reprise par l'évêque MARBODE, en son *Liber Lapidum*, puis passe dans la première version française, XII siècle: 'Cil ki diacodos avra/Par aive diviner porra/E saveir des secrez desus/Ne nule piere ne valt plus.' Cf. STUDER P. & EVANS J., *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, Paris, 1924, *Glossary*, s.v. diacocos. Les variantes 'diacodos, diadocode' de la version susdite v. 913 du Lapidaire de Cambridge, v. 1294, rendraient vraisemblable la leçon 'dyodake' d'E.M., la métathèse vocalique se justifiant aisément par la rime 'S. Jake'.)

WORDS AND PLACES IN THE WRITINGS OF EDWARD THOMAS

By MAIRE A. QUINN

IN 1911 an edition of Isaac Taylor's *Words and Places* appeared, edited and introduced by Edward Thomas.[1] The fact that Edward Thomas undertook to edit Isaac Taylor's scholarly study of the derivation, meaning and distribution of place-names witnesses to his enthusiasm for place-names and place-name lore. This is an aspect of Edward Thomas's work which has been overlooked until now because much of his writing on the subject is contained in his rather inaccessible and generally neglected prose works and book reviews. In this essay I propose to consider some facets of Edward Thomas's approach to place-names, paying particular attention to his keen interest in their historical dimension. Familiarity with his approach to 'words and places' will help to illuminate the poet's achievement in 'The Combe', a poem which is the product of a lifetime's musings on ancient names and places.

It must be admitted at the outset that for Edward Thomas part of the charm of place-names is due to their intrinsic poetry. In *The Icknield Way*, for instance, he refers to 'the fascination of a roll-call of country names'[2] and his poems for his children exploit the delights of such a roll-call:

> If I should ever by chance grow rich
> I'll buy Codham, Cockridden and Childerditch,
> Roses, Pyrgo, and Lapwater...
>
> *(If I Should Ever by Chance)*

> Wingle Tye and Margaretting
> Tye — and Skreens, Bandish, and Pickerells,
> Martins, Lambkins and Lilliputs...
>
> *(If I were to Own)*

His joy in such quaint rural names finds similar expression in excited torrents of place-names in *The South Country:*

[1] J.M. Dent, London, 1911.
[2] *The Icknield Way*, London, 1913, p. 12.

How goodly are the names hereabouts! – Dinas Dene . . .
Balk Shaw, Cream Crox, Dicky May's Field, Ivy Hatch,
Lady Lands, Lady's Wood, Upper and Lower Robsacks,
Obram Wood, Ruffits, Styants Mead, the Shode, and, of
course, a Starvecrow.
What a flavour there is about the Bassetts, the Boughtons,
the Worthys, the Warrants, Winterbournes, Deverills,
Manningfords, the Suttons: what goodly names of the
South Country – Woodmansterne, Hollingbourne, Horsmonden,
Wolstanbury, Brockenhurst, Coburn, Lydiard Tregoze,
Lydiard Millicent, Clevancy, Amesbury, Amberley (I once
tried to make a beautiful name and it was Amberley, in
which Time had forestalled me); what sweet names
Penshurst, Frenshaw, Firle, Nutley, Appleshaw, Hambledon,
Cranbrook, Fordingbridge, Milksham, Lamburn, Draycot,
Buscot, Kelmscot, Yotton, Yolding, Downe, Cowden, Iping . . .[3]

In a review of R.A. Beckett's *Romantic Essex* he records his gratitude
for the 'mere repetition of such names as Ashingdon, Cressengs, Haver-
ing-atte-Bowe, Sible Hedingham, Parndon, Roydon and the like',[4] and a
review of W.H. Davies' *Songs of Joy and Others* praises the poet for
making 'an exquisite music of some old Monmouthshire names that were
sweet, but never so sweet'.[5] Elsewhere, he refers to the recurring names
of old inns as possessing 'the charm of fixed epithets and phrases re-
curring in ballads and the Homeric poems'.[6] Place-names are for Thomas
redolent of the whimsical and elusive native genius of England. He once
referred to them as 'a well of native English undefiled'[7] and some of the
most racy and incomprehensible of these names are attributed to Lob,
the incarnation of this native English genius:

> 'Twas he first called the Hog's Back the Hog's Back,
> That Mother Dunch's Buttocks should not lack
> Their name was his care. He too could explain
> Totteridge and Totterdown and Juggler's Lane:
> He knows, if anyone. Why Tumbling Bay,
> Inland in Kent, is called so, he might say.
>
> (*Lob*)

[3] *The South Country*, London, 1932, pp. 51 and 153.
[4] 'The Daily Chronicle', 1st May, 1901.
[5] Ibid., 30th January, 1912.
[6] 'The Morning Post', 22nd November, 1906.
[7] 'The Academy', 22nd March, 1902.

