DESCRIPTION BY NEGATION: HISTORY OF A THOUGHT-PATTERN IN ANCIENT ACCOUNTS OF BLISSFUL LIFE (*)

(i)

"It is in the nature of man to sympathise only with those things which relate to him, which touch him at some point, such as misfortune, for example. Heaven, where boundless felicity reigns, is too far above the human condition for the soul to be strongly affected by the bliss of the elect: one can interest oneself but little in beings who are perfectly happy. This is why poets have succeeded better in the description of hells; at least humanity is there, and the torments of the guilty remind us of the miseries of our life."

François René de Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity*

The foregoing remarks are true and just, but ancient poets and (under their inspiration) several Christian poets devised a different way of

(*) I apologise for the vagueness of these terms, but it is difficult to hit upon a satisfactory expression that will adequately convey the common ground (in point of content and style) shared by such superficially dissimilar concepts as the Elysian Fields, the Garden of Eden, or the Golden Age. A few attempts at orientation: for a general bibliography of the whole concept of Paradise (embracing Elysium, the Islands of the Blessed and Eden) see T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament*, London 1969, 24 ff., 332 ff., and Claus Westermann's commentary on *Genesis 1-11* (English translation, London 1984, 208 f.). On Eden in particular see Gaster as cited asbove and also Westermann 209 ff. On Elysium and the Isles of the Blessed cf. A. T. Edwards, "GRBS" 26, 1985, 215 ff. (with bibliography in p. 215 n. 1) and pp. 174 ff. of the book by Bodo Gatz mentioned below in connection with the Golden Age. The phrase *locus amoenus* as a technical term seems to derive from (or at any rate to have been definitively popularised by) Ernst Curtius in his epoch-making book on Latin literature'influence upon the Middle Ages (*Europäischer Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter*, 1961[3], 197 ff., esp. 202 ff. ~ *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*). For a recent treatment of the whole general topic see H. Thesleff, *Man and* locus amoenus *in early Greek poetry*, ap. *Gnomosyne: menschliches Denken und Handeln in der frühgr. Lit. (Festschrift für W. Marg zum 70. Geburtstag)*, Munich 1981, 31 ff. with handy bibliography in p. 31 n. 2. On the Golden Age Bodo Gatz, *Weltalter, goldene Zeit und sinnverwandte Vorstellungen*, 'Spudasmata' 16 (1967) is helpful. Another useful book in this context is *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* by A. O. Lovejoy and G. Boas (1935: repr. 1965) which though approaching a different topic from a different angle assembles much material that I have found relevant. For some salutary scepticism concerning the presuppositions of this famous book see Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1964) 360 f. and 370. All these authors are cited by name alone below.

responding to the difficulties which Chateaubriand so well analyses. The first description in literature of the Elysian Fields is to be found in Homer's *Odyssey* 4.565 ff., where Menelaus reports to Telemachus the words of Proteus, Old Man of the Sea. According to the marine seer, Menelaus, as husband of Helen of Troy and therefore son-in-law of Zeus, is destined to be transported to the Elysian Fields:

τῇ περ ῥηΐστη βιοτὴ πέλει ἀνθρώποισιν·
οὐ νιφετός, οὔτ' ἄρ χειμὼν πολὺς οὔτε ποτ' ὄμβρος,
ἀλλ' αἰεὶ ζεφύροιο λιγὺ πνείοντος ἀήτας
'Ωκεανὸς ἀνίησιν ἀναψύχειν ἀνθρώπους.

This passage has proved exceedingly influential upon other accounts of the Afterlife (1); and yet (perhaps because of its very familiarity) several features of it have not received the attention they deserve. Holger Thesleff (2) has complained that "the description is extremely laconic (except for the weather conditions)" and another critic refers to "der hier mit seinen Worten so sparsame Dichter" (3). Indeed the negative features (no snow, no storm, no rain) remain in the mind at least as much as the positive detail of the cooling zephyr. A recent article by B. Lincoln, *On the Imagery of Paradise* (4), compares the description of the ideal after-life in *Od.* 4.561 ff. with those in Hesiod's *Works and Days* 167 ff. and Pindar *Olympian* 2.61 ff.; observes that in all three passages "paradise is described almost entirely in terms of a negative sort"; and proceeds to cite analogously negative accounts from "the literature of other Indo-European peoples", especially Celtic, Iranian, and Indian (from the *Ṛg-Veda* and *Mahabharata* in particular). His final con-clusion (5) is that the evidence adduced allows us to infer a "Proto-Indo-European poetic description of paradise: a realm without heat or cold, snow or rain (6) ... a realm in which appear none of those things which make this world unpleasant... [Paradise] is so totally unlike our own mortal sphere that our very language and normal set of images is thoroughly inadequate for the task of describing it". Lincoln ends by characterising this as a poet's

(1) See, for instance, Curtius (p. 192 ~ p. 185): "mit Homer beginnt die abendländische Verklärung der Welt"; Puhvel terms it "a sequence... providing a *topos* for all subsequent literature" ("Zeitschr. für vergl. Sprachforsch." 82, 1968, 68 = *Analecta Indoeuropaea* p. 214).

(2) P. 34. Cf. Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* F 161.1 ("Perpetual summer in otherworld. No storms").

(3) R. Spieker, "Hermes" 97, 1969, 143.

(4) "Ingogermanische Forschungen" 85, 1980, 151 ff.

(5) Sup. cit. [n. 14] p. 163 f. But cf. the negative description of Paradise in the Sumerian myth of Enki and Ninhursag (*ANET*^{3} p. 38); etc.

(6) I omit from Lincoln's list other negative concepts (such as freedom from pain) which do not concern us here.

"charming and profound reticence, daring not to speak of that which he knows not, venturing only to say that it is unlike anything that he knows"(7).

This is an important perception, though (as we shall see) it can be extended to a large number of other attempts to convey a picture of the Afterlife, and to concepts other than paradise as strictly defined. It should also be stressed that descriptions like that in *Od.* 4.565 ff. are stylistically next-of-kin to the rhetorical device whereby a series of negative statements lead up to and emphasise by contrast a number of positive details that follow. Classical scholars have applied the term "priamel" to this and other, closely related, stylistic devices, and this rhetorical mode of emphasis has received detailed investigation in recent times (8). One could further quote (9) a number of descriptions of wonderful or miraculous persons or things in Greek literature which exhibit precisely the same pattern of emphasis (a longish series of negative statements leading up to a climactic statement usually introduced by ἀλλά, more rarely by some other connective particle or by asyndeton). For instance, the description of the two rocks in the vicinity of Scylla and Charybdis at *Od.* 12.73 ff.:

οἱ δὲ δύω σκόπελοι ὁ μὲν οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἱκάνει

(7) Compare the remarks of Spieker [sup. cit. n. 3] 140 ff. on *Od.* 6.42 ff.: "Dem Sitz der Götter eignet nichts und kann nicht eignen, was zur Natur des reinen βροτός gehört" (p. 143).

