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THE 'DISPOSITION TO COMBINE'
Thomas Campbell's *The Pleasures
of Hope*, Edmund Burke, and the Power of the Poetic
Imagination to Reconcile and Reform¹

Bernard McKenna



IN A LETTER DATED 12 NOVEMBER 1824, Thomas Campbell writes of his delight that *The Pleasures of Hope* would be translated into French: 'I shall be much flattered to see myself in French Costume.'² Campbell's letter also suggests the possibility that he would be nominated to the French Academy of Letters, expressing gratitude for being offered as 'a candidate for the honour of a seat in the Academy'. The French Revolution had inspired Campbell to write *The Pleasures of Hope* and, therefore, it must, indeed, have been gratifying, nearly twenty-five years after its publication, to be considered for the honour of a seat in the Academy and to have the poem appear in French. The English-language edition of the poem, published by Mundell (the Glasgow University printer) in 1799 was 'continuously in print and readily available throughout the nineteenth century'.³ However, Campbell had received little financial recompense for his work, despite the poem's vigorous sales; he had entered into an agreement with the publisher that granted Mundell all rights to the poem in exchange for Campbell's option to purchase fifty copies of his own work at a trade discount and to receive ten pounds if the poem were reprinted: William St Clair notes that 'Campbell never overcame his sense of having been cheated'.⁴ A French edition, then, would net Campbell some royalties for his poem but, more importantly, it promised that the poem's philosophical impact would make itself felt in the land that had inspired its creation. In indulging such a hope, Campbell is not alone among the Romantics: 'critics [emphasise] the writers' continuing engagement with European political events and [stress] the extent to which they saw themselves as playing an active role in them'.⁵ Campbell, as a consequence, could actively engage in and contribute to the ongoing political debate over the legacy of both the Revolution and of the monarchy in connection with the (re)formation of French political and governmental systems.

In specific terms, *The Pleasures of Hope* represents a type of philosophical reform,⁶ suggesting that, unlike the French Revolution, a gradual transition—rather than an abrupt and violent break from the old to the new—should be the aspiration of those who seek change. Campbell's view then aligns itself with

the 'conservative' rather than the 'radical' view of the Revolution. A partial cause of Campbell's more conservative approach is almost certainly the events following the initial triumph of democracy in 1789. Indeed, many writers, even Coleridge and Wordsworth, early champions of the Revolution, sought 'to realign their political allegiances' after the Reign of Terror,⁷ the outbreak of war with England, and the rise of an imperialist French foreign policy. Expressing such conservative sentiments, Campbell echoes Edmund Burke, the Irish-born parliamentarian and philosopher. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Burke argues that the goal of revolutionary movements ought to be 'to preserve and to reform':

When the useful parts of an old establishment are kept, and what is superadded is to be fitted to what is retained, a vigorous mind, steady, persevering attention, various powers of comparison and combination, and the resources of an understanding fruitful in expedients, are to be exercised; they are to be exercised in a continued conflict with the combined force of opposite vices, with the obstinacy that rejects all improvement, and the levity that is fatigued and disgusted with everything of which it is in possession.⁸

Like Burke, Campbell argues for a balance between the old and the new. *The Pleasures of Hope* preserves and gives respect to those elements of philosophy and poetic expression that are helpful, while, simultaneously, clearly rejecting components of a philosophical and religious heritage that hinder the development of a poetic imagination that can reconcile and reform. In his appreciation of the powers of the poetic imagination, Campbell anticipates the work of more established Romantic poets.

Specifically, Campbell rejects both a narrow, scientific empiricism and a scepticism that doubts that introspection can reveal anything like a continuing substratum of personal identity or 'soul'. In the introduction to the Part II of *The Pleasures of Hope*, he expresses concerns over 'the baneful influence of that sceptical philosophy which bars us from such comforts' as 'a belief in a future state over the terrors attendant on dissolution'.⁹ The poem closes with an even clearer refutation of scepticism, writing that 'the laurelled-wreath that Murder rears, | Blood-nursed, and watered by the widow's tears, | Seems not so foul, so tainted, and so dread, | As waves the night-shade around the sceptic's head' (*PH*, II, 329–32). Campbell's thoughts echo Burke's reflections from *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757):

If we suffer ourselves to imagine, that their senses present to different men different images of things, this sceptical proceeding will make every sort of reasoning on every subject vain and frivolous, even that sceptical reasoning itself which had persuaded us to entertain a doubt concerning the agreement of our perceptions.¹⁰

Both Burke and Campbell represent sceptical philosophy as incapable of understanding those elements that embrace human inquiry and a sense of fulfilment.

