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When Daedalus Meets Orpheus: Edwin Morgan's Science-Fiction Poetry*

Daedalus Orpheus'la Buluşunca: Edwin Morgan'ın Bilim Kurgu Şiirleri

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Abstract

As is illustrated in a number of contemporary British poems, it is safe to assume that the reflections of science and technology in contemporary poetry are abundant. Influenced by the Space Race that had been going on between the US and the USSR and fascinated with "the shiny technological outcome," Scottish poet Edwin Morgan wrote science fiction poems which present optimistic scenarios for the future of humanity. Putting people in extraordinary, if not impossible, circumstances, Morgan envisions a future where, despite the horrifying results of the catastrophes that had occurred on Earth, humans are shown as the ideal species to adapt to change. Forced to abandon Earth, humanity is excited about discovering new frontiers. Humanity's positive attitude towards mutability reflects Morgan's views, which regard evolution as a natural step. Determined to carry forward no matter what their dire circumstances compel them to, humanity shows a strong stamina. Space exploration, alien encounters, teleportation, dematerialisation and rematerialisation are central to most of Morgan's science fiction poetry. Particularly, his science-fiction poems, namely "For the International Poetry Incarnation," "The First Men on Mercury," "In Sobieski's Shield" and "Memories of Earth," in which encounters with the third kind occur reflect Morgan's tendency to break down the distinctions between the human and non-human world. Thus, in an age when travelling to space is no longer a dream but a reality, Morgan's poetry, unlike many post-apocalyptic science-fiction works of the twenty-first century, welcomes change quite positively. Contrary to miscellaneous post-apocalyptic scenarios regarding the future, which look back on the past quite wistfully and melancholically, Morgan's science-fiction poetry presents an optimistic attitude towards mutability that eagerly and curiously awaits whatever the future has in store for humanity. In this sense, this article will argue that Morgan's science-fiction poetry has an unwavering faith in progress, which by challenging the anthropocentric worldview introduces an alternate way to see things at the same time, besides underlining the adaptability of humankind into any environment despite the negative experiences they have underwent.
Keywords: Edwin Morgan, British poetry, contemporary poetry, science-fiction poetry, technology, science, space race.

Öz

Bilim ve teknolojinin yankıları çağdaş şiirde sıklıkla görülmektedir. Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyetler Birliği arasında devam etmekte olan uzay yarışından etkilenmiş ve teknolojinin gözkamaştırıcı çıktılarından büyülenmiş İskoç şair Edwin Morgan, insanlığın geleceği hakkında iyimser senaryolar öngören bilim kurgu şiirleri yazmıştır. İnsanları, imkânsız değilse de, olağanüstü durumlara yerleştiren Morgan, dünyadaki felaketlerin yıkıcı sonuçlarına rağmen geleceği insanların ideal bir tür olarak değişime ayak uydurabildikleri bir zaman olarak tasavvur eder. Dünyayı terk etmek zorunda kalan insanlık yeni hudutları keşfetmekten heyecan duyar. Morgan'ın evrimi bir sonraki doğal adım olarak gören bakış açısı, insanlığın değişime dair olumlu tutumundan kaynaklanır. Vahim şartlar neye zorlarsa zorlasın ilerlemeye kararlı olan insanlık, güçlü bir direnç gösterir. Uzayın keşfi, uzaylılarla karşılaşma, ışınlanma, maddenin bölünmesi ve maddenin yeniden yapılanması Morgan'ın bilimkurgu şiirlerinin başlıca konularıdır. Üçüncü türden varlıklarla karşılaşmayı içeren "For the International Poetry

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Incarnation", "The First Men on Mercury", "In Sobieski's Shield" ve "Memories of Earth" başlıklı bilimkurgu şiirleri Morgan'ın insan ve insan olmayan türler arasındaki farklılıkları yok etme eğilimini gösterir. Uzaya yolculuğun gerçek olduğu bugünlerde, yirmi birinci yüzyılın birçok kıyamet sonrası bilimkurgu eserinin aksine Morgan şiirlerinde değişimi olumlu karşılar. Geçmişe özlem ve hüzünle bakan çeşitli kıyamet sonrası gelecek senaryosunun aksine, Morgan bilimkurgu şiirlerinde değişime iyimser yaklaşır, heves ve merakla geleceğin insanlığa neler getireceğini bekler. Bu makale, Morgan'ın bilimkurgu şiirlerinin insan merkezli dünya görüşünü sorgulayarak olaylara değişik bir bakış açısı kazandırır ve ilerlemeye yönelik sarsılmaz bir inanca sahip olmanın yanı sıra olumuz deneyimlere rağmen insanoğlunun her çevreye uyum sağlayabileceğinin altını çizdiğini tartışır.
Anahtar sözcükler: Edwin Morgan, İngiliz şiiri, çağdaş şiir, bilimkurgu şiiri, teknoloji, bilim, uzay yarışı.