Thomas, however, delights not only in the poetry of place-names but
also in their historical dimension:

> Few in the multitude of us who handle maps are without some vague
> awe at the Old English lettering of the names of ancient things, such
> as Merry Maidens, Idlebush Barrow, Crugian Ladies, or plain Carn,
> Long Barrow or Dolmen . . . We are touched in our sense of unmeasured
> antiquity, we acknowledge the honour and the darkness of the human
> inheritance.[8]

In *The Heart of England* he points to the historical aspect of London
place-names which are 'an epitome of the world and time'. London street
names commemorate the history of the world, 'famous and unknown men;
battles, conspiracies, far-off cities and rivers', but the city's place-
names also recall an earlier phase of English history when much of the
urban area of London was still open country. Its street names serve as a
reminder of 'streams and hills now buried by houses' while the names of
its inns, 'as rich as the titles of books in an old library', suggest 'many
an inn by wood and mill and meadow and village square'.[9] A notice list-
ing the names of copses and woods where underwood is for sale provides
the impetus for a journey backward in time. At Penshurst he read the
following names: Black Hoath Wood, Heronry Pond, Marlpet Field, Tap-
ner's Wood, Ashour Farm, Sidney's Coppice, Weir Field, Well Place. In
this case it is the seventeenth century literary associations of the place-
names that lead to a recovery of the past:

> I was back in Sidney's time, remembering that genial poem of Ben
> Jonson's 'To Penshurst' and especially the lines:
>
> > Thy copse too named of Gamage thou hast there
> > . . . .
> > Each branch doth yield the conies; and the tops
> > Fertile of wood. Ashore and Sidney's copps,
> > To crown thy open table, doth provide
> > The purple pheasant with the speckled side.[10]

Edward Thomas's *Celtic Stories* points to yet another facet of the link
between past and present afforded by ancient places and place-names.
The fact that Arthurian legend employs place-names still extant in Wales

[8] *The Icknield Way*, p. 32.
[9] *The Heart of England*, London, 1906, p. 9.
[10] *The South Country*, p. 207.

means that 'a man today could walk in the steps of Kilhugh and Rhona-bury'.[11] In his retelling of Arthurian legend Thomas is careful to pre-serve these place-names. His story of 'Kilhugh and Olwen', for instance, contains references to the 'Stag of Redynvre', the 'owl of Cwm Cawl-wyrd', the 'Eagle of Gwern Abbey' and the 'Salmon of Llyn Llyn'. An-other of his *Celtic Stories* seems specially designed to illustrate his remark that 'a man today could walk in the footsteps' of these old Cel-tic heroes:

> Arthur sent out the swiftest hunters, and with them Dridwyn and his own hound Cavall. They hunted through St. David's and Milford and over the Presselly Mountains, through Cardigan and back along the valleys of the river Loughor and the Aman, over the Black Mountains and the Beacon of Caermarthen, into the Tawy Valley, and over the Beacons of Brecknock... At the pool of Ewin in Bettws on the slopes of the valley where Aman runs into Loughor, the boar turned upon Arthur himself and slew heroes as well as hounds and yet escaped. He was making eastwards away from these fatal valleys towards the Severn, and Arthur summoned all Cornwall and Devon to meet him at the estuary of the Severn.[12]

In the case of the Arthurian cycle, then, the use of place-names still extant results in a rapprochement of the heroic ages and the contem-porary world.

For Thomas, however, the most important contribution of the place-name to the establishment of a relationship between the historical and the contemporary resides in the fact that such a place-name is actually a living oral communication from the past. Isaac Taylor had stressed that the place-name is a medium of historical communication in *Words and Places:*

> Local names... are never mere arbitrary sounds, devoid of meaning. They may always be regarded as records of the past, inviting and re-warding a careful historical interpretation...