(8) See, for instance, W. H. Race, *The Priamel from Homer to Boethius*, "Mnemosyne" Supplement 74, Leiden 1982, and (on the particular issue of the οὐκ... ἀλλά priamel) U. Schmid, *Die Priamel der Werte im Griechische von Homer bis Paulus*, Wiesbaden 1964, 54. The similarity between *Od.* 4.565 ff. and a priamel is observed by, among others, R. Spieker [sup. cit. n. 3] 138 ff. and W. Elliger, *Die Darstellung der Landschaft in der gr. Dichtung*, Berlin 1975, 114.

(9) Winfried Bühler's commentary on Moschus' *Europa* 80 ff. ("Hermes" Einzelschr. 13, Wiesbaden 1960, 126) cites a selection of such passages. He rightly observes (p. 126 n. 2) that "eine Häufung von Negationen kennt schon Homer bei der Schilderung wunderbarer Personen oder Dinge" and mentions *Od.* 5.478 ff., 6.43 ff., 12.75 ff. To his examples one might add Soph. *Tr.* 144 ff., the metaphorical description of the blissful life of young girls before they marry:

τὸ γὰρ νεάζον ἐν τοιοῖσδε βόσκεται
χώροισιν αὐτοῦ, καί νιν οὐ θάλπος θεοῦ
οὐδ' ὄμβρος οὐδὲ πνευμάτων οὐδὲν κλονεῖ,
ἀλλ' ἡδοναῖς ἄμοχθον ἐξαίρει βίον
ἐς τοῦθ', ἕως τις ἀντὶ παρθένου γυνὴ
κληθῇ κτλ.

Like the description of Elysium in *Od.* 4 (see next note) this passage has been denounced as an interpolation (R. Dawe, *Studies on the Text of Sophocles*, Leiden 1978, 80 f.), a view which has rightly met with total rejection.

ὀξείῃ κορυφῇ, νεφέλη δέ μιν ἀμφιβέβηκε
κυανέη· τὸ μὲν **οὔ** ποτ' ἐρωεῖ, **οὐδέ** ποτ' αἴθρη
κείνου ἔχει κορυφὴν **οὔτ'** ἐν θέρει, **οὔτ'** ἐν ὀπώρῃ·
οὐδέ κεν ἀμβαίη βροτὸς ἀνήρ, οὐδ' ἐπιβαίη,
οὐδ' εἴ οἱ χεῖρές γε ἐείκοσι καὶ πόδες εἶεν·
πέτρη γὰρ λίς ἐστι, περιξέστῃ ἐϊκυῖα.

Let us, however, first consider the other descriptions of Paradise mentioned by Lincoln. We begin with the *Odyssey*'s account of Olympus (6.43 ff.):

οὔτ' ἀνέμοισι τινάσσεται **οὔτε** ποτ' ὄμβρῳ
δεύεται **οὔτε** χιὼν ἐπιπίλναται, ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἴθρη
πέπταται **ἀννέφελος**, λευκὴ δ' ἐπιδέδρομεν αἴγλη.

The correspondences between this and *Od.* 4.565 ff. in terms of style and content are inescapable (10), both passages expressing their point largely in terms of the absence of features that make our own existence so tiresome and grim.

Hesiod's *Work and Days*, with its description of the heroes who inhabit the Isles of the Blessed, perhaps fits less well here than Lincoln imagines: καὶ τοὶ μὲν ναίουσιν **ἀκηδέα** θυμὸν ἔχοντες the poet says of his ὄλβιοι ἥρωες and their fortunate existence (for a more strikingly negative Hesiodic account of the Golden Age see below, p. 00). The picture of life after death in Pindar *Ol.* 2.61 ff. fits considerably better (11). This ode too touches on the Isles of the Blessed but first the non-heroically virtuous are mentioned:

ἴσαις δὲ νύκτεσσιν αἰεί,
ἴσαις δ' ἐν ἀμέραις
ἄλιον ἔχοντες, **ἀπονέστερον**
ἐσλοὶ δέκονται βίοτον, **οὐ** χθόνα τα-
ράσσοντες ἐν χερὸς ἀκμᾷ
οὐδὲ πόντιον ὕδωρ
κενεὰν παρὰ δίαιταν, **ἀλ-**
λὰ παρὰ μὲν τιμίοις
θεῶν οἵτινες ἔχαιρον εὐορκίαις
ἄδακρυν νέμονται
αἰῶνα κτλ.

(10) The similarities (as well as the differences) between the two passages are assessed by Elliger [sup. cit. n. 8] 115 f.; they have sometimes been interpreted in the light of the notion that *Od.* 4.565 ff. is an interpolation based on *Od.* 6.42 ff.: against this notion see Elliger p. 115 n. 42 (cf. Spieker [sup. cit. n. 3] 136 ff. esp. 143).

(11) For a recent summary and survey of the numerous problems associated with this passage see H. Lloyd-Jones ap. *Pindare*, 'Entretiens Hardt' 31, Genève 1985, 245 ff.

Perhaps we must therefore reconsider the thesis advanced by Friedrich Solmsen in his article on Pindar's description of the Afterlife in this poem (12). According to Solmsen, "after mentioning the sun, all that Pindar says [of the Afterlife enjoyed by the ordinary virtuous (the ἐσθλοί)] is cast in the form of negative statements" in contrast with the much more positively described existence of the special heroes who dwell on the Isles of the Blessed. Solmsen concludes that "Pindar has heightened the final condition" of these latter and "toned down the earlier" to emphasise the contrast. But given the idiomatic nature of such negative descriptions of the Afterlife, Pindar's originality may have been confined to "heightening the final condition" of the heroes on the Isles of the Blessed.