Introduction

dis is di age of reality
but some a wi a deal wid mitalagy
dis is di age of science an' teknalagy
but some a wi a check fi antiquity (Johnson, 2009, para. 1)

So writes Linton Kwesi Johnson in his "Reality Poem" and recent topics of interest in contemporary poetry seem to support his words. There has been an increasing interest in the inclusion of science and technology in British poetry recently, as is shown via the poems of many contemporary British poets. Among poets who have integrated science and technology into their poems the most well-known names are Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978), Louis MacNeice (1907-1963), Edwin Morgan (1920-2010), Robert Crawford (b. 1959), W. N. Herbert (b. 1961), David Morley (b. 1964), Lavinia Greenlaw (b. 1962), Pauline Stainer (b. 1941), Peter Redgrove (1932-2003) and Allen Fisher (b. 1944). Others, like Carol Ann Duffy (b. 1955), Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925-2006), Simon Armitage (b. 1963), Peter Reading (1946-2011) and Linton Kwesi Johnson (b. 1952), too, make science and technology an occasional interest in their poetry.

As can be understood from the above-mentioned poets' endeavours to include science and technology in their poems, poetry and science, besides their creative power, share some common interests and ends such as the provision of thought-provoking questions regarding the universe that eventually bring humanities and sciences closer (Michaelis, 1981, p. 175). The reasons for the attraction between the humanities and the sciences may lie in the scientists' pleasure in reading about their scientific processes reflected in the body of a poem or the precision of poetic expression that mirrors something of scientific value or else, simply, it may exist because science offers "fascinating poem-fuel" (Crawford, 2006, p. 6) which introduces a renewed perspective on poetic subject matters. The tension between what is commonplace and what is unexpected will, thus, provide a fresh outlook on things. Consequently, science today, as it has occasionally done before, provides poetry with "images, metaphors, and procedures that might be mutually enriching, illuminating, or pleasurable" (Crawford, 2006a, p. 6), which, in short, can be identified as the "promethean status of technology" (Armstrong, 2001, p. 85).

The reflections of science and technology have gradually found their way into contemporary British poetry via postmodernism which enabled a plurality of voices. While racial, gender-based, regional, and class-based issues found their expression in this plurality of forms and voices, it is no wonder that science and technology have, too, found their place in this polyphony of poetic voices. Particularly in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries science and technology became essential parts of our daily lives. Hence, Crawford (2006b, p. 51) asserts, poetry inevitably makes use of science and technology, or else it would surely become "a ghetto concern only." For, "one way or another, 'science' permeates every aspect of modern life" (Woolgar, 1978, p. 11). As Erickson (2005, p. 11) also confirms: "Our lives are now described by technoscientific language, our meanings are constructed around technoscientific viewpoints on the world. We cannot easily escape the frame of reference, this form of life." Crawford (2006b, p. 54) emphasises the inevitability of such a tendency as follows: "Poetry will continue to be obsessed with sea and stars, love and death, but if it is not also alert to semiconductors and computers, windfarming and global warming, it will grow subtly untrue to the linguistic and cultural climate in which it is written." Accordingly, contemporary British poets, such as Hugh MacDiarmid, Louis MacNeice, Edwin Morgan, Robert Crawford, W. N. Herbert, David Morley, Lavinia Greenlaw, Pauline Stainer, Peter Redgrove and

Allen Fisher, rely on topics borrowed from science and technology for their subject matter, the way the metaphysical poets did back in the seventeenth century. As a result, their poetry is not didactic but relies on technoscientific terminology for figurative purposes which will direct the attention of the readers to the ongoing changes in the world.