> ...the name of a district or of a town may speak to us of events which written history has failed to communicate.

> The names of places are conservative of the more archaic forms of a living language, or they embalm for us the guise and fashion of speech in eras the most remote.[13]

[11] *Celtic Stories*, Oxford, 1911, p.127.
[12] Ibid., p.108.
[13] *Words and Places*, (1864) pp.1-2.

In *The Last Sheaf* Edward Thomas quotes some lines of Wordsworth's which testify to his own awareness of the importance of the place-names as a means of communication between past and present:

> Mark how all things swerve
> From their known course, or vanish like a dream;
> Another language spreads from coast to coast;
> Only perchance some melancholy Stream
> And some indignant Hills old names preserve,
> When laws and creeds and people all are lost.[14]

Thomas is conscious of the history latent in place-names and desires to probe beneath the poetry of these names to come to terms with their meaning:

> If only those poems which are place-names could be translated at last, the pretty, the odd, the romantic, the racy names of copse and field and lane and house.[15]

On one occasion he envisaged Malory as a poet who read 'the legends written tersely in the names of crag and forest'.[16] It must be noted that Thomas did not naively envisage the place-name as a direct communica-tion from antiquity, undistorted by the passage of time. In a review of W.P. Duignan's *Notes on Staffordshire Place-names* he deals with this very issue, remarking that in the matter of the preservation of place-names 'the chapter of accidents is large; for invaders and hasty scribes shamefully mauled the words' but concluding that 'in most cases the soul of a place-name is immortal; like the mountains, the brook, the way-side oak, for which it stands, 'sedet aeternumque sedebit'.'[17]

The fact that Thomas contributed a preface to Isaac Taylor's *Words and Places* is evidence of his serious interest in the subject of histori-cal communication. He even undertakes Taylor's role of explaining place-names on occasion. An answer to a query of Gordon Bottomley's, for instance, elicits the following explanation of the word 'Winterbourne':

> A Winterbourne is a river running only in the winter. They are common in the chalk. All the Summer you can walk over their grassy beds and under their bridges, as a rule. They give part of the names of many

[14] *The Last Sheaf*, London, 1928, p.104.
[15] *The South Country*, p.153.
[16] 'Literature', 7th October, 1899.
[17] 'The Academy', 22nd March, 1902.

villages in Dorset and Wiltshire.[18]

In *The South Country* he points out that Beisgawen 'bears a name that connects it with the assembling and rivalry of the bards of Britain'.[19] He notes that 'the name Ewell, like that of the Oxfordshire Ewelme, seems and is said to be connected with the presence of Water'.[20] In the course of a review in 'The Morning Post' he lists some villages 'whose names record that they once stood out a little above the primeval marsh — names record that they once stood out a little above the primeval marsh — Childrey, Goosey, Pusey, Charney, Hanney, and Tabney...'.[21] Elsewhere he questions a writer's connection of the 'bury' in Buryclose with burial.[22]

The title of Isaac Taylor's book, *Words and Places*, aptly designates Thomas's approach to the subject of historical places and place-names, both elements being frequently found intertwined in his writing. It is not a case of a failure to distinguish between the two entities for in 'Words' he carefully discriminates between 'name' and 'thing':

> Make me content
> With some sweetness
> From Wales...
> From Wiltshire and Kent
> And Herefordshire
> And the villages there —
> From the names and the things
> No less...

A near interchangeability of ancient place-name and place in Thomas's writing arises from the fact that he looks on both as a communication from the past and, therefore, applies to both the same metaphor of verbal transmission. The deliberate blurring of the distinctions between place-name and place in this regard may be seen in operation in the following passage from *The South Country:*

> ... if we but knew or cared every wavering line of hedge or path or road were an inscription, brief as an epitaph, in many languages and characters. But most of us know only a few of these unspoken languages of the past and only a few words in each.[23]

[18]*Letters from Edward Thomas to Gordon Bottomley*, edited by R.G. Thomas, London, 1968, p. 169.
[19]*The South Country*, p. 163.
[20]*In Pursuit of Spring*, London, 1914, p. 49.
[21]'The Morning Post, 20th August, 1908.
[22]'The Daily Chronicle', 22nd July, 1909.
[23]*The South Country*, p. 155.