Remaining with the same topic but changing from a Greek poet to a Latin we may extend our investigation beyond the trio of passages to which Lincoln confined his attention. Horace's description of the Isles of the Blessed in *Epode* 16 is a good place to start (13). Some miraculous features couched in positive terms are succeeded by a large number of negative. We begin at vv. 49 ff.:

illic iniussae veniunt ad mulctra capellae,
refertque tenta grex amicus ubera,
***nec** vespertinus circumgemit ursus ovile,*
***neque** intumescit alta viperis humus.*
*pluraque felices mirabimur: ut **neque** largis*
aquosus Eurus arva radat imbribus,
*pinguia **nec** siccis urantur semina glaebis,*
utrumque rege temperante caelitum.
nulla nocent pecori contagia, nullius astri
gregem aestuosa torret impotentia.
***non** huc Argoo contendit remige pinus,*
***neque** impudica Colchis intulit pedem;*
***non** huc Sidonii torsuerunt cornua nautae*
*laboriosa **nec** cohors Ulixei.*

Here the accumulation of negatives is all the more striking because Horace interposes the comment *pluraque felices mirabimur* (v. 52) for all the world as if he were producing a list of positive wonders to elicit our admiration.

At this point we may profitably pause to consider the implications of what has been said so far. It is not always easy to decide in such cases whether we are dealing with merely literary borrowings or whether the

(12) "Hermes" 96, 1968, 503 f. = *Kl. Schr.* 3.28 f.

(13) For a recent discussion of this poem and its sources see R. G. M. Nisbet, ap. *Poetry and Politics in the Age of Augustus* edd. A. J. Woodman and D. A. West, Cambridge 1984, 2 ff.

charac-terisation of various ideas about the Afterlife in largely negative terms as something essentially the reverse of the present life derives from a deep-seated and constant attitude on the part of humanity. The latter interpretation would seen to be suggested by, for instance, the ready resort of Greek literature to adjectives in privative ἀ- (14) to depict a "Sakrallandschaft": for instance Soph. *Tr.* 200 τὸν Οἴτης ἄτομον... λειμῶν' or *O.C.* 39 (ὁ χῶρος) ... ἄθικτος οὐδ' οἰκητός. Nor is the feature under discussion confined to Greek or Roman modes of thought: consider the familiar description of the New World in *Revelation* 21.4 ff.: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be *no* more death, *neither* sorrow; *nor* crying, *neither* shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away". Charles I when confronted with his own death conceived his impending release in strikingly similar terms (15): "I go from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown, where no disturbance can be, none whatever".

That so many ancient accounts of a life after death are cast in the negative form is, then, an extremely revealing and illuminating fact. And we are not dealing with coincidence; this is not the only way such subjects can be treated. As a sort of check we may cite a counter-example in the description of the island of Syrie given by Eumaeus the swine-herd as part of his life-story (*Od.* 15.405 ff.):

> οὐ τι περιπληθὴς λίην τόσον, ἀλλ' ἀγαθὴ μέν,
> εὔβοτος, εὔμηλος, οἰνοπληθής, πολύπυρος.
> πείνη δ' οὔ ποτε δῆμον ἐσέρχεται, οὐδέ τις ἄλλη
> νοῦσος ἐπὶ στυγερὴ πέλεται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν.

This is altogether more positive and inventive. But in fact such passages form the exception not the rule.

The account of the Garden of Eden in *Genesis* 2.8-3.20 is "notoriously poor in descriptive details" (16). This fact is not merely significant in its own right. It also helps to explain why the treatment of Eden or Paradise in much Christian poetry is no less negative than pagan literature's depiction of analogous topics. When Avitus came to describe Eden in his epic on Old Testament themes he subtly distributed the negative statements (in the manner of Vergil's *Fourth Eclogue*: see below, p. 00) so that the rhetorical impact of a string of negatives followed by positives is disrupted and dissipated. But the underlying pattern is still discernible:

> *turbidus auster abest semperque sub aere sudo*

(14) See Elliger [sup. cit. n. 8] p. 241 n. 68.
(15) See John Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (1659).
(16) Thesleff p. 38 n. 35.

*nubila **diffugiunt** iugi **cessura** sereno.*
*nec poscit natura loci quos **non** habet imbres,*
sed contenta suo dotantur germina rore.
...
*lilia perlucent **nullo** flaccentia sole*
nec tactus violat violas roseumque ruborem
servans perpetuo suffundit gratia vultu.
*sic cum **desit** hiems **nec** torrida ferveat aestas...*

Several centuries later the *Anticlaudianus* of Alan of Lille more directly expresses the pattern of negative description in its depiction of the bountiful garden of Lady Nature:

est locus a nostro secretus climate tractu
longo, nostrorum ridens fermenta locorum.
...
***non** ibi nascentis exspirat gratia floris,*
*nascendo moriens: **neque** enim rosa mane puella*
*vespere languet anus; **sed** vultu semper eodem*
gaudens, aeterni iuvenescit munere veris.
*hunc florem **non** urit hiems, **non** decoquit aestas:*
***non** ibi bacchantis Boreae furit ira,*
*fulminat aura Noti, **nec** spicula grandinis instant.*

Peter Damiani on the joys of Paradise echoes this pattern:

*hiems horrens, aestus torrens illic **numquam** saeviunt,*
flos perpetuus rosarum ver agit perpetuum...

and further back in time Dracontius' description (in his *De laudibus Dei*) of the Earthly Paradise is recognisably similar:

est locus interea diffundens quattuor amnes
...
*... **non** solis anheli*
*flammatur radiis, quatitur **nec** flatibus ille,*
nec coniuratis furit illic turbo procellis;
***non** glacies destricta domat, **non** grandinis ictus*
*verberat **aut** gelidis canescunt prata pruinis.*
*sunt ibi **sed** placidi flatus...*

It would be possible to pursue this theme through many more bye-ways. But we may prefer to close the first part of this study with a further reminder of the appeal of the negative conception of Paradise to Christian poets by quoting Gerard Manley Hopkins' early poem *Heaven-Haven* (composed c. 1865 and subtitled *A nun takes the veil*):

I have desired to go
*Where springs **not** fail;*

To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
Where no storms come;
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb
And out of the swing of the sea. (17)

(ii)

If scholars are right to assume "that the idea of an earthly Golden Age is merely the secularisation of an earlier concept of the blessed abode of the gods and at the same time the first preformation of later utopian thought" (18), then we shall have at least one explanation of the analogies we are about to consider.

For Greek literature's earliest account of the Golden Age (19) exhibits very similar features to those considered above: Hesiod *Works and Days* 111 ff.:

οἱ μὲν ἐπὶ Κρόνου ἦσαν, (20) ὅτ' οὐρανῷ ἐμβασίλευεν·
ὥστε θεοὶ δ' ἔζωον **ἀκηδέα** θυμὸν ἔχοντες
νόσφιν ἄτερ τε πόνων καὶ ὀϊζύος· **οὐδέ** τι δειλὸν
γῆρας ἐπῆν, αἰεὶ δὲ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὁμοῖοι
τέρποντ' ἐν θαλίῃσι **κακῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἁπάντων**.