Scotland's first poet laureate Edwin Morgan is amongst the very first of contemporary poets to develop a relationship between the sciences and the humanities in his poems. Unlike poets who associate science with destruction, Morgan's attitude towards the sciences is highly positive. Influenced by the Space Race that had been going on between the US and the USSR, and fascinated with "the shiny technological outcome," (Middleton, 2007, p. 957) Morgan wrote science fiction poems which offered optimistic scenarios for the future of humanity rather than presenting negative ones. Putting people in extraordinary, if not impossible, circumstances, Morgan often envisions a future where, despite the horrifying results of the catastrophes that had occurred on Earth, humans are shown as extremely eager to adapt to change. Forced to abandon Earth, rather than obsessing about the past, humanity is excited about discovering new frontiers instead, and has poets to record these experiences. Humanity's positive attitude towards mutability reflects Morgan's own views which regard evolution and the survival of the fittest as natural steps for humanity to survive. Thus, determined to carry forward no matter what their dire circumstances compel them to, humanity shows a strong will to go on throughout his poems. Thus, in an age when travelling to space is no longer a dream but a reality, Morgan's poetry, unlike many post-apocalyptic science fiction works of the twenty-first century, welcomes change quite positively. In this sense, this article will argue that contrary to miscellaneous post-apocalyptic scenarios regarding the future, which look back on the past quite wistfully and melancholically, Morgan's science-fiction poetry has an unwavering faith in progress which by challenging the anthropocentric worldview introduces an alternate way to see things besides underlining the adaptability of humankind into every environment despite the negative experiences they have experienced.

Science-Fiction

Science fiction, as is known, is a type of speculative fiction which relies on science and technology, and is often set in futuristic settings. Including such plot motifs as space exploration, alien encounters, teleportation, dematerialisation and rematerialisation along with "parallel universes, time-travel from present into the past, even impending invasion or catastrophe," and as such science fiction "more than any other literary form reflects the impact of modern scientific thought upon the literary imagination" (Clareson, 1971, p. 3). Bova (1974, p. 7) further claims that "science fiction stands as a bridge between science and art, between the engineers of technology and the poets of humanity," and adds, "never has such a bridge been more desperately needed" in an age when technological changes occur by the minute.

The changes technology brings along have not always been greeted with enthusiasm. Specifically, the Luddite movement in England, which took place towards the end of the eighteenth century in the industrial North, provides an example of the spreading scepticism towards machinery in Britain. The movement started out as an uprising particularly against textile industry which had caused the unemployment of many labourers early on, thus triggering a series of conflicts that will extend to the later centuries (Tompson, 2003, p. 291). Subsequently, the word Luddite itself would become synonymous with someone who is either ignorant of or distrustful of technology (Snow 22). In the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin's ground-breaking theories in biology, followed by James Clerk Maxwell's innovational work in physics strengthened the cynicism felt towards technology which culminated in fear in the twentieth century with the use of heavy machinery in warfare during World War I and later on during World War II with the use of nuclear weapons.

Thus, besides providing authors with creative and inventive dreams, science and technology also provided them with, evidently, possible nightmares. That's why many of the science-fiction works of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries imagined either dystopian or post-apocalyptic world-orders that looked back on the past wistfully. Novels ranging from *Frankenstein* to *The War of the Worlds*; *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to *Brave New World*; *The Children of Men* to *Never Let Me Go*, all painted future societies in a pessimist light warning the readers of the possibilities of good science gone bad. Either suffering from a case of mad scientist with a God complex to hostile alien invasion; a case of strict political dictatorship

and thought control to scientific advancement which comes at the expense of losing emotional stimuli; or health problems, such as infertility and organ failure, arising from an oligarchic control of technology; British science-fiction tends to portray the future in a cynical light, while the survivors of the many catastrophes that befell them view the past nostalgically as a period when there was peace and harmony.