Here the allusion to an ancient site as a 'brief' phrase from one of the 'unspoken languages of the past', a reference which would furnish an apt definition for an ancient place-name, inevitably effects a merger between 'name' and 'thing'. An even more obvious instance of this synthesizing process may be observed in another passage in *The Heart of England:*

> A dolmen rises out of the wheat in one field, like a quotation from an unknown language in the fair page of a book. The names of the places are in the same language, and yet how smoothly they issue from the lips.[24]

Here ancient place and ancient place-name are juxtaposed and the metaphor of verbal transmission is applied to both. Nevertheless, while drawing on such metaphors to illuminate his theory of the past's communication with the present through historic places and place-names alike, Thomas does manage to maintain a fine distinction between 'word' and 'place'. It will be noted that while the place-name makes an oral contribution ('issue from the lips') the place offers an 'inscription' in 'characters' and is 'like a quotation... in the fair page of a book'.

In his use of the metaphor of the written word to describe the kind of access to the past offered us by an historic site Thomas makes use of an image which Hardy also employed to similar purpose. Interviewed on the subject of Stonehenge, for instance, Hardy had the following observation to make:

> A nation like our own ought to have what may be called a final guardianship over any monument or relic which is of value to it as a page of history, even though the hieroglyphics of such monument or relic cannot be deciphered as yet.[25]

Stonehenge is here referred to both as a 'page of history' and a series of undeciphered hieroglyphics. In like manner Hardy's recognition of the antiquity of England as a whole also finds expression in the metaphor of 'charactery':

> ... these ancient lands
> Enchased and lettered as a tomb
> And scored with prints of perished hands...[26]

[24]*The Heart of England*, p. 128.
[25]*Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*, edited by Harold Orel, London, 1967, p. 197.
[26]'On an Invitation to the United States', *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy*, London, 1968, p. 99.

Unlike Thomas, however, Hardy does not advert to the fact that the ancient place-name is an oral transmission from antiquity so that this aspect of the communication of past and present is not to be encountered in his writings.

The coupling and near interchangeability of place-name and place in Thomas's historical meditations is due to an awareness that through the medium of ancient place and ancient place-name alike temporal barriers may be overcome and past and present may enter into communication. Some places proclaim themselves ancient by means of their appearance and structure; the antiquity of others is attested to by their names. Thomas's association of ancient place-name and place springs from a recognition of their equality as historical media.

In the introduction to *Words and Places* Thomas remarked that 'Studies like Canon Taylor's can only feed the roots of the imagination...' and in his own case the poetic flowering resultant on his fascination with 'words and places' may best be seen in the poem, 'The Combe'. In this poem, by a combination of ancient Celtic place-names and a wooded combe reminiscent of ancient Celtic landscape, Thomas seeks to create a fastness of early English civilization. Our foregoing study of Thomas's concern with ancient places, place-names and their role as media between antiquity and the modern world helps to illuminate his intent in this poem for in 'The Combe' he is 'the great writer [who] so uses the words of everyday that they become a code of his own which the world is bound to learn...'[27] In 'The Combe' this code is written in the ancient Celtic tongue transmitted to contemporary man by means of place-names and the poem's precise reference to the English past only becomes transparent when we have understood the linguistic connection between the words 'combe' and 'badger'.

'Combe', meaning valley or hollow ground, is a word dating back to the Celtic world of ancient Britain, the earliest stratum of English civilization of which we have any linguistically communicated record. That Thomas was aware of the antiquity of the word is probable in view of his keen interest in the derivation and meaning of place-names, combe being a fairly common place-name component. It is also noteworthy that Celtic place-names, in particular, fascinated Thomas. Reviewing W.P. Duignan's *Notes on Staffordshire Place-names* he displays an eagerness 'to be on the scent of a Celtic origin' and regrets 'the paltry number of instances of a transition from British into Anglo Saxon', lamenting the

[27] *The South Country*, p.136.

fact that although 'names are a nation at least as old as the Jews we can seldom trace them beyond Anglo Saxon times'.[28] In the unlikely event that Thomas was ignorant of the Celtic origins of the word 'combe' the lack would have been supplied by Isaac Taylor's *Words and Places*. Isaac Taylor treats of the word 'combe' at some length on two occasions:

> The word 'cwm' is very frequently used in Wales, where it denotes a cup-shaped depression in the hills. This word, in the Saxonised form 'combe', often occurs in English local names, especially in those countries where the Celtic element is strong. In Devonshire we have Ilfracombe, Yarcombe, and Combe Martin; and the combes among the Mendip Hills are very numerous. The Celtic county of Cumberland has been supposed to take its name from the 'combes' with which it abounds. Anderson, a Cumberland poet, says of his native county:
>
> > There's Cunwhitton, Cumwhinton, Cumranton,
> > Cumrangan, Cumrew, and Cumeatch,
> > And many mair Cums i the County,
> > But nin wi' Cumdivock can match.

