw said that young painters were usually very much aware

of a certain amount of prejudice in the public attitude towards works setting forward a different point of view than that normally seen and appreciated. He observed that the abstract currents of controversy underlined rather than marred the success of the exhibition. The controversy by its very nature gave recognition to the Group's unusual qualities.

It is more than likely that whenever anything original and invigourating appears, the braying of asses will be heard. Neville Dubow, in an article in the Cape Argus of June 22, 1965, on the occasion of the Group's first Cape Town exhibition at Gallery Shear, commented as follows:

"The overall impression is one of considerable vigour and assertiveness. If this vigour is often of a physical rather than an intellectual nature and if its assertiveness often becomes brashness, this may well be forgiven as the natural lustiness of any new institution keen on making its mark". He described Brian Bradshaw's painting of Brigitte Bardot as "neither sufficiently purely pop in approach nor sufficiently painterly in execution to convince in either category". He said that one could usually see the idea behind Bradshaw's work but that it was not always realized in its final statement as a painting.

"Much of the work" Dubow continued, "is strongly derivative, Apart from the Bradshaw influence, which is to be expected, there is a general air of expressionist dynamism which animates these paintings with the influence of Kokoschka particularly

evident Elsewhere one feels that Marquet, de Staël, Morandi possibly, have all been looked at. Again this is no bad thing in itself. In a young school it is inevitable that they, or other masters like them, should be studied and one objects not at all to their influence per se. What one does query though is the adoption of the manner of another painter without digesting the reasons for the manner. There is a great difference, surely, between looking at something and learning from it as opposed to pouncing on something and using it".

As everyone knows, hot air rises. Dubow was later appointed to the Chair of Fine Art at Michaelis. A more understanding comment came from Johan van Rooyen in the Cape Times of June 29, 1966. "We find no covering up of weaknesses and mistakes but an honest search for the most suitable way in which best to express their vision".

The controversy continues. On practically every occasion where the Group has exhibited, there has been an element of negative criticism.

"A feeling for humanity is not particularly evident [This is] somewhat disquieting". (Daily Dispatch March 26, 1966)
 "Mrs. E.K. Lorimer (Director George VI Art Gallery, P.E.) said that it was a pity the students painted on such a large scale. 'If some of the works were on a smaller scale, they would look better' From a purely practical point of view, they were too large for many people's homes". (ibid).

"The group seems to say that, whether one likes their styles

or not, at least they will ensure that one is not bored by repetition and intellectual remoteness". (Sunday Express May 30, 1971).

Marylyn Chapman seemed more enthusiastic in her review of the R.S.A. '76 exhibition which opened in East London at the Ann Bryant Gallery on September 3, 1976. Over forty paintings by present and ex Grahamstown Group members were selected for the exhibition. In a review of the work on exhibit, she speaks of a "Good, sound, middle-of-the-way basic body of work which is quietly confident and strong. Much of this strength floods through from the Grahamstown influence - Brooks in Port Elizabeth, Cleone Cull in East London J.W. Roome is charming and at the same time bold in Yellow Tree, and Anette Laubser works impressively with red from cold to hot in her large still-life..... there are new names worth noting like Hugh Dent and Steven Pratt Bradshaw, the enigmatic, the fountainhead of Grahamstown's powerful influence, shows bold abstractions, quite different to his earlier periods. The static electric build-up of those moonlit landscapes, give way to powerful brush strokes, clear colours exploding from darkness". (Daily Dispatch September 4, 1976)

There is evidence of a slowly rising tide of acceptance and appreciation of the rationale of the Grahamstown Group. As a result of the R.S.A. '76 exhibition, a breakthrough has occurred in the Eastern Cape and the work of the Group is being looked at dispassionately by people outside the area. Bettie Cilliers-Barnard - a member of the selection committee - has

shown the capacity to want something that is superior to the normal standard of work being produced in South Africa.