Although science fiction is generally recalled in relation to prose in literature, it is possible to see examples of it in verse, too. Particularly with the late twentieth century the use of science-fiction in poetry gained a new momentum with poets like Hugh MacDiarmid and Edwin Morgan. As "a great experimenter," (Graham, para. 2) Morgan, continuously fascinated by new ideas, helped develop science-fiction poetry which came into being through the deconstructionist theories had started out in the 1950s as a post-war development, and grew to its full extent in the 1980s resulting in "a wide range of contemporary British 'poetries'" (Huk, 1996, p. 1) marked by a multiplicity of voices in literature (Kennedy and Morley, 1993, p. 7). Through his miscellaneous science-fiction poems, Morgan helped shape science fiction poetry as a subgenre. In this regard, space exploration, alien encounters, teleportation, dematerialisation and rematerialisation are central to most of Morgan's science fiction poetry. Particularly, his science-fiction poems in which encounters with the third kind occur reflect Morgan's tendency to break down the distinctions between the human and non-human world. Morgan's interest in space is visible in several of his poems, however, it is particularly evident in his longer science-fiction poems such as, "For the International Poetry Incarnation," "The First Men on Mercury," "In Sobieski's Shield" and "Memories of Earth" which will be analysed in relation to Morgan's optimistic faith in change, and humanity to overcome any future difficulties.

Edwin Morgan's Science-Fiction Poetry

Morgan's ideal dream of a poet-explorer is evident in his poem "For the International Poetry Incarnation." Written for the specific occasion identified in the title, the poem combines Morgan's interest in space exploration with a unique literary event. The International Poetry Incarnation was initiated by the American poet Allen Ginsberg's visit to an independent bookstore in London in May 1965 where he proposed to carry out poetry readings for free anywhere in the world (Watts, 2015, p. 1). This idea was quickly taken up by his contemporaries like Alexander Trocchi, William S. Burroughs, Michael Horovitz, George Macbeth and Tom McGrath together with whom a kind of an underground literary movement was rapidly founded (Watts, 2015, p. 1). Already an ardent lover of public readings, the topic Morgan came up with for this occasion was that of different space programmes and advancements in the Space Race: "Vostok shrieks and prophesies, Mariner's prongs flash – / to the wailing of Voskhod Earth sighs, she shakes men loose at last –" (Morgan, 1982, p. 184). Throughout the poem, Morgan underlines humanity's adaptability to their changing circumstances and encourages poets to celebrate the future of mankind as inspired by the current events.

The Soviet Vostok space programme was the first to succeed in sending a human, Yuri Gagarin, into space successfully (Crompton, 2007, p. 31). The next programme, American Mariner, is evoked in the next line, implying that the Russians had the Americans at their heels right after their success. NASA's Mariner programme was also one of many firsts, including flying by and taking pictures of other planets (Reeves, 1994, p. 193). The Space Race gained new momentum from that point onwards; a competition where the rivals were merely Soviet Russia and the U.S. The third project, Voskhod, enabled the second human spaceflight mission for Soviet Russia. Superseded by the Soyuz programme to better the original spacecraft designs, Voskhod programme was later abandoned not being able to compete with the successes of the previous Vostok or the Mercury and Gemini projects developed by NASA (Siddiqi, 2000, p. 382-85).

The opening of Morgan's poem, while making references to these historical milestones, also reflects the excitement of the Space Race by purposefully using exclamation marks to create a similar effect with words: "Worldscene! Worldtime! Spacebreaker! Wildship! Starman!" (Morgan, 1982, p. 184). Accordingly, the mother ships of the previous space projects are individually praised by Morgan for their unique qualities. Described as going ever deeper into space, the mother ships are admired by Morgan for exploring areas that are even beyond human imagination and comprehension. From this point on, Morgan introduces the role of imagination, in terms of the discoveries made, thus making his real intentions clear:

. . . take
poets on your voyages! Prometheus
embraces Icarus and in a gold shell with wings
he launches him up though the ghostly detritus
of gods and dirty empires and dying laws,
he mounts, he cries, he shouts, he shines, he streams
like light new done, his home is in a sun
and he shall be the burning unburned one.
In darkness Daedalus
embraces Orpheus, the dark lips caked with earth and roots
he kisses open, the cold body he rubs
to a new life – the dream
flutters in a cage of crumbling bars, reviving
and then beginning slowly singing of the stars. (Morgan, 1982, p. 184)