Note in particular the phrase ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες which (as we saw above, p. 00) Hesiod also uses of heroes who dwell in the Isles of the Blessed. The negative characteristics of the Hesiodic description are observed by Bodo Gatz in his useful analysis of Golden Age motifs, and

(17) Students of Hopkins (e.g. P. L. Mariani, *A Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, London 1970, 11) observe the obvious influence of Tennison's famous description of Avalon (*Idylls of the King*) upon these lines ("Where falls *not* hail, *or* rain, *or* any snow, I *Nor* ever wind blows loudly" etc.) but not the passages here cited.

(18) Ludwig Edelstein's summary (*The Idea of Progress in Classical Antiquity*, London 1967, p. 9 n. 17) of the findings of A. Doren, *Wunschräume und Wunschzeiten*, "Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg" 1924/5, Leipzig 1927, 163.

(19) The Golden Age's absence from Homer is noted by several scholars (see e.g. Edelstein [sup. cit. n. 18] p. 7 n. 13). Apart from Homer's well-known aversion to motifs that smack of folk-lore, the picture of men in a state of advanced felicity resembling that of the gods would fatally blur that crucial distinction between human and divine which runs throughout *Iliad* and (to a lesser extent) *Odyssey* (on which see e.g. J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, Oxford 1980, *passim*).

(20) For the way in which "the picture of a happy existence remote from ordinary life... was normally known in antiquity before the Roman Empire as the age of Cronus or Saturn" see Baldry, "CQ" 2, 1952, 84 ff.

Gatz's *Conspectus Locorum* (21) also has (and very rightly) under the section *Loci Communes* a subsection headed '*absentia*' which will direct us to treatments of the Golden Age which harp upon the absence of ships, war, possessions, illnesses and slaves. But in fact the technique of negative description is far more commonly resorted to than Gatz's treatment would suggest. We encounter a very early instance of the adaptation of Golden Age motifs in a fragment from Empedocles' *Καθαρμοί* (fr. 128 DK = fr. 23 Zuntz) (22):

οὐδέ τις ἦν κείνοισιν Ἄρης θεὸς **οὐδὲ** Κυδοιμός
οὐδὲ Ζεὺς βασιλεὺς **οὐδὲ** Κρόνος **οὐδὲ** Ποσειδῶν,
ἀλλὰ Κύπρις βασίλεια ...
...
ταύρων δ' ἀκρήτοισι φόνοις **οὐ** δεύετο βωμός.

A later instance is to be found at Aratus' *Phaenomena* 108 ff.:

οὔπω λευγαλέου τότε νείκεος ἠπίσταντο
οὐδὲ διακρίσιος πολυμεμφέος **οὐδὲ** κυδοιμοῦ,
αὔτως δ' ἔζωον· χαλεπὴ δ' ἀπέκειτο θάλασσα,
καὶ βίον **οὔπω** νῆες ἀπόπροθεν ἠγίνεσκον,
ἀλλὰ βόες καὶ ἄροτρα καὶ αὐτή, πότνια λαῶν,
μυρία πάντα παρεῖχε Δίκη, δώτειρα δικαίων.

Latin poets likewise cast their descriptions of analogous periods within this predominantly negative framework. Thus Vergil's account of Saturn's Golden Age (*Aen.* 8.314 ff.) begins with a reference to men born of trees (316 ff.):

quis neque mos neque cultus erat, nec iungere tauros
aut componere opes norant aut parcere parto,
sed rami atque asper victu venatus alebat.

Compare his earlier reference at *Georg.* 2.539 f.:

necdum etiam audierant inflari classica, necdum
impositos duris crepitare incudibus ensis.

Tibullus' account of the Golden Age of Saturn is an even more extreme example of the style (1.3.35 ff.) (23):

quam bene Saturno vivebant rege, priusquam

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(21) P. 229.

(22) For a general discussion of this fragment see e.g. W. K. C. Guthrie, *In the Beginning*, London 1957, 73; Zuntz, *Persephone*, Oxford 1971, 259 f.

(23) Cf. Marianne Wifstrand Schiebe, *Das ideale Dasein bei Tibull und die Goldzeitkonzeption Vergils*, 'Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis: Studia Latina Upsaliensia' 13, Uppsala 1981, for a comparison of this and other passages of Tibullus with analogous themes in Latin poetry: pp. 48 ff. deal with *Aen.* 8.316 ff., pp. 79 and 86 ff. with Tib. 1.3.

tellus in longas est patefacta vias!
nondum caeruleas pinus contempserat undas,
effusum ventis praebueratque sinum,
nec vagus ignotis repentes compendia terris
presserat externa navita merce ratem.
illo non validus subiit iuga tempore taurus
non domito frenos ore momordit equus,
non domus ulla fores habuit, non fixus in agris
qui regeret certis finibus arva, lapis.
ipsae mella dabant quercus, ultroque ferebant
obvia securis ubera lactis oves.
non acies, non ira fuit, non bella, nec ensem
immiti saevus duxerat arte faber.

Cf. Tib. 1.10.7 ff.:

divitis hoc vitium est auri, nec bella fuerunt,
. . .
non arces, non vallus erat, somnumque petebat
securus varias dux gregis inter oves.

Note too Ovid's description of the way of the world *cum regna senex caeli Saturnus haberet* (*Amores* 3.8.39 ff.):

... curvo sine vomere fruges
pomaque, et in quercu mella reperta cava.
nec valido quisquam terras scindebat aratro,
signabat nullo limite mensor humum,
non freta demisso verrebant eruta remo...

and his more elaborate treatment of the same theme in *Metamorph.* 1.89 ff.:

aurea prima satast aetas, quae vindice nullo,
sponte sua, sine lege, fidem rectumque colebat.
poena metusque aberant, nec verba minantia fixo
aere legebantur, nec supplex turba timebat
iudicis ora sui, sed erant sine vindice tuti.
nondum caesa suis, peregrinum ut viseret orbem,
montibus in liquidas pinus descenderat undas,
nullaque mortales praeter sua, litora norant.
nondum praecipites cingebant oppida fossae;
non tuba directi, non aeris cornua flexi,
non galeae, non ensis erat: sine militis usu
mollia securae peragebant otia gentes.
ipsa quoque immunis rastroque intacta nec ullis
saucia vomeribus per se dabat omnia tellus:
contentique cibis nullo cogente creatis

arbuteos fetus montanaque fraga legebant...