Burke points out the obvious contradiction regarding the sceptic's advancement of a reasoned argument that rejects the validity of reasoned arguments. Burke also implicitly argues for a common bond among men, an 'agreement of our perceptions', while for Campbell, such absence of commonality not only offers no comfort but rather only the surety of death, drowning in 'waves' of 'night-shade'.

The Pleasures of Hope directly confronts some of the basic tenets of sceptical philosophy. Specifically, David Hume in 'Of Academical or Sceptical Philosophy', from Chapter 12 of *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (1748) observes that

nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception, and that the senses are only the inlets, through which these images are conveyed, without being able to produce any immediate intercourse between the mind and the object.¹¹

Hume's reflection on the relationship between mind and object, according to Campbell, negates the power of the senses to transform and make vital the objects they discern:

No! not the quaint remark, the sapient rule,
Nor all the pride of Wisdom's worldly school
Have the power to soothe, unaided and alone,
The heart that vibrates to a feeling tone! (PH, II, 393–96)

Campbell speaks of a 'heart that vibrates to a feeling tone' (l. 396) arguing that things do not exist independently of one another but rather in union, or—to borrow Hume's words—in 'intercourse' with one another: producing within Campbell's epistemology an offspring of hope and the poetic imagination. External objects do not, as Hume argues, simply 'pass through' the senses and leave an impression on the consciousness; for Campbell, those impressions have an effect beyond themselves. He argues that such impressions cause 'vibrations' in a 'feeling' heart, a heart able to respond to the natural world. Campbell's alternative embraces an integration of mind and sentiment, of that which perceives and that which is perceived.

Campbell also condemns the precepts of Hume's philosophical antecedent school, empiricism:

Oh! Lives there, Heaven! Beneath thy dread expanse
One hopeless, dark idolater of Chance,
Content to feed, with pleasures unrefined
The lukewarm passions of a lowly mind;
Who, mouldering earthward, 'reft of every trust,
In joyless union wedded to the dust,
Could all his parting energy dismiss,
And call this barren world sufficient bliss? (PH, II, 295–302)

In these lines, Campbell rejects both observation void of imaginative transformation and the scientific principles that vest the ultimate truth in what the

senses can discern of an object. Campbell's words also recall the language of Newton's first observations regarding light and its properties. Specifically, in his condemnation of the 'dark idolater of Chance', Campbell echoes Newton's recollections that it was the consequences of a 'chance' occurrence that two pieces of glass pressed hard together were actually 'a very little convex' that enabled his observations regarding light (*PH*, II, 169). For Campbell, then, 'chance' has two meanings: it signifies both the serendipity of Newton's experiments and the underlying assumption that 'chance' rather than a higher intelligence, a unifying force akin to the poetic imagination, created the natural world.

Campbell's rejection of empiricism in *The Pleasures of Hope* also serves as a response to Newton, who in *Opticks* (1704) describes his 'Method of Analysis' and its potential applications outside of the scientific realm.¹² Specifically, Newton argues for 'making experiments and observations, and in drawing general conclusions from them by induction, and admitting no objections against the conclusions, but such as are taken from experiments.'¹³ Newton argues that his 'Method', if applied to 'natural philosophy in all its parts, shall at length be perfected, the bounds of moral philosophy will also be enlarged'.¹⁴ *The Pleasures of Hope* might then see Newton's appeal to a scientific method as a 'mouldering earthward' and his espousal of only that which can be proven through experimentation as a dismissal of 'all his parting energy'. Essentially, Campbell uses the inspired observations of the scientific mind to refute the scientific method that, although it relies on 'parting energy' for its inspired observations, refuses to acknowledge that which cannot be measured and, consequently, lies 'wedded to the dust' of pure observation.

In addition to rejecting elements of scepticism and empiricism, *The Pleasures of Hope* outlines a process through which an individual might come to realise the transformative potential of hope and the poetic imagination, a process which begins in truth that leads to virtue and gives birth to beauty. The emergence of beauty leads to action that results in hope. In this process, Campbell, a Scotsman, follows a path remarkably similar to that of Scottish Enlightenment philosophers, including Thomas Reid¹⁵ and Francis Hutcheson, who themselves rejected scepticism.¹⁶ Campbell observes that, 'Truth, ever lovely,—since the world began' (*PH*, II, 347) is 'The foe of tyrants, and the friend of man' (l. 348)—remarks which find a resonance in Reid's reflections on 'self-evident truths': 'Anything virtuous and praiseworthy must consist in the right use of our power—of action;—anything vicious and blameworthy must consist in the abuse of that power'.¹⁷ For both Campbell and Reid, truth contains manifest power in and of itself, and exists independently of man. Campbell chooses to emphasise the 'lovely' nature of that power, suggesting that it is inherently good, and chooses to emphasise the potential inherent in that power, a potential to befriend 'man' but to oppose 'tyrants'. Campbell's observation places tyrants outside of the human, indicating that 'truth' is a force that characterises the human as human and that, when an individual rejects 'truth', he becomes a tyrant and, therefore, non-human. Reid also sees