Aesthetic Considerations:

In the above extracts from the press, much has been made of journalistic trivia - trivia that are indicative of the public's frantic search for the type of reality that they have been conditioned to accept as true reality. The press merely feeds them on the type of diet that they themselves prescribe. One reads of an absence of typical South African atmosphere; paintings too large for many peoples' homes; a stern regard for simplicity (with "boo" undertones suggesting a lack of entertainment value); the absence of "true abstract"; the contemporaneous idiom. On the credit side one encounters such phrases as "a break with more traditional realism; insistence on sound drawing; dash, verve, brilliant colour; variety of style. As is to be expected from a society which accepts the type of work reviewed in Part 1 of this essay, there is a persistent failure to grasp the true nature of the Group.

Closer to the essence was Professor K. Antonissen's contribution to the S.A.B.C.'s "Arts Review", broadcast in April 1965. In his talk, he said that one might expect the term "group" to denote inter alia a more or less high degree of common interest, purpose, striving, even technique. The impression he gained, however, was rather a different one. He noticed "a wide variety ranging from land, sea- and skyscapes to still lifes and nudes, from life drawings to evocations of a purely imaginary world, from an atmospheric near-impressionism to a very bold expression

and magic realism, from refined design to visionary and daringly robust composition". More closely aligned with the metaphysical viewpoint of the Group was Professor Antonissen's observation that the common ground of these artists seemed to be a strong sense of structure and form, a continuous investigation of experience gathered by working in a particular environment. In this way the creative elements of the environment are revealed, rendering the essence of and surpassing natural reality; a reality that is not imitative, charming or enchanting; a reality that is a straightforward statement about the world and a vigorous reaffirmation of life.

More pertinent was an Arts Review broadcast by Mrs. Chapman on March 27, 1966. Since her remarks have a direct bearing on the Group aesthetic, the following extract is quoted verbatim from a transcription of the broadcast.

"Professor Bradshaw visualises the Rhodes School as a centre of indigenous painting, presents new dimensions, grafts new life on to what previously we have come to regard as South African art. Ruthlessly discarding Abstract Expressionism, forcing exoticism and the easy influence of primitive art into the background, this group strives to remind us of our traditional inheritance.

Roots are set back through the broken top-soil of the Impressionists, and into the deeper ground of the Romantic period. This is noticeable in the work of Hilary Graham who is influenced by Delacroix. But always the English influence comes through - Delacroix himself was interested in English

Art - and the Grahamstown Group is one school in South Africa which has every reason to build on English tradition.

Essentially a rural school, landscape painting and portraits of living, growing things, form the basis for interpretation.

Each member of the group is dedicated to hard work. Each observes nature with intelligent insight. Not one is concerned with the fashionable, the Avant Garde or with technical virtuosity. Sound, strong drawing forms the core, the pith of their work. Their observation of contemporary life is expressed always with contained emotion. This uncompromising attitude is a direct inheritance from Brian Bradshaw, whose achievement in Europe and the United States is noteworthy. In all, [the work] breaks powerfully upon one with clean, fresh force. Standing alone and isolated, but intensely aware of the life around it, the Rhodes School is unique and individual".

Perhaps Mrs. Chapman has placed too much emphasis on the traditional elements found in these paintings. In his 'Anatomy of Frustration', H.G. Wells pointed out that envelopment by tradition only results in frustration for the artist. The artist who imitates and repeats is lost. However, the artist who consciously shapes his work by contradicting and avoiding tradition is lost as well. The true artist is innocent of the past. He knows the past but is not controlled by his knowledge. He creates something authentically new from the ashes of tradition. He is a mutation, the growing point of the species in which the human imagination is

perpetually expanding. In a sense he is what would be popularly termed insane. Hence the true artist's continual rejection by society.