The speaker is quite eager to make poets a part of these space voyages, which, according to Crawford (1990, p. 12), reflects the fusion of "medieval heroic poetry with another of his [Morgan's] early and continuing enthusiasms, the heroic and adventurous. . . . Part of his interest in science fiction verse is surely bound up with space travel as a heroic endeavour. Morgan the modern, Morgan the futurist, and Morgan the medievalist are united." Moreover, it is significant that Morgan names mythological poets and scientists rather than any historical figures in the poem. The evolved version of the journey motif from mythology to modern-day space travel obviously intrigues the poet. As is pointed out, "[o]f poets writing in English, he [Morgan] was one of those most attuned to what changes in our perception of the world science and technology have brought" ("Edwin Morgan," n.d., para. 10), in addition to being one of the very first "to put his name down for a journey to the Moon" (Reid, para. 25). For Morgan, the developments in the Space Race are symbolic of a poetic dream that came true. Hence, these developments should be followed closely by the poets to record and to get inspired by them no matter how irrelevant these may sound to them.

Interestingly, the poem's rich mythological allusions start off initially with Prometheus. As he stood up against the gods in order to help mankind by stealing fire from the gods and giving it to humans, Prometheus has long been hailed as the father of industry and progress who lit the torch of enlightenment and passed it on to needy humanity. This time he helps yet another dreamer, Icarus, the son of the master craftsman Daedalus, who wanted to fly away from Crete, where the father and the son were imprisoned, by way of wings made of feathers and wax. Despite his father's warnings not to get too close to the sun, Icarus's curiosity drives him ever on, realising only too late that the wax that supports his wings has melted. The myth acts as a cautionary tale that is appropriate to the poem's topic. In the poem, Icarus is once more taken to great heights, this time to outer space, guided by Prometheus who has both the knowledge and the means to do so for he is "the burning unburned one" (Morgan, 1982, p. 185). So, while Daedalus represents the controlled scientist who imagines and designs the necessary machinations, Icarus represents the ambitious explorer who is curious to see more. Contrary to general assumption, Morgan does not consider the fall of Icarus as a tragedy but rather considers it as exemplary. Left behind, Daedalus is the primeval engineer who, after his son's death, collaborates with the famous poet Orpheus to sing of what has happened so as to combine a scientific dream with a poetic one. Their combined efforts, in the end, turn "the stars" into the subject matter of poetry: "To get / the man new born to go" (Morgan, 1982, p. 185). The new man that is referred to in the poem, hence, is someone who can realise that creativity is the tool that drives both the scientist and the poet and acts accordingly by continuously daring forward into the future by trying to erase the painful experiences of the two World Wars from memory and celebrating humanity's adaptation to mutability instead.

"The First Men on Mercury," included in *From Glasgow to Saturn*, is an example of an unusual encounter between humans and aliens which affirms Morgan's firm belief in progress by rejecting anthropocentricism and envisioning adaptability as a solution for inter-species interaction. The poem starts

with a group of explorers visiting Mercury: "We come in peace from the third planet," (Morgan, 1982, p. 259) they say. Apparently, the explorers are from Earth which is the third planet from the Sun. Morgan's poem presents a mock-meeting between aliens and humans for the first time, employing the popular idiom of "we come in peace," followed by yet another unoriginal inquiry, "[w]ould you take us to your leader?" The poem all of a sudden takes an unusual turn upon the answer given by the man from Mercury: "– Bawr stretter! Bawr. Bawr. Stretterhawl?" (Morgan, 1982, p. 259). The question directed to the men from Earth starts off a number of questions and explanations. While it is clear that the parties are having difficulty trying to communicate, something astonishing happens:

> – Men come in peace from the third planet
> which we call 'earth'. We are earthmen.
> Take us earthmen to your leader.
> – Thmen? Thmen? Bawr. Bawrhossop.
> Yuleeda tan hanna. Harrabost yuleeda.
> – I am the yuleeda. You see my hands,
> we carry no benner, we come in peace.
> The spaceways are all stretterhawn. (Morgan, 1982, pp. 259-260)