Scholars often compare with these lines the following verses from the *Octavia* attributed to Seneca (397 ff.):

tunc illa virgo, numinis magni dea,
Iustitia, caelo missa cum sancta Fide
terris regebat mitis humanum genus.
non bella norant, non tubae fremitus truces,
non arma gentes, cingere assuerant suas
muris nec urbes...

See too the real Seneca's *Medea* 309 ff., and Statius *Theb.* 4.278 f.

Maximus of Tyre, *Or.* 36.1 (p. 414 Hobein) has a very similar account: δοκοῦσιν δέ μοι καὶ οἱ ποιηταὶ ἐγγύτατα εἶναι τῷ ἡμετέρῳ τούτῳ μύθῳ, ὑπὸ Κρόνῳ θεῶν βασιλεῖ τοιοῦτόν τινα αἰνιττόμενον βίον, **ἀπόλεμον, ἀσίδηρον, ἀφύλακτον,** εἰρηνικόν, **ἀπερι**μάχητον, ὑγεινόν, **ἀνενδεᾶ**· καὶ τὸ χρυσοῦν γένος τοῦτο ὡς ἔοικεν, ὁ Ἡσίοδος καλεῖ, νεανιευόμενος πρὸς ἡμᾶς.

Likewise when the theme is adapted slightly so that the subject is the Golden Age to come or already at hand (24). Echoing Hesiod's *Works and Days* a Sibylline Oracle (25) prophesies ἀγήραοι ἤματα πάντα | ἔσσονται **νόσφιν** νούσων κρυερῶν μαλεράων. Another expresses its vision of the future in the following terms (7.146 ff. Geffcken = *OTP* 1.413):

οὐκέτι τις κόψει βαθὺν αὔλακα γυρῷ ἀρότρῳ
οὐ βόες ἰθυντῆρα κάτω βάψουσι σίδηρον
κλήματα δ' **οὐκ** ἔσται **οὐδὲ** στάχυς· **ἀλλ'** ἅμα πάντες
μάννην τὴν δροσερὴν λευκοῖσιν ὀδοῦσι φάγονται.

A further specimen (8.426 ff. = *OTP* 1.427) proclaims the abolition of the seasons (426 οὐκ ἔαρ, οὐ χειμών, οὐτ' ἄρ θέρος, οὐ μετόπωρον) and another besides (14.351 ff. = *OTP* 1.468):

οὐκέτι γὰρ δόλιος χρυσὸς **οὐδ'** ἄργυρος ἔσται,
οὐ κτῆσις γαίης, **οὐ** δουλείη πολύμοχθος.

(24) On "die immanente Goldzeit" see Schiebe [sup. cit. n. 23] 44 ff.

(25) For a useful and up-to-date summary and bibliography of studies on the Sibylline Oracles see J. J. Collins ap. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 ed. J. H. Charlesworth, London 1983, 317 ff. This volume also gives a handy English translation of the relevant texts as edited by Geffcken with skeleton commentary and *loci similes*. With the passages here cited we might compare Shelley's vision of the returned Golden Age, which likewise transpires to be remarkedly negative:

the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless and nationless... (*Prometheus Unbound* 3.3.193 ff.).

ἀλλὰ μίη φιλότης τε καὶ εἷς τρόπος εὔφρονι δήμῳ.

The relationship between this class of oracular literature and the most famous specimen of the genre in Roman literature has long been debated (26). This reference, of course, is to Vergil's *Fourth Eclogue*, and here too the pattern is easily traceable, though instead of the massive simplicity of the effect produced by a series of negatives yielding to a succession of positive statements, we find a more complex and allusive interweaving of negative and positive (37 ff.):

hinc ubi iam firmata virum te fecerit aetas,
cedet et ipse mari vector, nec nautica pinus
mutabit merces: omnis feret omnia tellus.
***non** rastros patietur humus, **non** vinea falcem;*
robustus quoque iam tauris iuga solvet arator;
***nec** varios discet mentiri lana colores,*
*ipse **sed** in pratis aries iam suave rubenti*
murice, iam croceo mutabit vellera luto...

This pattern is reproduced in the derivative account of the Golden Age which concludes Book One of Claudian's *In Rufinum* (380 ff.):

*tum tellus communis erit, tum limite **nullo***
*discernetur ager, **nec** vomere sulcus obunco*
findetur: subitis messor gaudebit aristis.
rorabunt querceta favis; stagnantia passim
*vina fluent oleique lacus; **nec** murice tinctis*
*velleribus quaeretur honos, **sed** sponte rubebunt*
attonito pastore greges pontumque per omnem
ridebunt virides gemmis nascentibus algae.

It is also to be observed in such attempts to revive the bucolic genre as Calpurnius, *Eclogue* 1.60 ff.:

***nulla** catenati feralis pompa senatus*
*carnificum lassabit opus, **nec** carcere pleno*
infelix raros numerabit curia patres.
plena quies aderit...
*iam **nec** adumbrati faciem mercatus honoris,*
***nec** vacuos tacitus fasces et inane tribunal*
*accipiet consul, **sed** legibus omne reductis*
ius aderit...

and in *Anth. Lat.* 726.17 ff.:

***nec** gladio metimus **nec** clausis oppida muris*
*bella tacenda parant, **nullo** iam noxia partu*

(26) See e.g. R. G. M. Nisbet, "BICS" 25, 1978, 59 ff.

femina quaecumque est hostem parit...

It is highly significant that when Catullus wishes to import a flavour of the Golden Age into his account of how the countryside is deserted while its inhabitants flock ti the marriage of Peleus and Thetis (64.37 ff.) he uses similar means (27):

*rura colit **nemo**, mollescunt colla iuvencis,*
__non__ humilis curvis purgatur vinea rastris,
__non__ glebam prono convellit vomere taurus,
__non__ falx attenuat frondator arboris umbram.

When scholars such as Bramble (28) argue that "Catullus' negative method of procedure has allowed room for an ambiguity" and observe that "the insistent negatives" fail to "lead up to the expected idyllic conclusion", some modification may again be required in the light of the traditional framework within which the Golden Age was often described.

A similar point can be made about the *laudes Italiae* in Vergil's *Second Georgic* 140 ff. (29):

haec loca __non__ tauri spirantes naribus ignem
invertere satis immanis dentibus hydri,
__nec__ galeis densisque virum sages horruit hastis;
__sed__ gravidae fruges et Bacchi Massicus umor
implevere...
...
at rabidae tigres __absunt__ et saeva leonum
semina, __nec__ miseros fallunt aconita legentis,
__nec__ rapit immensos orbis per humum __neque__ tanto
squameus in spiram tractu se colligit anguis.