the power inherent in truth as 'self-evident', a 'first principle' of understanding, indicating that, contrary to the tenets of scepticism, there exist 'first principles'. Reid chooses to emphasise how man's 'right use', truthful and 'virtuous' use, of power becomes 'praiseworthy'. A 'vicious' use or, more correctly, an 'abuse of power', akin to Campbell's tyrant, is contrary to the 'right [truthful] use' of power and, therefore, outside the range of ideal human, moral behaviour. Both Reid and Campbell work from the assumptions that truth exists independently of human verification and the vicissitudes of human interpretation. Both argue for man's ability to implement that power, valuing the human power of choice and control, even temporarily, of pre-existing 'self-evident truths'.

Within Campbell's epistemology, it is essential both that truths exist independently of the individual and that the individual has the power of choice about whether to pursue truth or not. *The Pleasures of Hope* observes that 'Reposing Virtue' lies 'pillowed on the heart' (II, 350), revealing virtue's proximity to human emotions but also that virtuous actions remain in a state of slumber or inaction. If virtue is a 'praiseworthy' use of power, as the previous lines indicate, then it becomes praiseworthy after a close association with human feeling: emotion tempers the tyranny of a solely intellectual engagement with the world. However, Campbell also indicates that 'words from balmy slumber start' (II, 349) virtue from its 'pillowed' rest next to the heart: words, the product of the intellect, have the ability to lend initiative to slumbering virtue. Poetry, then, works to integrate the intellect and the heart, properly nurtured with virtue, to enact 'praiseworthy' and non-tyrannous behaviour. Moreover, the poem reveals that, although virtue reposes close to the individual, it exists independently of the individual, which further contributes to the ability of words to inspire action. In *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, Francis Hutcheson observes that 'virtue or the beauty of action' depends on 'general laws fix'd in the Course of Nature', which inspire 'men' to 'prudence and design', to 'rational expectation', and to 'schemes of action'.¹⁸ He further argues that 'The Universe must be govern'd, not by particular Wills, but by general Laws, upon which we can found our Expectations, and project our Schemes of Action'.¹⁹ Hutcheson's argument, like Campbell's, advances a position at odds with both empiricism and scepticism, in that it argues for the existence of certain 'first principles' or 'self-evident truths' independent of the individual and also argues for the ability of man to integrate these principles employing abilities and powers that cannot be measured using the scientific method proposed by Newton. For the poet of *The Pleasures of Hope*, mankind's heart, nurtured by the self-evident truth of virtue and inspired by words, acts in a way that is 'praiseworthy', which produces, using Hutcheson's phrase, 'the beauty of action'.

Campbell's poem subsequently demonstrates how the 'beauty of action' transcends death precisely because of the independent existence of self-evident truths and because, as he argues, an individual's virtuous acts inspire others to perceive those truths and to implement them in their own lives. In the voice

of 'Conrad of Sydney Cove', a father advises his daughter to 'Weep not [...] at nature's transient pain', because 'Congenial spirits part to meet again' (*PH*, II, 405–06)—arguing not only for the limited power of death, but also for the retention of a form of individual consciousness after death. In presenting such reasoning, Campbell once again rejects the arguments of empiricism and scepticism, particularly the notion that only that which can be observed and measured holds value, and he refutes the notion that there are no unifying virtues common to all. Speaking of his imminent death, Conrad tells his daughter that

And soon these limbs to kindred dust return!
 But not, my child, with life's precarious fire,
 The immortal ties of Nature shall expire;
 These shall resist the triumph of decay,
 When time is o'er, and worlds have passed away! (II, 424–28)

The return of human life to 'kindred dust' recalls Campbell's earlier reference to a 'joyless union wedded to the dust' (II, 300) and its association with empirical philosophy. In these lines, Campbell chooses to emphasise the 'parting energy' (l. 301) he spoke of earlier by stressing that which survives 'decay'.