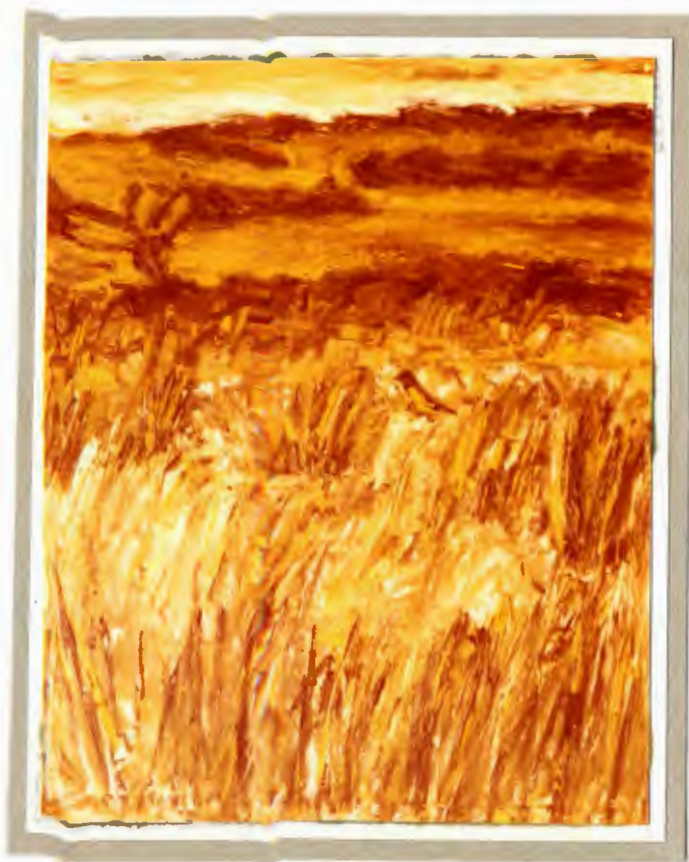
It is essential that he remain alienated since alienation is the condition proper to real creative activity. For this very reason the Grahamstown Group was formed to work in isolation. Its attitude is of necessity anti-social and constitutes a refusal to sacrifice the reality of its own existence to the deluded 'realities' of society. It moves away from all the establishments and reverts back to the bundu. This should not be mistaken for a retrogression into primitivism. It is an honest involvement in a particular area of experience, the indigenous landscape.

Several artists have tried to imitate the style of the Group unsuccessfully. Such vain attempts are rather like going to paint South West Africa because the works of Adolph Jentsch happen to have caught the eye. Imitators fail to realize that the act of painting, the instinctive translation by the hand, precludes any preconceived notion of what the painting is going to be. "To push, prod, hurl into the unknown",⁽¹⁾ is one of the primary cerebral activities of any artist concerned with the essential, universal realities of nature.

The Group's strong identity with the mystery of life-forms and an acute awareness arising out of involvement with the environment gives rise to a root art where landscape is used



B. Bradshaw



T. Matthews

as a point of romantic departure. This naturally romantic impulse raises the landscape into the realm of poetic symbolism; to that metaphysical level at which it takes its origin - universal and total artistic reality. Symbolism is set in its proper context, as a device to be called upon rather than an ideology to be followed.

The ideology of the Grahamstown Group is a romantic one. It is based on a coherent metaphysical theory of reality. One of the most serious difficulties in any discussion of Romanticism is the progressive loss of meaning which critical and historical illiteracy has inflicted on the name itself. Romanticism is not a stylistic term. The criterion of its application is not how the painter paints, but what he believes. The nature of reality is the romantic's first concern. The only claim of Romanticism to the status of a valid ideology lies in the coherence of its metaphysics and its root in observed fact. It "challenges the legitimacy of what we habitually accept as reality".⁽²⁾ There is no correspondence between the physical essence of the universe and the psychological and so-called "spiritual" aspirations of man. Romanticism is the ideology of a whole human being looking at the whole universe. In this way the romantic totalizes experience.

Observers have been known to identify a landscape by one of the Group with surroundings that are familiar to them. More often than not the landscape concerned is nowhere near the locale suggested. The totalizing of human experience in



B. Bradshaw



B. Bradshaw



J. Nell



N. Hodnett

paintings is the root cause behind such misconceptions.

The ethic behind the Group is based on a belief in the hostility of life. It is from this metaphysical idea of conflict, of principles which are maintained only by struggle, that its work draws its social and philosophical criticism and the power of its artistic statements. Its work has a force which seems to preserve perpetual virility and to involve a perpetual struggle.