Vergil's passage has long been recognised (30) as the source for the less successful treatment in Propertius 3.22.27 ff.:

at __non__ squamoso labuntur ventre cerastae,
Itala portentis __nec__ furit unda novis;
__non__ hic Andromedae resonant pro matre catenae,
__nec__ tremis Ausonias, Phoebe fugate, dapes,

(27) Commentators are not very helpful (e.g. Kroll ad loc.: "Die Anaphora von *non* ist beliebt", followed by references to Cat. 64.63 ff. and *Ciris* 178 - neither comparison is very enlightening). "A description of the state of the countryside which is, in some ways, reminiscent of treatments of the 'Golden Age'" is recognised by J. C. Bramble, "PCPS" 16, 1970, 38.

(28) Sup. cit. [n. 27] p. 39.

(29) See Schiebe [sup. cit. n. 23] 32 ff.

(30) See, for instance, Gordon Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry*, Oxford 1968, 417 ff.

nec cuiquam absentes arserunt in caput ignes
exitium nato matre movente suo;
Penthea non saevae venantur in arbore Bacchae,
nec solvit Danaas subdita cerva ratis;
cornua nec valuit curvare in paelice Iuno
aut faciem turpi dedecorare bove;
* * *
arboreasque cruces Sinis, et non hospita Grais
saxa, et curvatas in sua fata trabes.

A similar impression is conveyed by the remarkable negative representation of the fortunate life of country dwellers which closes *Georgics 2* (485 ff. and 495 ff.) (31).

The motifs may still be discerned in parodic treatments of these themes. Thus in Juvenal's treatment of the Age of Saturn (*Sat.* 13.42 ff.) where the tone is "clearly ironical" and "uses the technique of discrediting by over-praising" (32):

nulla super nubes convivia caelicolarum
nec puer Iliacus formonsa nec Herculis uxor
ad cyathos, et iam siccato nectare tergens
bracchia Volcanus Liparaea nigra taberna;
prandebat sibi quisque deus, nec turba deorum
talis ut est hodie, contentaque sidera paucis
numinibus miserum urguebant Atlanta minori
pondere; nondum imi sortitus triste profundi
imperium aut Sicula torvos cum coniuge Pluton,
nec rota nec Furiae nec saxum aut volturis atri
poena, sed infernis hilares sine regibus umbrae.

A similar description marks out the happy city in Crates of Thebes, the Cynic philosopher (*Suppl. Hell.* fr. 351):

Πήρη τις πόλις ἐστὶ μέσῳ ἐνὶ οἴνοπι τύφῳ,
καλὴ καὶ πίειρα, περίρρυπος, οὐδὲν ἔχουσα,
εἰς ἣν οὔτε τις εἰσπλεῖ ἀνὴρ μωρὸς παράσιτος,
οὔτε λίχνος πόρνης ἐπαγαλλόμενος πυγῇσιν·
ἀλλὰ θυμὸν καὶ σκόρδα φέρει καὶ σῦκα καὶ ἄρτους κτλ.

Compare besides the humorous idealisation of animal life in Philemon fr. 93 K. (2.507):

ὦ τρισμακάρια πάντα καὶ τρισόλβια

(31) See Schiebe [sup. cit. n. 23] 36 f.

(32) I quote the remarks of E. Courtney in the introduction to his commentary on this poem (London 1980, 537).

τὰ θηρί', οἷς **οὐκ** ἔστι περὶ τούτων λόγος·
οὔτ' εἰς ἔλεγχον **οὐδὲν** αὐτῶν ἔρχεται,
οὔτ' ἄλλο τοιοῦτ' **οὐδέν** ἐστ' αὐτοῖς κακὸν
ἔπακτον, ἢν **δ'** ἂν εἰσενέγκηται φύσιν
ἕκαστον, εὐθὺς καὶ νόμον ταύτην ἔχει.

Even accounts of earliest man which (for whatever reason) deliberately eschew idealisation and have no cause to import any flavouring of the Golden Age, often employ the same sort of framework as we have encountered, so attractive or convenient was this mode of depiction found. Thus in Prometheus' markedly unidealising account of mankind before it enjoyed the benefits of his aid and advice (*PV* 447 ff.):

οἳ πρῶτα μὲν βλέποντες ἔβλεπον μάτην,
κλύοντες οὐκ ἤκουον, ἀλλ' ὀνειράτων
ἀλίγκιοι μορφαῖσι τὸν μακρὸν βίον
ἔφυρον εἰκῇ πάντα, **κοὔτε** πλινθυφεῖς
δόμους προσείλους ἦσαν, **οὐ** ξυλουργίαν,
κατώρυχες **δ'** ἔναιον ὥστ' ἀήσυροι
μύρμηκες ἄντρων ἐν μυχοῖς **ἀνηλίοις**.
ἦν δ' **οὐδὲν** αὐτοῖς **οὔτε** χείματος τέκμαρ
οὔτ' ἀνθεμώδους ἦρος **οὔτε** καρπίμου
θέρους βέβαιον, **ἀλλ' ἄτερ** γνώμης τὸ πᾶν
ἔπρασσον.

Moschion [*Tr G F* 1 (97) F 6 (= Orph. fr. 292 Kern).3 ff.] has a very like account:

ἦν γάρ ποτ' αἰὼν κεῖνος, ἦν ποθ' ἡνίκα
θηρσὶ⟨ν⟩ διαίτας εἶχον ἐμφερεῖς βροτοί...
... **οὐδέπω** γὰρ ἦν
οὔτε στεγήρης οἶκος **οὔτε** λαΐνοις
εὐρεῖα πύργοις ὠχυρωμένη πόλις.
οὐ μὴν ἀρότροις ἀγκύλοις ἐτέμνετο
μέλαινα καρποῦ βῶλος ὀμπνίου τροφός,
οὐδ' ἐργάτης σίδηρος εὐιώτιδος
θάλλοντας οἴνης ὀρχάτους ἐτημέλει,
ἀλλ' ἦν **ἀκύμων** †κωφεύουσα ῥέουσα γῆ.

Compare the similar treatment of the same topic by 'Critias' [*Tr.G.F.* 1 (43) F 19.1 ff.] (33):

ἦν χρόνος ὅτ' ἦν **ἄτακτος** ἀνθρώπων βίος
καὶ θηριώδης ἰσχύος θ' ὑπηρέτης,
ὅτ' **οὐδὲν** ἆθλον **οὔτε** τοῖς ἐσθλοῖσιν ἦν

(33) In fact Euripides: see A. Dihle, "Hermes" 105, 1977, 28 ff.

οὔτ' αὖ κόλασμα τοῖς κακοῖς ἐγίγνετο.