Moreover, Campbell's choice to relay in narrative form the hope that can accompany death reinforces the individual nature of 'That spark unburied in its mortal frame' (*PH*, II, 431) and, ironically, because of its individual appeal creates a sense of universality. Using such a technique is also consistent with Hutcheson's views of artistic creation:

The most sacred poets are often led into this Imagery, and represent Justice and Judgment as supporting the Almighty's throne, and mercy and truth going before his Face: They shew us peace as springing up from the earth, and mercy looking down from Heaven. Every one perceives a greater beauty in this manner of representation, this imagery, this conjunction of moral ideas, than in the fullest narration, or the most lively natural description.²⁰

Hutcheson's language reveals a confidence in the power of poetic expression to recognise 'mercy and truth' and to acknowledge the role of 'Heaven' and the 'Almighty' in the pursuit and expression of that truth.

Campbell also turns to spirituality, but not to a spirituality that rejects all scientific reasoning, which to the poet–speaker would be as damaging as an exclusive science that rejects elements of faith. As Burke argues in *The Sublime and the Beautiful*:

Whenever the wisdom of our Creator intended that we should be affected with anything, he did not confide the execution of his design to the languid and precarious operation of our reason; but he endued it with powers and properties that prevent the understanding, and even the will; which, seizing upon the senses and

imagination, captivate the soul before the understanding is ready either to join with them, or to oppose them.²¹

Likewise, Campbell ‘dreams of future felicity which a lively imagination is apt to cherish when Hope is animated by refined attachment—This disposition to combine, in one imaginary scene of residence, all that is pleasing in our estimate of happiness.’²² It is, thus, in Campbell’s first poem that his philosophy of writing most clearly expresses itself. He not only articulates a path to the redemptive power of the poetic imagination, but also confronts those philosophical movements that preceded his work and prevented the imagination from fully realising its potential.

However, Campbell takes a more subtle course when it comes to the poetic expression of those philosophical schools, preferring to see himself as the heir to the poets that have come before him, such as Pope and Cowper. He will build on the works of imaginative expression that he sees as his poetic predecessors rather than reject them. In the process of refining his epistemology, Campbell develops a philosophical expression in his poetry that anticipates many of the expressions, by his more recognised contemporaries, of what would be called Romanticism.²³ Specifically, *The Pleasures of Hope* opens with a contemplation on ‘Nature’, recalling the lines from Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Criticism*,²⁴ which advise an aspiring artist to

First follow NATURE, and your Judgment frame
By her just Standard, which is still the same:
Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
One clear, unchang’d and Universal Light,
Life, Force, and Beauty, must to all impart,
At once the Source, and End, and Test of Art
Art from that Fund each just Supply provides,
Works without Show, and without Pomp presides.²⁵

For the poet–speaker of *The Pleasures of Hope*, nature and the natural world do indeed offer a constant ‘Standard’ from which to start an exploration of the nature and character of ‘Hope’. From such a start, Campbell builds on Pope’s reflections on the permanent aspects of human personality and experience of the natural world. Nature becomes a unifying force capable of reconciling seemingly divergent elements, such as the natural world with the human mind or the solitary wanderer seeking union with nature. Campbell’s poem consequently suggests a reading of the natural world at variance from the Pope of the *Essay on Criticism*, even though Pope’s work also speaks to unity: for Campbell, the ‘mountain’ attracts ‘the musing eye’ (*PH*, 1, 3), clearly playing on the dual meaning of ‘muse’ to introduce the character of the poet as the initial observer of the landscape. Immediately, the ‘sunbright summit mingles with the sky’ (l. 4) and thus becomes ‘More sweet than all the landscapes smiling near’ (l. 6). Campbell thus establishes a relationship between the natural world and the human mind that anticipates the poet/speaker of ‘Lines Composed a

Campbell's poet is indeed suspended in that 'which glows divinely' (l. 14) in his perceptions and, subsequently, 'With meteor-standard to the winds unfurled, | Looks from his throne of clouds over half the world' (*PH*, I, 59–60). Akin to Burke's 'astonishment', Campbell's 'Hope' precedes artistic production and functions as a necessary component in the artistic process. Both astonishment and hope, then, are integral components in the moments of transcendence that accompany inspiration.

Significantly, Campbell roots his observations of individual hope in a communal experience; in doing so, he echoes and then expands upon the reflections of William Cowper, a poet whose work Campbell admired.³⁰ The poet–speaker of *The Pleasures of Hope* remarks that 'we linger', stressing the plurality of the experience despite its immediate presence in a single observer's mind. Even those who have chosen or are fated to an isolated existence share in the communal experience of inspiration. Campbell observes that

[...] in Nature's languid hour
 The way-worn pilgrim seeks the summer bower;
 There, as the wild bee murmurs on the wing,
 What peaceful dreams thy handmaid spirits bring!
 What viewless forms the Aeolian organ play,
 And sweep the furrowed lines of anxious thought away.