This struggle takes place on two levels - the fight against death (the artist is hostile with life), and the struggle against those men and institutions who ally themselves with death. Of all ideologies, Romanticism alone declares this basic antagonism and demands appropriate action. "We must demand the right to secession as the one square foot of ground which is solid and from which we can look at and interpret the gigantic chaos of human existence. We are learning ourselves to live in the structure of insane societies while defying them, practising to retain our lives as if we were really sane men in an asylum". (3)

Here the romantic is obliged to face the criticism that he denounces other people's doings when he has no human right to do so. However, his isolation is brought about by his essential humanity. He is an individual with the same organs and the same psychological make-up as every other individual who has ever existed. He is subject to every branch of human experience but consciously or unconsciously he is aware of

the individual's position and of the roots in anthropology and evolution which make up humanness. One cannot identify the 'Cause of Man' with the 'Cause of Humanity'. It is the 'Cause of Man' that the romantic denounces. "He is an incarnation of the historic inevitability which brings the entire social structure round the ears of its owners and victims in one final, glorious smash".⁽⁴⁾

Romantic art will survive because it is based on the universality of man; a universality which society tends to destroy. Some type of force, some kind of determination and persistence, is needed to ensure survival. Imagination (frequently termed insanity) is public taboo. South African viewers are so far discouraged by their education and their place in society from all things imaginative, and they have so great a fear of them, linked with a terror of insanity, that the fantastic, unless their attention is focussed on it by force, is met with vapid derision.

The main circumstances surrounding the Grahamstown Group's originality are these: tradition, adversity, isolation. Its protest is stimulated by adversity and made efficacious by its isolation, especially isolation from outside forms of "civilized" culture. Where aesthetically valuable work is produced, these three conditions will be fulfilled. Tradition is in the visual pattern of the landscape - the province.

The Group is provincialist. Reality, and the opportunity to experience reality and the pleasure of honest creation,



J. Nell



T. Matthews



J. Cook



C. Till

is far more a part of provincial communities than the type of communities which co-exist in the metropolitan structure of so-called civilization. The romantic artist, as an individual is obliged by his reason to become an enemy of society. The enemies of society are likely to become romantic artists if they produce art at all.

Romanticism is fully vindicated as a theory of life by the historical event. Time, in other words, will tell.

Mr. Jack Boltz, town clerk of Pietersburg, has shown an artistic sensibility not normally associated with his type of official position. Impressed by the work produced by members of the Group, he invited them to contribute to a newly instituted municipal collection of 300 - 400 paintings which includes works by Jean Weltz and Alfred Krenz. The main exhibition room in the Municipal high-rise complex is devoted to the Grahamstown Group. This is the first public collection in which the Grahamstown Group per se is represented. It is not the first time the Group has been asked to contribute to a public collection. Anton Rupert was refused a request to submit works for inclusion in the Hester Rupert Collection in Graaff Reinet.

As a result of the events in Pietersburg, the sub-director of the South African National Gallery has asked the Group to exhibit in Cape Town. There is an obvious danger in this type of acceptance by society.

If the Group comes to terms with any social system it does so

entirely of its own free will. Patronage is the outward and visible liason which exists between the artist and society. Any such liason is likely to result in the deterioration of the artist who accepts it. Contemporary urban civilization cannot by its nature have any use for an artist who is not prepared to be a prostitute.

"The more the Grahamstown Group's influence becomes felt, the more steadily its principles will have to be applied. Otherwise it becomes no better than anything else in the country. People decay, are subverted, but maintenance of what the Group stands for must be continued".⁽⁵⁾

What the Group stands for was made explicit in the following manifesto, published at the inception of the Group on May 15, 1964:

Since the roots of our development belong to Grahamstown South Africa

The Albany Museum is more important than the Tate Gallery

The Bundu is more important than the Albany Museum

The Bundu is Hostile With Life

Pacifist-Periodicals of International-Art have no Vitalism

Art symbolises Indigenous culture- the Only Culture

We are Provincialists like the Mediators of Lascaux and Altimira

The artist is a Shaman

Not a sham-man

We reject the Fashion-Forms circulated by the Intellectual-Herd

The kind of art delivered with the groceries

The technics of de Styl and suprematism and what not are dead

They were never alive

The Bauhaus was born dead
and buried sixty years ago
Art is Action
We are Alive
Art is permanent revolution
art is not an object for the display of charm techniques
machine art is for machines
(cosmetics are also sold in tubes)
Mass-man is an incompetent machine - all spare parts
The Individual makes art
The Individual avoids the levelling blade - and grows tall
Art unifies; no atomising
Art is Unitive Vision - and Power
It is Heroic and Immortal
The artist totalises experience
He is not a humanist-fragment but a Complete and Whole Man
Therefore he is at war with the Crowd and the Suckers and
the Sugarspicers
Therefore he justifies life
Therefore he is hostile with life
Therefore his actions are permanent revolution
Stay away from the stagnant mulch of decayed decades - and
art cults
There is life in the Bundu
The Gods are still alive
Attack us and give us energy
Ignore us and leave us room to Work
Condemn us, abuse, misunderstand us - Amuse us
We know; we Are
We act in unison with 400,000 years of Man
We react against [1976] years of fragmentary man and non man
We propagate the artistic mind
We find no use in fossil sterile avantism
We belong to the Future - not to the Shops and the Shopkeepers
In order to build it is necessary to Destroy
And transvaluate values
To Hell with non-being, non-sense, non-art
We thrive in Being
The future is ours

The past is ours

The present damns itself the weak are impressed by/into
the Canning Factory

they stew in their juice and we are used to the Smell

It is the Stink of Death and everlasting peace

We live apart from the cemetery

Where the air is Clean and brushed by the revolution of life

Let us by all means war with modern weapons - they are more
destructive

And we may make them more efficient

As we rebuild the world according to its Nature.

APPENDIX A.

Acknowledgement of Quotations

PART I

1. E. Berman, Art and Artists of South Africa, p. 18.
2. Artlook, No. 37, December 1969.
3. W. Lewis, The Demon of Progress in the Arts, p. 96.
4. A. Rand, Atlas Shrugged, p. 993.
5. R. van Graan, in Lantern, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, December 1974.
6. E. Berman, op. cit., p. 266.
7. G. Boys, quoted in Lantern, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, June 1974.
8. W. Lewis, op. cit.
9. W. Lewis, op. cit., p. 5.
10. W. Lewis, op. cit., p. 50.

PART II

1. A. Rand, The Romantic Manifesto, p. 67.
2. F. Klee, On Modern Art, p. 43.
3. A. Rand, op. cit., p. 39.
4. H. Grierson, quoted in H. Read, The Philosophy of Modern Art, p. 107.
5. H. Read, op. cit., p. 109.

PART III

1. Prof. B. Bradshaw, Philosophy of Art Lectures, 1974/75.
2. Prof. B. Bradshaw, ibid.
3. A. Comfort, Art and Social Responsibility, p. 37.
4. A. Comfort, op. cit., p. 48.
5. Prof. B. Bradshaw, Philosophy of Art Lecture, September 1976.

APPENDIX B.

Grahamstown Group Exhibitions

Gallery 101, Johannesburg, 1964.
Arts Hall, Port Elizabeth, 1965.
Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1965.
Gallery Shear, Cape Town, 1965.
East London Museum, East London, 1966.
Republic Festival Exhibition, Uitenhage, 1966.
Arts Hall, Port Elizabeth, 1967.
Arts Hall, School of Art, R.U., Grahamstown, 1967.
Association of Arts Gallery, Cape Town, 1968.
Carinus Art Centre, Grahamstown, 1968.
Arts Hall, School of Art, R.U., Grahamstown, 1969.
Arts Hall, School of Art, R.U., Grahamstown, 1970.
Arts Hall, Port Elizabeth, 1971.
Gallery 101, Johannesburg, 1971.
Fine Art Department, R.U., Grahamstown, 1972.
Open air exhibition in the gardens of No. 11, High Street,
Grahamstown, 1973.
Fine Art Department, R.U., Grahamstown, 1973.
C.R. Swart Auditorium, University of O.F.S., Bloemfontein, 1974.
Fine Art Department, R.U., Grahamstown, 1974.
Fine Art Department, R.U., Grahamstown, 1975.
Arts Hall, Port Elizabeth, 1976.