Diodorus Siculus on the life of primitive man (1.8.5) (34) is proof that ancient historians were not immune to this way of writing: τοὺς οὖν πρώτους τῶν ἀνθρώπων **μηδενὸς** τῶν πρὸς βίον χρησίμων εὑρημένου ἐπιπόνως διάγειν, γυμνοὺς μὲν ἐσθῆτος ὄντας, οἰκήσεως δὲ καὶ πυρὸς **ἀήθεις**, τροφῆς δ' ἡμέρου παντελῶς **ἀνεννοήτους**. καὶ γὰρ τὴν συγκομιδὴν τῆς ἀγρίας τροφῆς **ἀγνοοῦντας μηδεμίαν** τῶν καρπῶν εἰς τὰς ἐνδείας ποιεῖσθαι παράθεσιν.

Even Tacitus, when obliged to generalise about the earliest state of mankind, falls back on this device (*Annals* 3.26): *vetustissimi mortalium, **nulla** adhuc mala libidine, **sine** probro, scelere eoque **sine** poena aut coercitionibus agebant. **neque** praemiis opus erat, cum honesta suopte ingenio peterentur; et ubi **nihil** contra morem cuperent, **nihil** per metum vetabantur.* Cf. Dio Chrys. 6.28.

The pattern is again discernible within Lucretius' account of primitive man in *De rerum natura* 5.932 ff.:

nec robustus erat curvi moderator aratri
*quisquam, **nec** scibat ferro molirier arva*
*nec nova defodere in terram virgulta **neque** altis*
arboribus veteres decidere falcibu' ramos.
...
(958 f.) *nec commune bonum poterant spectare **neque** ullis*
*moribus inter se scibant **neque** legibus uti* (35).

(iii)

It is an accepted fact that descriptions of Paradise, the Elysian Fields and the Golden Age share many features with accounts of fabulous lands and peoples with remote and exotic connotations: "Häufig sind es Inseln, wo die paradiesischen Zustände walten. Sie liegen mitunter im Westmeer und unterschneiden sich von den Inseln der Seligen nur durch das Fehlen des Namens und des metaphysischen Bezuges". The scholar who puts the point thus (36) also rightly observes that it is with the *Odyssey*'s ethnographical

(34) For a general discussion of this section of Diodorus' history see A. Burton's commentary ad loc. (Leiden 1972) and W. Spoerri, *Späthellenistische Berichte über Welt, Kultur und Götter*, Basel 1959, 132 ff.

(35) On the question of Golden Age elements within Lucretius' history of early mankind see e.g. Dodds, *The Ancient Concept of Progress and Other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief*, Oxford 1973, 20.

(36) Gatz 189 f. For recent studies of the concept of Utopia (with bibliography) see J. Holstun, *A Rational Millennium: Puritan Utopias of Seventeenth Century England and America*, Oxford 1987, 317.

excurses on the Libyans (4.86 ff.), the Phaeacians (7.114 ff.), and the Cyclopes (9.108 ff.) that we encounter "die ersten utopischen Reiseberichte der Weltliteratur".

Consider the first of the passages mentioned (86 ff.):

τρὶς γὰρ τίκτει μῆλα τελεσφόρον εἰς ἐνιαυτόν·
ἔνθα μὲν **οὔτε** ἄναξ ἐπιδευὴς **οὔτε** τι ποιμὴν
τυροῦ καὶ κρειῶν **οὐδὲ** γλυκεροῖο γάλακτος,
ἀλλ' αἰεὶ παρέχουσιν ἐπηετανὸν γάλα θῆσθαι.

Or recall the description of the garden of Alcinous king of the Phaeacians in *Od.* 7.114 ff. which gives a list of trees and then proceeds (117 ff.):

τάων **οὔ** ποτε καρπὸς ἀπόλλυται **οὐδ'** ἀπολείπει
χείματος **οὐδὲ** θέρευς, ἐπετήσιος· **ἀλλὰ** μάλ' αἰεί
ζεφυρίη πνείουσα τὰ μὲν φύει, ἄλλα δὲ πέσσει.

Once more the technique of description by negation is at work. All the familiar characteristics are present again in Odysseus' description (37) of the land of the Cyclopes (*Od.* 9.108 f.):

οὔτε φυτεύουσιν χερσὶν φυτὸν **οὔτ'** ἀρόωσιν,
ἀλλὰ τά γ' **ἄσπαρτα** καὶ **ἀνήροτα** πάντα φύονται (38).

Aeschylus' description of the Gabioi, who "were characterised by a righteousness and kindness to strangers which won them a spontaneous crop from earth, i.e. they lived in a technological state of nature like the Golden Race" (39) (*Tr G F* 3 F 196 Radt):

ἔπειτα δ' ἥξεις δῆμον ἐνδικώτατον
⟨ x – ⟩ ἀπάντων καὶ φιλοξενώτατον,
Γαβίους, ἵν' **οὔτ'** ἄροτρον **οὔτε** γατόμος
τέμνει δίκελλ' ἄρουραν, **ἀλλ'** αὐτόσποροι
γύαι φέρουσι βίοτον ἄφθονον βροτοῖς.

Traces of the same approach are detectable in certain authors' description of actual (though remote) tribes. So, for instance, Vergil introduces his account of the Scythians in the following manner (*Georgics* 3.352 ff.):

*illic clausa tenent stabulis armenta, **neque** ullae*
*aut herbae campo apparent **aut** arbore frondes;*

(37) "The life of these monsters is undeservedly like life in the Hesiodic Golden Age – that is, it is a technological, juristic, and economic state of nature": Lovejoy and Boas 303. G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer*, Cambridge 1962, 236 refers to "the golden-age/noble-savage" motif here, a point he expands in *Myth: its Meaning and Function in Ancient and Other Cultures*, Cambridge 1971, 164 ff. without reference to Lovejoy and Boas. On the Cyclopes and the Golden Age see further e.g. W. K. C. Guthrie, *In the Beginning*, London 1957, 81.

(38) Cf. Lovejoy and Boas 303.

(39) Lovejoy and Boas 315.

sed iacet aggeribus niveis informis et alto
terra gelu late septemque adsurgit in ulnas.
semper hiems, semper spirantes frigora Cauri.
tum sol pallentis ***haud umquam*** *discutit umbras,*
nec cum *invectus equis altum petit aethera,* ***nec cum***
praecipitem Oceani rubro lavit aequore currum.