(*PH*, I, 47–52)

Campbell employs the language of the religious 'pilgrim', who journeys in search of the meaning of life and hope and who, despite nature's initial languor, discovers a spiritual union with the natural world in the 'sounds' of the bee and in the gifts of the muse. This use of the religious pilgrim is reminiscent of the 'Christian' in Cowper's 'Hope':

Hope! Nothing else can nourish and secure
 His new-born virtues and preserve him pure.
 Hope! Let the wretch, once conscious of the joy,
 Whom now despairing agonies destroy.
 Speak, for he can, and none so well as he,
 What treasures centre, what delights in thee.³¹

Cowper's forlorn pilgrim must speak from the 'delight' inspired by a faithful belief in 'Hope'. For Cowper, 'Hope' exists within the individual and, not, as in Campbell, in a relationship between the individual and the external world. Indeed, for Cowper, 'Nature opposes, with her utmost force', the 'Christian [...] consciousness' in which lies the 'genuine hope' of purging an individual from sin ('Hope', ll. 639, 635–36). Sin and the natural world, then, for Cowper stand united against an individual's redemption. Essentially, for both Campbell and Cowper, the pilgrims dwell initially in despair: for Cowper, it is the pilgrim's faith that redeems his experiences and lifts him from despair, while for Campbell, nature speaks to the pilgrim and in its subtle 'murmurs' discovers a 'Hope' that renews him by washing clean his 'anxious thoughts'. For Cowper,

'Hope' speaks clearly to the 'wretch' who has fallen from faith and speaks in a clear voice; Campbell's poem argues for a relationship between the individual and nature that is both redemptive and reciprocal. Nature does not dictate to Campbell's languid pilgrim: rather, it mirrors his languor and then offers soft and subtle sounds of redemption. For Cowper, nature is an alien force that must be defeated for 'Hope' to enter into the soul of the forlorn wanderer, but for Campbell, 'Hope' represents an integration of the natural world and the individual's consciousness.

Campbell's poem argues not for an isolation of the individual,³² even though he may be physically isolated, but for an integration of the individual with the natural world that can—like the poet of Coleridge's 'The Aeolian Harp'—discover in nature's 'soft floating witchery of sound' that 'Which meets all motion and becomes its soul'.³³ Coleridge's poet, like Campbell's, hears in the sounds of the 'Aeolian organ' a subtle yet complete communion with the natural world. In an echo of the juxtaposition between Cowper and Campbell, Coleridge's poet does battle with a 'Daughter in the family of Christ', who upbraids him for the 'shapings of the unregenerate mind' ('Aeolian Harp', ll. 53, 55). Unlike Coleridge, however, Campbell does not offer a direct confrontation between the Christian and the worshiper of nature, leaving open the possibility that the two are not mutually exclusive.³⁴ Indeed, Campbell suggests that both receive like gifts and that these gifts come from a like source.

Campbell's emphasis on a communal experience as a source of hope is also apparent in his poem's consideration of mortality. Ironically, *The Pleasures of Hope* achieves commonality in coming to terms with death within a poetic narrative of personal testimony (in the story of Conrad). The presentation of an individual's perspective may seem to alienate others from that perspective; however, Campbell presents Conrad in such a way as to allow the reader to identify with him and his experiences. In choosing to articulate his ideas in the form of a personal testimony that unites reader and character, Campbell accomplishes what he saw as the failure of earlier poetry which contemplates a similar subject. Robert Herrick, whose 'To the Virgins, to make much of Time' Campbell admired,³⁵ meditates on death in his 'Good precepts, or counsel':

In all thy need, be thou possest
 Still with a well-prepared brest:
 Nor let the shackles make thee sad;
 Thou canst but have, what others had.
 And this for comfort thou must know,
 Times that are ill won't still be so.
 Clouds will not ever power down rain;
A sullen day will cleere againe.
 First, peales of Thunder we must heare,
 Then Lutes and harpes shall stroke the eare.³⁶

Campbell writes of the collection to which 'Good precepts' belongs as 'pieces on religious subjects where [Herrick's] volatile genius was not in her element'.³⁷ Herrick's poem, nonetheless, espouses sentiments very much consistent with those of 'Conrad of Sydney Cove'. However, Campbell accomplishes his celebration of triumph over death not through objective contemplation of a supposed truth, as does Herrick, but rather in the subjective dialogue of a father and daughter. Thus, the contemplation takes on an air of truth, as Hutcheson observes such poetry would, because it links the abstract to personal testimony. Clearly, an encounter with death is subjective, but, ironically, a deeply personal encounter makes it an all the more convincing and universal experience. Campbell, then, offers the 'hope' of a personal testimony rather than a statement of religious principles to demonstrate that the 'spark' of a human life transcends death. He offers an imaginative creation, in the witness of 'Conrad', in order to stimulate an imaginative response in the reader.