The men from Mercury and the Earthmen start to understand each other, while the conversation continues as can be seen from the inclusion of each other's words in their own languages. For Boddy (2000, p. 186), "Morgan (the translator)" is at work here, since he has always been "fascinated with the way that languages are acquired," while according to Fox (2004, p. 84), "[t]his is more than just giving 'voice,' more even than Robert Crawford's description of Morgan as 'the translator, the decoder of alien messages.'" While the Mercurians question the men, "[t]hmen," and inquire after the Earthmen's leader, "yoleeda," a process of familiarisation with the English language takes place. Gradually, however, peace talks come to an end, as the men from Mercury send the Earthmen off showing at the same time an amazing and complete acquisition of the English language. However, the acquisition of English language does not strictly remain a one-way activity, for the Earthmen themselves start to talk in the Mercurian language. By the end of the poem, the two groups have swapped languages and could easily understand each other:

> – Banghapper now! Yes, third planet back.
> Yuleeda will go back blue, white, brown
> nowhanna! There is no more talk.
> – Gawl han fasthapper?
> – No. You must go back to your planet.
> Go back in peace, take what you have gained
> but quickly.
> – Stretterworra gawl, gawl…
> – Of course, but nothing is ever the same,
> now is it? You'll remember Mercury. (Morgan, 1982, p. 260)

It is now the Earthmen who are fluent in Mercurian which is what will make their expedition to Mercury memorable as is suggested by the poem's final line. Apparently, during their conversation a familiarisation process has taken place turning the aliens into mainstream figures, while the Earthmen themselves have come to be regarded as the marginalised "others." The othering process, which is overtly presented, combined with colonial implications, also bring to mind Scottish-British relations, while the marking of the Mercurian language as rude and barbaric, according to Herbert (qtd. in Gardiner, 2002, p. 144), signifies the British reception of particularly Glaswegian dialect in which Morgan was fluent. If the colonial implications are left aside, however, it could be assumed that the poem reflects how progress could be extended to inter-species communication as well, subsequently enabling humans to understand alien species' point of view.

Aside from that, Morgan's poem cleverly illustrates how everything is rather a matter of perspective. According to Watson (1997, p. 179), as a "chemical element Mercury is notably fluid, . . . and as Hermes, messenger to the gods, he is equally quick, playful, ingenious and even untrustworthy." Through the Mercurians' playful message, Morgan also challenges the anthropocentric view of the

humans as the most important species of the universe by introducing an alternative way to see things. That humanity in general is only a small part of a greater whole is emphasised once again as the "men who land on Mercury appear to believe that they are the supreme beings of the universe, only to be faced by equal or superior life forms. Their language faces similar opposition as they (and their observers, us readers) are forced to listen, learn and evolve their mother tongue to take messages away from their hosts" (Jones, 2009, para. 2). Thus, presenting a case of the fear of the unknown, as represented by the aliens in the poem, Morgan demonstrates that perhaps men are not really afraid of the aliens as much as they are afraid of a projection of their own conceptual mind-sets as reflected in their attempts at geographic and linguistic colonialism. Showing no interest in the Earthmen, the aliens adopt English language only to teach a moral lesson to the Earthmen.

Made up of one whole sentence, Morgan's intriguing poem "In Sobieski's Shield" yet again reflects Morgan's faith in progress and his belief in humanity's aptitude for change. The poem starts *in medias res* describing a family's experiences "on a minor planet / of a sun in Sobieski's Shield" after they have dematerialised and rematerialised (Morgan, 1982, p. 181). The poem, "literally deconstructs the self – dismantling the body atom by atom, dispatching the atoms to a distant planet and reassembling them" (Gregson, 2006, p. 150). The speaker, who is a survivor of "dematerialization and subsequent molecular reconstruction," reflects "anxiety at anatomical alteration in himself" (Nicholson, 2000, p. 223) and the rest of his family members. Claiming that he would not have been surprised to see himself turn into a mouse or worse, the speaker states:

> I am
> very nearly who I was I see I have only
> four fingers on my left hand and there's a sharp
> twinge I never had in my knee and one most curious
> I almost said birthmark so it is in a sense
> light brown shape like a crazy heart spreading
> across my right forearm well let it be we are
> here my wife my son the rest of the laboratory
> my wife has those streaks of fiery red in her
> hair that is expected in women . . .
> . . .
> she is hardly altered apart from that extraordinarily
> strange and beautiful crown of bright red hair (Morgan, 1982, p. 181)