This list does not include exhibitions where the Group formed part of a larger body of exhibitors, neither does it include the five exhibitions held at its own Gallery in New Street, Grahamstown. The Gallery housed a permanent exhibition of Group works up until such time as the Gallery was closed in 1975. The reasons for its closing were financial.

APPENDIX C.

Grahamstown Group Members

Since the difficulties in supplying a complete list of all members of the Group are practically insurmountable (a large body of members consisted of students who have long since left Rhodes University), the following list of names comprises those encountered during research. Apart from the original members mentioned in the text, other members and ex members are:

Almon,	D.	Kileff,	A.
Baker,	C.	Kirkwood,	J.
Biggs,	C.	Knox,	J.
Britz,	M.	Laubser,	A.
Champion,	D.	Massey,	V.
Cook,	Jes.	Merwe,	J van der.
Cook,	Jon.	Parker,	J.
Cull,	C.	Poultney,	C.
Dent,	H.	Pratt,	S.
Dicks,	G.	Randell,	G.
Grant,	D.	Reeve,	C.
Haddad,	D.	Roome,	J.
Hall,	E.	Siopis,	P.
Hallier,	M.	Skinner,	C.
Harvey,	K.	Snyman,	E.
Hepburn,	R.	Spoor,	D.
Heerden,	J van.	Swift,	T.
Heydenrych,	A.	Thomas,	C.
Hodnett,	N.	Till,	C.
Hogge,	R.		

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Berman, E. Art and Artists of South Africa. Balkema, 1970.
- Brion, M. Art of the Romantic Era. Thames and Hudson, 1966.
- Comfort, A. Art and Social Responsibility. Falcon Press, 1946.
- Klee, P. On Modern Art. Faber and Faber, 1966.
- Lewis, W. The Demon of Progress in the Arts. Henry Regnery Company, 1955.
- Norton, L.(tr) The Journal of Delacroix. Phaidon Press, 1951.
- Rand, A. Atlas Shrugged. Random House, 1957.
- The Romantic Manifesto. New American Library, 1971.
- Read, H. The Philosophy of Modern Art. Faber and Faber, 1964.
- Roethke, H.K. Modern German Painting. Eyre and Spottiswood, 1958.
- Shalm, B. The Shape of Content. Harvard University Press, 1957.

Periodicals

- Artlook. No. 37, December, 1969.
No. 55, June, 1971.
- Lantern. Vol. XXII, No. 2, December, 1972.
Vol. XXIII, No. 4, June, 1974.
Vol. XXIV, No. 2, December, 1974.
- The Studio. Vol. XXXIV, No. 144, March, 1905.

Newspaper Articles

- The Cape Argus. June 22, 1965.

<u>The Cape Argus.</u>	May 24, 1968.
<u>The Cape Times.</u>	June 29, 1965.
<u>The Daily Dispatch.</u>	March 26, 1966.
	September 4, 1976.
<u>Die Vaderland.</u>	November 11, 1964.
<u>The Evening Post.</u>	April 9, 1965.
	April 13, 1965.
<u>The Eastern Province Herald.</u>	April 8, 1965.
	September 5, 1968.
	August 13, 1976.
<u>The Rand Daily Mail.</u>	November 11, 1964.
<u>The Sunday Express.</u>	May 30, 1971.

Other Sources

Catalogues of Grahamstown Group Exhibitions. 1964 - 1975.

Transcriptions of S.A.B.C. Broadcasts: "Arts Review",
 "The Local Scene",
 April 24, 1965
 March 27, 1966.

Prof. B. Bradshaw. Philosophy of Art Lectures. Rhodes
 University. 1974, 1975, 1976.