Such imaginative engagement, then, enables Campbell to conclude *The Pleasures of Hope*, with a testament of his principles that are consequent to the poetic imagination. For Campbell, 'Eternal Hope' shares an origin with the natural world (II, 467). Addressing 'Hope' directly, his poet-speaker observes that 'Thy Joyous youth began' simultaneously with 'yonder spheres sublime' (II, 469, 467), which suggests a kinship between the created world and hope, and juxtaposes their common heritage in order to demonstrate their relationship with one another. Using the word 'sublime' suggests that the 'spheres' and, by association, 'hope' have a divine connection, that they are not simply that which can be measured through objective scientific observation. Additionally, Campbell observes that the planets are subject to the 'march of Time' (*PH*, II, 468), that they are subject to mutability and death. However, hope stands apart from the created world in that, even though nature decays, hope lives on, 'not to fade' (l. 469) and actually takes sustenance from the end of all things:

When all the sister planets have decayed,
 When wrapt in fire the realms of ether glow,
 And Heaven's last thunder shakes the world below,
 Thou, undismayed, shalt o'er the ruin smile,
 And light thy torch at Nature's funeral pile! (ll. 470–74)

Hope triumphs over death and can even be read as glorifying in its ability to exist beyond nature; however, the final line suggests an even more intimate relationship between hope and the death of the living world: one through which hope will 'light' its 'torch' at 'Nature's funeral pile', that it will enhance, and therefore change, its form by taking fire directly from the still burning ashes of nature's death. Hope consequently gathers inspiration, to use one of the symbolic connotations of fire, from nature's changing form, and the energy, the light, drawn from nature's death will be added to hope and the inspiration drawn from hope. Within Campbell's epistemology, the natural world—that realm subject to empirical observation—and that which lies beyond the

measurable—the world of sceptical enquiry—contribute to one another, share an intimate relationship and point of origin, and even as nature decays, the products of its demise, ‘fire’ and by association imaginative insight, transfer themselves to hope. Campbell concludes *The Pleasures of Hope* with an image of a transcendent hope carrying forward the light of the natural world under new forms. Campbell’s observations recall the lines of Coleridge’s ‘Dejection: An Ode’, in which the speaker observes that in ‘our life alone does Nature live: | Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud’.³⁸ For both Coleridge and Campbell, there exists an intimate relationship between hope and nature, ultimately growing into, for Coleridge, a ‘light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud’—an image similar to Campbell’s hope’s light taken from nature’s funeral fires. For Coleridge, the smoke from that final fire, ‘Enveloping the Earth’ and ‘from the soul itself must there be sent | A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth, | Of all sweet sounds the life and element!’³⁹ For Coleridge, as for Campbell, inspiration arises in reaction to, and in an effort to reverse, the decay of the poet’s response to the natural world and even of individual human life.

The process carries a resonance with what Coleridge would call the ‘Secondary Imagination’ in that it ‘dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealise and to unify’.⁴⁰ Shelley articulates a similar view in the opening passage of his ‘Defense of Poetry’:

According to one mode of regarding those two classes of mental action, which are called reason and imagination, the former may be considered as mind contemplating the relations borne by one thought to another, however produced, and the latter, as mind acting upon those thoughts so as to colour them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity. [...] Reason respects the differences, and imagination the similitudes of things. Reason is to imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance.⁴¹

For Coleridge, Shelley, and Campbell, the poetic imagination breaks down in order to recreate and, in doing so, unifies that which comes before into a vital force. It is as Edmund Burke observes in *The Sublime and the Beautiful*:

the mind of man possesses a sort of creative power of its own; either in representing at pleasure the images of things in the order and manner in which they were received by the senses, or in combining those images in a new manner, and according to a different order. This power is called the imagination.⁴²