Just like the speaker and his wife, the speaker's son is also more or less alright. He lost one of his nipples during re-materialization, according to his father, it is nevertheless not his worst loss: "[W]hen he speaks his boy's / treble has broken and at thirteen he is a man / what a limbo to lose childhood where has / it gone between the throwing of a switch" (Morgan, 1982, p. 182). According to the speaker, losing one's childhood in a foreign limbo is a terrible thing. Despite everything, the speaker still feels blessed for having been given a "second life" (Morgan, 1982, p. 182). In time, however, another problem surfaces. Apparently, rematerialization also comes with false memories in the form of fragments as the speaker finds himself struggling with memories of a war unbeknownst to him. Trying to pull himself together, the speaker realises that he has become "a "demonstrative man yet how to tell them / what and who I am that we are all bound to all that lived / though the barriers are unspeakable we know a little of that" (Morgan, 1982, p. 182). Although it will be difficult for him to leave everything behind, the speaker knows better than looking back and decides to grasp his second chance gratefully: "[L]et's take our second / like our first life out from the dome are the suits / ready the mineral storm is quieter it's hard / to go let's go" (Morgan, 1982, p. 183). The final remark, "let's go," neutralises the negativity of the former comment, consequently ending the poem in an optimistic note.

As is made clear by Morgan, "In Sobieski's Shield" is heroic because it is "a positive poem which shows people being aware of the most frightening changes in their life experience, but somehow determined to carry forward. 'Let's go' the poem says at the end" (Cambridge, 1997, pp. 40-1). Walker additionally identifies more in the poem to be admired:

> There is the tenderness of heart that marvels at his wife's new beauty as he draws her head into his arms . . . . There is the man's courage, his curiosity about the new environment of iron hills and lakes of mercury, and there is his deepened sense of the human bond prompted by the similarity of the new birthmark on his right forearm to the tattoo on the arm of a dead person in the First World War. Above all there is his resilience as he prepares to leave the protective 'dome' and fare forward into new life in the unknown world. (1990, p. 59)

Thus, the speaker welcomes the unfamiliar with enthusiasm. His strong willingness to adapt to change easily marks the speaker as a pioneer whose inquisitive mind is keen to explore and discover the marvels of the new frontiers that lie ahead. In this regard, the poem once again admires the adaptability of humankind into any situation and environment as a positive quality despite the negative mutations they have suffered.

Likewise, "Memories of Earth" stresses Morgan's faith in progress and mankind's ability to adapt themselves to their changing conditions despite the negative experiences the speaker of the poem and his friends are subjected to. The poem reverses the journey motif from Earth to a distant planet that is encountered in "In Sobieski's Shield," and additionally factors in the presence of a poet on a space expedition, as desired by the speaker of "For the International Poetry Incarnation." The poem is Morgan's longest science-fiction poem which portrays a group of human time-travellers whose duty is to observe and record what they witness during their travels objectively, ultimately presenting these before a council. The poem begins with a dramatic note: "My fingers tremble when I touch the tapes. / Since we came back from earth, nothing's the same" (Morgan, 1982, p. 327). The speaker of the poem is Erlkon who refrains from asking questions for fear of the, apparently tyrannical, council:

> I must avoid questions, exclamations.
> Keep your report formal, said the Council,
> your evidence is for the memory-banks,
> not for crude wonder or cruder appraisal.
> I only report that nature is not the same.
> And I report it within the spirit
> of our resolve, which is indeed our duty,
> to record whatever we've found to be (Morgan, 1982, p. 327)

Then, with a final resolve, the speaker starts to play the tapes one by one. Tape 1, which is named "The Stone," relates the experiences of Erlkon's expedition group of six that was tasked with the exploration of distant lands (Morgan, 1982, pp. 327-8). The group was expected to enter a marked stone which required them to shrink several times before they could enter it. Throughout the report, the speaker has the dilemma of whether to speak his mind out loud or to exercise self-censorship for fear of the council:

> . . . Have we moved at all?
> I am not to speculate, only to explore
> as commanded.
> . . .
> A desert in the middle of a stone!
> – Erase the exclamation mark. Surprise
> comes from old microstructure of thinking. (Morgan, 1982, p. 328)

The council, thus, represents goal-oriented scientists who are concerned with objective data rather than the recitation of subjective experience. On the other hand, since the recitation of personal experiences belongs to Erlkon, he is representative of a poet in the poem. While the council tries to keep the report strictly objective, Erlkon is determined to include subjective experience to the data provided. He asks questions, although the council strictly forbids it. In this sense, the poem exemplifies how sciences and humanities merge by taking into consideration Morgan's earlier suggestion to take poets on space voyages. The poet's underlying comments and personal observations that run on while collecting

objective data, in a sense, are what makes a difference by colouring reality and speculating about the various possible reasons and outcomes of the things past and about to come.