. . . .

Combe was an early loan-word from the Celtic, appearing as 'cwm' in modern Welsh names, such as Cwm Bechan, and in Strath Clyde taking the form 'cum', as Cumwhitton and Cumdivock, both in Cumberland. It is not, however, confined to these districts, as we have Combe in Surrey, and High Wycombe in Bucks. Winchcombe in Gloucestershire is called in a charter 'Wincelcumb', glossed 'in angulo vicus' (A.S. wincel, a corner). Comb is found in Wessex charters in the eight century, and then vanishes from English literature till 1578. A combe is usually a hollow in a hillside, and corresponds in meaning to 'hope', a word which takes its place in certain northern and Mercian districts.[29]

Although 'badger' is not an early loan-word from the Celtic its ancient Celtic equivalent, 'broc', still persists in place-names. The badger is, in fact, the only surviving animal whose early Celtic name is still extant.[30] Again it may be pointed out that if Thomas were unaware of the connection between 'badger' and the Celtic term 'broc' a reading of Isaac Taylor would have remedied the deficiency, for Taylor twice equates 'badger' and 'broc':

[28] 'The Academy', 22nd March, 1902.
[29] *Words and Places*, pp.173 and 244.
[30] A.C. Baugh, *A History of the English Language*, New York, 1965 pp.85-6.

The badger or broc gave its name to Bagshot, Broxburne, and Broxden...
Other wild animals whose names often occur are... the Badger or
Broc, at Bagshot, at Broxbourne, and at Brokenborough in Wilts, an-
ciently Broken-eber-egge, or Badger-boar-corner...[31]

The South Country provides a concrete instance of Thomas's associa-
tion of the badger with early Celtic civilization. In a description of a
Cornwall the following observation occurs: 'A cormorant flies low across
the sky — that sable bird which seems to belong to the old time, the
time of badger and beaver, of ancient men who rose up out of the crags
of this coast'.[32] However, it is the concluding line of 'The Combe' it-
self, where Thomas refers to the badger as 'That most ancient Briton of
English beasts', which provides the final and most authoritative com-
ment on the poet's reason for the choice of the badger. This line makes
it obvious that Thomas was aware of the fact that the badger is the only
surviving animal whose early Celtic name is still extant.

The rarity of early Celtic survivals in modern English makes the
coupling of 'combe' and 'badger' seem decidedly more than a fortuitous
occurence. The choice of the combe as the badger's habitat would seem
rather to be prompted by the fact that the badger is indigenous to the
combe, both being survivals from Britain's ancient Celtic era. An ana-
logous example of an historical rapport between scene and animal in
Thomas's writings occurs in *The Last Sheaf*:

> Once I met a small bear in one of the tangled dells in the neighbour-
> hood. He was curled up in the sun between bushes of gorse, and his
> master's head was buried in his fur. If the bear had been alone it
> might have been a scene in Britain before Caesar's time, but though
> it was 1904 the bear looked indigenous. This dell is one of those
> which may be natural or artificial, or perhaps partly both, a small
> natural combe...[33]

Another passage in *The Last Sheaf* also helps to illuminate the his-
torical significance which Thomas attaches to such a place as the
combe. Writing of chalk-pits which form 'islands of copse in the midst of
arable' he has the following observations to make:

> These islands are attractive largely, I think, because they suggest
> fragments of primeval forest that have been left untouched by the

[31] *Words and Places*, pp. 331 and 400.
[32] *The South Country*, p. 160.
[33] *The Last Sheaf*, p. 36.