Thomas Campbell would only rarely rise again to the level of poetic expression of that imaginative power that he articulates in *The Pleasures of Hope*. Instead, he would turn towards the more practical application of the ideals of the Romantic movement. Nonetheless, his work is an early poetic expression of

the Romantic ideal, even though, as he articulates in his original introduction to *The Pleasures of Hope*, the ‘charm dissolves’ and he will ‘bless the smiling guest of other days’ (1, 20). Campbell’s ‘other days’ included the project of a university in London: on 6 June 1825, *The Times* published an article that described the goal of the project to establish an urban university at a ‘rate of expense so economical as to bring the benefits of the establishment within the reach of almost every class in society’, observing that Campbell was the ‘most active’ of all the gentlemen involved in this early venture (p. 4). Indeed, Campbell’s passion for education and for students resulted not only in the formation of what would become University College London but also in his being elected rector of Glasgow University by the students in 1827, 1828, and 1829. Ultimately, he did not attain the promised membership in the French Academy but did see *The Pleasures of Hope* published as *Les Plaisirs de l’espérance* by the Parisian firm Baudry late in 1824. 

NOTES

1. Philip Flynn provided invaluable assistance in the production of this article.
2. Below is the complete text of the unpublished letter, held in Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark:

12th November 1824

No 10 Upper Seymour Street West

My Dear Sir,

I received your kind note at Cheltenham where I was in very bad health and obliged to abstain from all business and correspondence. I have returned to London from necessity much sooner than I wished and still but very poorly. It is still an effort for me to write. It would be double so to express myself in French. And on this account I trust you will excuse me putting you to the trouble of reading an English letter. I have to return you many thanks for your communication with Mons Montemont. Strange as it may appear it is nonetheless true that I did not finish my alterations on my new poem till yesterday and I could not forward a copy to Paris before Monday the 15th. The poem will be out in London on the 22nd so that I fear I have kept it too late for the possibility of its being published in Paris.

To you and to Montemont I feel quite as much obliged as if the kind office which has been offered had been realized. I will still beg leave to hold Mr Montemont to his promise of translating Theodoric. And I will for that purpose transmit to you the first copy which I can get from the Printer’s hands.

Whenever the translation of the Pleasures of Hope arrives I shall be much flattered to see myself in French Costume.

I know not what steps I ought to take to announce my intention to be a candidate for the honour of a seat in the Academy but shall await your directions.

Begging to be remembered with the utmost gratitude to Mons. Montemont

I remain
 Dear Sir
 Your obliged and faithful servant
 T. Campbell

3. William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), p. 591.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
5. Simon Bainbridge, 'The Historical Context', in *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*, edited by Nicholas Roe (Oxford: OUP, 2005), p. 16.
6. The *Cambridge History of English and American Literature* notes of *The Pleasure of Hope* that it 'scarcely ever gets beyond metred rhetoric'. Nonetheless, the poem and Campbell have had their admirers. J. Logie Robertson, in his preface to *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Campbell* (London: OUP, 1907), writes of feelings 'of mingled surprise and indignation that he is at present so much neglected, and with the conviction that a later generation will do more honour to his memory than we have done' (p. iii). Robertson's optimism thus far has not borne fruit and few studies of his life and work exist to do 'honour to his memory' other than Mary Ruth Miller's *Thomas Campbell* (Boston: Twayne, 1978): Miller writes that 'before his death he had been relegated to second place among classic English authors—a judgment that still prevails' (p. 9). Peter Macaulay attempts 'A Revaluation' of Campbell and his work, in *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature*, 50 (1969), 39–46. However, subsequent to his essay, other than a few notes on Campbell's influence on Shelley, by George Richards in 'Thomas Campbell and Shelley's "Queen Mab"', *American Notes and Queries*, 10 (1971), 5–6, only Timothy Fulford offers a critical study of Campbell's writing, in 'Romantic Indians and Colonial Politics: The Case of Thomas Campbell', *Symbiosis*, 2.2 (Oct 1998), 203–23.
7. Bainbridge, 'Historical Context', p. 16.
8. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, edited by L. G. Mitchell (Oxford: OUP, 1999), p. 280.
9. *Complete Poetical Works*, p. 21; subsequent references to *The Pleasures of Hope* will be given in the main essay, abbreviated *PH*, followed by the appropriate Part number.
10. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, edited by Adam Phillips (Oxford: OUP, 1998), p. 17.
11. David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Eric Steinberg (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993), p. 114.
12. Campbell would, in a letter written in 1813, comment on Newton's 'optics' more directly in connection with a friend, Dr (later Sir) William Herschel (1738–1822). However, Campbell seems less impressed with Newton than he does with Herschel's 'supernatural intelligence'—see William Beattie (ed.), *Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell*, 3 vols (London: Moxon, 1849), 1, 236. Essentially, Campbell uses Newton in order to achieve a spiritual connection with his friend, implicitly rejecting then the rational tests of knowledge Newton advocates.
13. Isaac Newton, *Opticks*, introduced by Nicholas Humez (1704; London: Smith and Wadford, 1998), p. 380.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 381.
15. Campbell not only knew Reid's works well, Reid and Campbell's father were on intimate terms: Alexander Campbell was 'the confidential friend of [...] Dr.