The group's last journey takes the expedition group to a distant galaxy within which they find "a speck of blue swirling with white / . . . a globe where millions of . . . [them] could live" (Morgan, 1982, p. 329) which is, undoubtedly, Earth. Hence, the next tape expresses a speaker who is

> . . . so confused
> Questions come thick and fast, we don't erase them.
> This is most dangerous. The Council warned
> any questioning was theirs alone.
> What makes us disobey them? There – again!
> A question and an exclamation, both.
> Are we disintegrating, are we growing? (Morgan, 1982, p. 330)

The group members' speculations grow with every other voyage eventually leading to more questions that upset the council. What they witness on Earth is a series of images from the past such as King Dozsa, who was the "leader of an unsuccessful Hungarian peasant revolt in 1514" (Nicholson, 2000, p. 225); Wordsworth, "one gaunt man," separated from his companions; then American teenagers at a drive-in movie and, finally, a Nazi extermination camp. Especially the latter affects and changes the explorers tremendously, as they keep watching painfully "an earth labouring in memories" (Morgan, 1982, p. 335). The "[m]emory of the exploitation and control they witness produces" in Erlkon's report "excluded feelings that evolve as an oppositional strategy" (Nicholson, 2000, p. 226) which explains Erlkon's inquisitive monologue at the beginning of Tape 2. By the end of the tape, the voyagers re-magnify themselves to their original size, but their peace of mind is ruined for good.

Unable to meet the expectations of the council, they get frozen and their "anti-brainwashing sessions" (Morgan, 1982, p. 336) begin. Nonetheless, they cannot refrain from thinking, as Erlkon finally comes to the conclusion that "it seems / the virtue's in the question, not the answers" and starts to wonder "What use is order / to a chained world under a painted sky?" (Morgan, 1982, p. 337). As a result, once they are released from anti-brainwashing sessions, they meet in secret to "study how to change this life" (Morgan, 1982, p. 338). Having the best of technology within an arm's reach helps, as they start to create "a source of life" bred in "pain and joy" (Morgan, 1982, p. 338). According to Nicholson (2000, p. 227), "Memories of Earth," hence, "sings of aliens' 'first disobedience, and the fruit / Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste / Brought pain into their world, and all their woe,' a transgression that expands the subject towards political freedoms," much like Winston Smith in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Ever hopeful of the future, although the poem does not cast light onto the issue of a possible revolt, Morgan emphasises his faith in progress once again, for the explorers vow to hold onto their memories of Earth in spite of the council's brainwashing efforts.

Conclusion

In none of the poems analysed above, Morgan's speakers are hesitant to take the next step. On the contrary, in each of them, the speakers are quite curious and eager to explore, experience and discover. Influenced by the progress that had been done via the Space programmes, Morgan as a pioneer in poetry, if not really in space travel, imagined possible voyages into space where distant settlements are nothing to be sad about and interactions between humans and non-human species are not really terrible encounters with disastrous effects. Even in his post-apocalyptic poems in which Earth is clearly destroyed, Morgan employs an optimistic attitude trying to uncover with earnest interest what the future has in store for humanity. Rather than nostalgically dwelling on the past and remembering it fondly, Morgan's science-fiction poems demonstrate a future where moving forward is the only viable option. Thus, instead of presenting a post-apocalyptic future which is trying to come to terms with its past, Morgan continuously invents characters who are eager to move forward. By putting emphasis on the positive effects of science and technology such as a firm belief in progress, adaptability of humankind to any environment regardless of the challenging physical conditions, rather than their devastating results, Morgan anticipates futuristic settings where mutability is a rather natural and welcome phenomenon, and where there are poets to

record these changes as they come along. The way Morgan regards it, moving forward is a necessity of evolution and in today's post-human world where distinctions between animal, plant and AI have been blurred, it is only logical that mankind adapts to change and fits into his new surroundings without any remorse or nostalgia.

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