> plough on account of their roughness... One is so broken up by
> the uneven diggings, the roots of trees, and the riot of brambles that a
> badger is safe in it with a whole pack of children... The old chalk
> pits, being too steep and rough to be cultivated, soon grow into pla-
> ces as wild as ancient Britain.[34]

Many of the characteristics of the chalk pit, noted here, are similar to
those of the combe in the poem. Both are 'steep and rough' and situated
in the chalk. 'Uneven diggings' anticipates the 'steps' of the poem, the
'roots of trees' are common to both scenes and the 'riot of brambles' in
the chalk pit has its counterpart in the 'bramble, thorn and briar' of the
combe. Both settings also offer a place of refuge to the badger. Not only
do Thomas's prose description of a chalk pit and his poem 'The Combe'
have many details in common but the vein of fancy aroused by such a
setting in the prose is remarkably similar to that suggested in the poem.
'Uneven diggings', roots, brambles, chalk, steepness and roughness, the
presence of a badger, such things in combination set Thomas's mind
thinking on the 'primeval', on the 'wildness of ancient Britain'. In the
poem the method is much less direct than in the prose passage and the
descriptive details are shaped into new and more imaginative patterns
but this prose analogue, nevertheless, may help to substantiate part of
the underlying significance of 'The Combe'. Awareness of 'The Combe's
early Celtic bias seems to warrant a fresh analysis of the work.

The darkness of the combe, twice stressed in the opening line, sets
it apart from its surroundings and endows it with an air of mystery, of
uniqueness and antiquity. It recalls, for instance, the brooding darkness
of Egdon heath at the beginning of Hardy's *The Return of the Native* and,
like it, conjures up a vision of a primitive land in mysterious communi-
cation with primeval forces, preserving alive the dark rites of the past.
Elsewhere, Thomas also refers to the remote past in terms of darkness.
Commenting on his reaction to ancient lettering on maps in *The Icknield
Way* he writes: 'We are touched in our sense of unmeasured antiquity, we
acknowledge the honour and the darkness of the human inheritance.'[35]
In *The Last Sheaf* he again associates darkness and antiquity in his ex-
planation of the place-name, 'Dark Lane': 'Travel has hollowed out this
descent, bramble and furze bushes on the banks help to darken it. Yet
the name of 'Dark Lane' is due rather to the sense of its ancientness
than to an extremity of shade'.[36] The combe is dark, also, in its secret-

[34] Ibid., pp. 31-3.
[35] *The Icknield Way*, p. 32.
[36] *The Last Sheaf*, p. 51.

iveness and taciturnity, in its withdrawal from the modern scene, 'dark' being in this case, the visual equivalent of the anthropomorphic expression, 'its mouth is stopped'. On yet another semantic level the phrase, 'its mouth is stopped', implies a physical barrier, an impediment to exit or entrance, and the 'bramble, thorn and briar' guard the inviolability of the combe by rendering it almost impenetrable. The 'bramble, thorn and briar', in turn, as we have already noted, conjure up the thickets and briary wilderness of ancient Celtic England. At first, the combe's introvertedness, its aloofness from twentieth century civilization, is matched by the indifference and incuriosity of the modern world in its regard:

> And no one scrambles over the sliding chalk
> By beech and yew and perishing juniper
> Down the half precipies of its sides, with roots
> And rabbit holes for steps...

The idea of difficulty of access made plain in earlier lines is reinforced by such words as 'scrambles', 'sliding', and 'half precipices', all of which point to the arduousness and danger of the descent into the combe, but that this fortress of the past is not impossible of penetration is conveyed by the mention of 'steps'. They are, however, the kind of steps that only a country lover would recognise as such, 'roots and rabbit holes'. It seems that, as so often in Thomas's poetry, the inference is that the past is approached only through the rural present, as indeed it is in this poem itself. The combe is immune to temporal change, unaffected by the seasonal cycle, by the passage of day and night:

> The sun of Winter,
> The moon of Summer...
> Are quite shut out...

Its solitary visitor is 'the missel thrush that loves juniper' and the even greater isolation of the combe in the future is indicated by the fact that juniper is 'perishing'.