- Thomas Reid, from whom the poet received his name in baptism. On publishing his celebrated 'Inquiry into the Human Mind,' Dr. Reid gave a copy to his friend Mr. [Alexander] Campbell, who after reading it attentively, called upon the author, and thanked him for the great pleasure and edification which his new work had afforded him' (*Life and Letters*, I, 15).
16. For a more comprehensive discussion of Scottish Enlightenment philosophers, see Philip Flynn's *Enlightened Scotland: A Study and Selection of Scottish Philosophical Prose* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1992).
 17. Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, edited by Derek Brookes (Edinburgh: EUP, 1997), p. 1.
 18. Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in Two Treatises*, edited by Wolfgang Leidhold (1725; Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003), p. 81.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
 21. Burke, *The Sublime and the Beautiful*, pp. 117–18.
 22. Campbell, *Complete Poetical Works*, p. 21.
 23. Miller makes a similar observation: 'Thomas Campbell was a humanitarian poet in a transitional position between Classicism and Romanticism' (*Thomas Campbell*, p. 9).
 24. Campbell observes that 'Pope was neither so insensible to the beauties of nature, nor so indistinct in describing them as to forfeit the character of a genuine poet. [...] Nature is the poet's goodness; but by nature, no one rightly understands her mere inanimate face'—see his *Specimens of the British Poets* (1819; Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1875), p. 59.
 25. *An Essay on Criticism*, ll. 68–75; in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, edited by John Butt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963).
 26. Albert Morton Turner notes that the 'first possible influence of Wordsworth on Campbell's poetry occurs in the year 1824' and, as *The Pleasures of Hope* is roughly contemporaneous with 'Tintern Abbey' it is likely that Campbell and Wordsworth simply arrived at a similar philosophic place and at similar time—see Turner's 'Wordsworth's Influence on Thomas Campbell', *PMLA*, 38.2 (June 1923), 253–66.
 27. William Wordsworth, 'Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey', l. 106; in *The Major Works*, edited by Stephen Gill (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 132.
 28. Burke, *The Sublime and the Beautiful*, p. 63.
 29. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
 30. Writing in *Specimens* of Cowper's first volume of poetry, which contains 'Hope', Campbell observes that its 'reception was not equal to its merit' and that the 'volume was certainly good fruit under a rough rind' (p. 705).
 31. William Cowper, 'Hope', ll. 169–74; in *Cowper's Poetical Works*, edited by H. S. Milford (Oxford: OUP, 1926), p. 63.
 32. In *Specimens*, Campbell writes of Cowper that he 'espoused the side of justice and humanity', but also that 'the most refined planter in the West Indies may look, with neither shame nor compunction, on his own image in the pages of Cowper' (p. 709).
 33. Coleridge, 'The Aeolian Harp', ll. 20 and 27, in *The Major Works*, edited by H. J. Jackson (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 27.
 34. In an ironic reference to a solitary adventurer, Campbell creates another distinction between his poetic vision and that of his more celebrated Romantic con-

- temporaries. He discusses how Byron, the adventurer and the poet's grandfather, too is touched by the universal qualities of communion with the natural world in sharp contrast to the grandson Byron's isolated hero who stands apart and defiant: 'The suffocating sense of woe, | Which speaks but in its loneliness, | And then is jealous lest the sky | Should have a listener, nor will sigh | Until its voice is echoless' (Byron, 'Prometheus', ll. 10–14, in *Major Works*, edited by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 265).
35. Campbell calls Herrick's 'To the Virgins, to make much of Time' 'sweetly Anacreontic' but adds that in Herrick's 'pieces on religious subjects [...] his volatile genius was not in her element' (*Specimens*, p. 284).
 36. 'Good precepts, or counsel', ll. 1–10; in *Poems of Robert Herrick*, edited by F. W. Moorman (Oxford: OUP, 1933), p. 262.
 37. Campbell, *Specimens*, p. 284.
 38. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Dejection: An Ode', Part IV, ll. 2–3; in *Major Works*, p. 117.
 39. *Ibid.*, Part IV, ll. 9–12, p. 117.
 40. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, edited by J. Shawcross, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 1, 202.
 41. Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry', p. 1; in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, edited by Donald Reiman and Neil Freistat (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2002).
 42. Burke, *The Sublime and the Beautiful*, p. 21.

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