Here, admittedly, there is a special motive behind the device since Vergil is purposely contrasting the climes of lands like Scythia with that of Italy (40). But consider Philo on the Essenes (*Quod omnis probus* 77 ff.): μόνοι γὰρ ἐξ ἁπάντων σχεδὸν ἀνθρώπων **ἀχρήματοι** καὶ **ἀκτήμονες** γεγονότες ἐπιτηδεύσει τὸ πλέον ἢ ἐνδείᾳ εὐτυχίας πλουσιώτατοι νομίζονται, τὴν ὀλιγοδεΐαν καὶ εὐκολίαν, ὅπερ ἐστί, κρίνοντες περιουσίαν. βελῶν ἢ ἀκόντων ἢ ξιφιδίων ἢ κράνους ἢ θώρακος ἢ ἀσπίδος **οὐδένα** παρ' αὐτοῖς ἂν εὕροις δημιουργὸν **οὐδὲ** συνόλως ὁπλοποιὸν ἢ μηχανοποιὸν ἤ τι τῶν κατὰ πόλεμον ἐπιτηδεύοντα· **ἀλλ' οὐδὲ** ὅσα τῶν κατ' εἰρήνην εὐόλισθα εἰς κακίαν· ἐμπορίας γὰρ ἢ καπηλείας ἢ ναυκληρίας **οὐδ'** ὄναρ ἴσασι, τὰς εἰς πλεονεξίαν ἀφορμὰς ἀποδιοπομπούμενοι. δοῦλός τε παρ' αὐτοῖς **οὐδὲ** εἷς ἐστιν, **ἀλλ'** ἐλεύθεροι πάντες ἀνθυπουργοῦντες ἀλλήλοις.

Indeed, Herodotus the "father of history" – and, I would suggest, of anthropology (41) too – is not averse to employing the pattern in question for his accounts of the various customs of various peoples. Here, for instance, is the beginning of his section on Persian modes of sacrifice (1.132.1): θυσίη δὲ τοῖσι Πέρσῃσι περὶ τοὺς εἰρημένους θεοὺς ἥδε κατέστηκε. **οὔτε** βωμοὺς ποιεῦνται **οὔτε** πῦρ ἀνακαίουσι μέλλοντες θύειν· **οὐ** σπονδῇ χρέωνται, **οὐκὶ** αὐλῷ, **οὐ** στέμμασι, **οὐκὶ** οὐλῇσι. τῶν **δὲ** ὡς ἑκάστῳ θύειν θέλῃ, ἐς χῶρον καθαρὸν ἀγαγὼν τὸ κτῆνος κτλ.

And here is the same author on the Egyptians and various of their eating habits (2.37.4 f.): πάσχουσι δὲ καὶ ἀγαθὰ οὐκ ὀλίγα· **οὔτε** τι γὰρ τῶν οἰκηίων τρίβουσι **οὔτε** δαπανῶνται, **ἀλλὰ** καὶ σιτία σφί ἐστι ἱρὰ πεσσόμενα... ἰχθύων δὲ οὔ σφι ἔξεστι πάσασθαι. κυάμους δὲ **οὔτε** τι μάλα σπείρουσι Αἰγύπτιοι ἐν τῇ χώρῃ, τούς τε γενομένους **οὔτε** τρώγουσι **οὔτε** ἕψοντες πατέονται· οἱ δὲ δὴ ἱρέες **οὐδὲ** ὁρέοντες ἀνέχονται, νομίζοντες οὐ καθαρὸν εἶναί μιν ὄσπριον κτλ. (42).

A modern historian of early anthropology paraphrases these passages

(40) Cf. Meuli, *Ges. Schr.* 2.757 n. 2.

(41) Much remains to be done on this topic. Margaret T. Hodgen has some suggestive remarks.

(42) For some positive Herodotean accounts of θωμάσια to act as a check to these negative instances see, for instance, Strasburger, *Studien zur alten Geschichte* 2.883.

thus: "It is not their customs to make and set up statues and temples and altars [as do other peoples]" and "they kill no living creature, nor sow, nor are wont to have houses [as we do]" and draws the perfectly justified conclusion "comparison was employed primarily as an aid to description, or was implicit in the describer's mind... apparently with a conceptual model of some other culture in mind, to which others were referred and found wanting. This negative type of description, implying comparison and the recognition of antithesis, will be met with again and again in the history of ethnological thought, not only among the Greeks but throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance" (43).

One might offer a few instances in conclusion. Montaigne, for example, in his famous essay *On the caniballes* conveyed a picture of the Brazilian tribe in the following manner: "It is a nation... that hathe *no* kinde of traffike, *no* knowledge of letters, ... *no* contracts, *no* successions, ... *no* dividences, *no* occupation but idle; *no* respect of kindred, but common, *no* apparell but naturall, *no* manuring of lands, *no* use of wine, corne, *or* mettle" (Florio's translation).

This passage is generally taken to be the source for Gonzalo's ideal political state as expressed in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (2.1.150 ff.) (44):

I' th' commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things. For *no* kind of traffic
Would I admit, *no* name of magistrate.
Letters should *not* be known. Riches, poverty,
And use of service, *none*. Contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, *none*.
No use of metal, corn, *or* wine, *or* oil.
No occupation: all men idle, all,
And women too, but innocent and pure.
No sovereignty...
...

(43) Margaret T. Hodgen 25 f. For an extremely useful selection of instances of "the negative mode of description" from writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries see the same author 196 ff. (cf. 377 f.). Further examples in e.g. H. C. Porter, *The Inconstant Savage: England and the North American Indian 1500-1660*, London 1979, 15 ff. and 36.

(44) For Montaigne's and Shakespeare's position within their century's range of attitudes to American 'savages' see Porter [sup. cit. n. 43] 145 f. (part of an excellent account of the ways in which Golden Age motifs were consciously applied to the natives of North America in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries). One further instance, from John Winthrop's *General Considerations for the Plantation in New England* quoted by Holstun [sup. cit. n. 35] 107: "This same people ruleth over many lands *without* title *or* property; for they enclose *no* ground *neither* have they cattle to maintain it, *but* remove their dwellings as they have occasion, or as they can prevail against their neighbours".

All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat or endeavour. Treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine
Would I *not* have; *but* nature should bring forth
Of its own kind all foison, all abundance,
To feed my innocent people.

Finally an even more famous passage from a later period of English literature: Hobbes' *Leviathan*: "During the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war... In such condition, there is *no* place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently *no* culture of the earth; *no* navigation; *nor* use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; *no* commodious building; *no* instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; *no* knowledge of the face of the earth; *no* account of time; *no* arts; *no* letters; *no* society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short".

St. John's College, Oxford MALCOLM DAVIES