The combe of this poem, as we have sought to establish from a comparison of external and internal evidence, is a fortress of the ancient Celtic world, a relic of the oldest stratum of English civilization. So far, in terms of landscape and its flora and fauna, Thomas has been attempting to define the sort of relationship that previously subsisted between early English civilization and its latterday counterpart. The final part of the poem treats of the violent disruption of this relationship of past and present. The focus now shifts to the badger and to the combe as his ha-

bitat. The whole build-up of detail in the poem which invests the combe with the sacredness of an inviolate sanctuary of Celtic antiquity endows the badger with a kind of hieratic dignity. This attitude is strengthened by the deliberate avoidance of all description of the badger, the purposeful abstention from any mention of distinguishing characteristics that would individualize him. He remains simply 'the badger', the tutelary deity of the combe, custodian and symbol of the ancient Celtic world of Britain, 'That most ancient Briton of English beasts'. The word 'Briton' in this, the concluding line, may be used to stress the fact that the civilization that left us the words 'broc' and 'combe' was the foundation of modern British civilization so as to emphasize the continuity that should exist between ancient and modern. The killing of the badger in the context of the poem as a whole is not merely a piece of localized brutality but an act of violence perpetrated against the past, resulting in the further estrangement of an already tenuous relationship:

> The Combe was ever dark, ancient and dark.
> . . . .
> But far more ancient and dark
> The Combe looks since they killed the badger there ...

Exactly what violation of England's past Thomas is referring to in 'The Combe' is difficult to determine from the context. It is most probable, however, that the poem, written in December 1914, was intended as an oblique commentary on the mortal threat to the English heritage posed by the First World War.

On the basis of Edward Thomas's imaginative interest in ancient place-names and places I have argued that the combe and the badger of 'The Combe' are related not only spatially within the poem but linguistically and historically as well and that their relationship as representatives of the early Celtic civilization of Britain is intrinsic to the poem's meaning. A failure to understand the implications of Thomas's choice of flora and fauna on this occasion accounts for such strained interpretations of the poem's conclusion as C. Day Lewis's:

> The ancient Briton metaphor derives added colour, it may be, from the badger's head — white, with a black streak on either side — which, if we substitute for black the dark blue of woad, gives us an association with the woad-stained white faces of ancient Britons.[37]

[37] C. Day Lewis, 'The Poetry of Edward Thomas', *Essays by Divers Hands* (transactions of the Royal Society of Literature), vol. xxviii, London, 1956.

This is a very ingenious explanation of the badger's association with ancient Britain but it is alien to Thomas's habitual approach to historical material. A correct reading of 'The Combe', in fact, would seem to demand historical and onomatological equipment similar to Thomas's own or, at least, a familiarity with his approach to 'words and places'. 'The Combe' illustrates how studies like Canon Taylor's fed the roots of Edward Thomas's poetic imagination.

ON THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN SYNTAX AND LOGIC

By Zdzislaw Kempf

THE subject of the present article is the assertion that the main categories of internal syntax which appear within a simple sentence, such as subject, predicate, object and other modifiers, are not grammatical but logical means. The ground for such an opinion may be the fact that the above-mentioned categories of syntax are not expressed by grammatical means in most languages best known and investigated. They are, then, not expressed grammatically in the Indo-European, Semitic and Ural-Altaic languages. The opposite pole of our conception, however, is the assertion that the mentioned syntactical categories may be denoted with grammatical means and that there are languages in the world in which they are just in such way uttered.

The mechanism of language communication in a great degree is founded upon formal distinctiveness called relevance. The word as a language sign of an out-of-language context becomes a form only when it stands in opposition to other adjacent words and when it differentiates from them becoming relevant. Opposition and relevance are then the grounds for language communication and condition of understanding, to begin with phonemes which owing to their oppositional character differ from positional variants, up towards the uppermost units — the syntagmata which must also be in opposition to deserve the name of forms. But we are aware of a strange phenomenon that in most languages there are arranged in oppositions even sentences and clauses in the parataxis and hypotaxis, for they have their language indicators; on the other hand, however, such categories as subject, predicate etc. are not set in opposition, thus they are not language forms.

Without doubt the exigency of relevance by using forms contrasted and oppositive is different in various languages. We deal thus with diverse types of language formalism. If we recognize namely as a language form a lexical element widened by a morpheme, e.g. by a flexional termination, then treating matters only morphologically we should recognize as the most distinctive in a formal sense the Tabasaranian language in the north-east Caucasus which according to L. Hjelmslev's[1] opinion pos-

[1]Louis Hjelmslev, La catégorie des cas, Acta Jutlandica VII, 1, pp. 137-8, Aarhus (Denmark), 1935 (tome I).