

WOMEN AND THE PASSION

By PAMELA HAYES

H-WING IN Durham Gaol! My reflection began with the thought of the women in the high-security wing of Durham prison: women for whom human passion had somehow lost its real life-giving intention; women whose lives were so securely controlled that they were constrained to suffer all that happened to them in a new experience of passion. Surely here was the Christ of the Passion, for here was the human sin-situation marked out, defined and confined, calling forth the forgiveness and healing of Jesus, in a passion of love that finally strung him up on the gallows-tree of the cross. In these tomb-like walls Christ was still labouring to bring forth, from the womb of the Passion, the risen and ever-rising Christ of each man and each woman. It was then that I realized that any reflection made on the women in the Passion, in the context of the Third and Fourth Weeks of the Exercises, required some preliminary consideration of the terms used in the title.

Passion and passivity

There is a tendency in popular thinking to equate passion with the biological drive of sex instead of distinguishing it from undifferentiated sexual energy as the essential power in love that attracts and drives towards union: the inner dynamism of the cosmos. In itself, passion is an irrational power with both destructive and creative potential, requiring intention to direct its creative human possibilities. It can destroy us from within. But harnessed and so integrated into the human personality, its dynamic power can transform and give meaning to human life and death. When, therefore, God is a person's true centre and whole intention, passion releases from the pure intent of the will a strength and dynamic power of energy that gains in momentum from its unified direction. Then the person is both liberated from all that is not ordered to God, and somehow carried, in the powerful flow of passionate love, towards God. Passion, then, is a yearning, a

reaching out, with every fibre of the body-person to the fulness of life and meaning in God. It is an intense psycho-physical thrust of the whole person, that focusses all our sensibilities and fuses all our faculties into one unifying process directed towards union with God.¹

It was this flame of passion that fashioned the human response of Jesus to union with the will of his Father, until in dying, he cast the flame into the earth, longing for it to catch fire. One single passion possessed Jesus at the very core of his being: its intentional object was the Father; its dynamic energy the Spirit. For the mystery of the Trinity is the mystery of pure passion: passion without limits, yet still a passion that must flow out in unconditional, universal love, that we see as *the Passion*.

The term 'passion' is not readily associated with the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Closer attention to the dynamic process of the Exercises, however, makes it clear that St Ignatius is applying the dynamic of passion to the whole process. His concern throughout is that we should conserve our strength for God and his work. In the First Week the purpose of the Exercises is to identify the true intention of people, and then to remove all disordered passions from hindering their way. But, in the Second Week the process is pursued more relentlessly. Not only is the question of intention considered more personally, as each exercitant is asked to listen carefully for the election call, but, by means of the contemplations on the person of Jesus, every attempt is made to harness the affective powers to their loving intent. In fact, the whole contemplating and discerning process of the Second Week is concerned with the intimate interrelating of affectivity and 'effectivity': the love of desire and the love of the will. Moreover, while the meditations on the Two Standards and the Three Classes highlight choice in portraying the power of passion to influence, the exercise on the Three Kinds of Humility definitely moves from simple willed choice, and acceptance of the will of God, to a level of response that can no longer operate except in terms of a passion of love. In the third kind of humility the words change together with the mood: 'desire' enters more conspicuously, and the prayer simply re-echoes the oblation to Christ the King at the beginning of the Second Week (Exx 167,98). Its ultimate significance, however, lies in the context of the Election, and so of preparation for entry into the Third Week. Only the active passion of love, albeit as a free gift of God, makes it possible to enter into the Passion of

the Third Week. Without it, we have not the strength to receive the passive passion that awaits us, in our measure, as it awaited Jesus.

The term 'passion', however, also speaks to us meaningfully of passivity: of receiving rather than giving, of suffering in place of doing; and we still tend to associate the term with pain: the passivity we find unpleasant.

Passivity dominates at the beginning and end of our lives, but it also impinges at every stage. It can come in the form of mental or physical illness or an operation, when waiting and receiving, and often feeling reduced to being simply a body, we are called 'a patient'. In our own day passivity is becoming a reality in the experience of those who are unemployed and feel that they have lost status. Most poignantly of all, it comes with the death of a loved one: in bereavement, with its jagged edge and empty space in the heart, waiting for time's healing is all that can be done. All this, without mentioning the hurts of rejection and broken relationships, and the deeper spiritual experiences that test our faith and hope and love to their uttermost limits. The pain comes from the fact that we are somehow no longer really in control of our lives. Life is happening to us. We are exposed to life and dependent upon others. We are object rather than subject, and this seems to be more truly the case as we age, so that in the last analysis, we are being directed to the quality of our being, as that which seems ultimately important.

This truth, which comes to us from the process of life's experience, seems to be given to us as the mystery hidden within the gospel story. The whole momentum of each gospel accelerates, like an eager driver nearing home, as it moves towards the Passion, understood as the whole process by which Jesus is handed over, from the kiss of Judas in Gethsemane to all that would be done to him right up to his death. Aware that the Passion is the climax of his incarnation, the purpose of his mission on earth, Jesus uses all the passionate power of his divine-human intent actively to choose to be handed over unconditionally to his Passion (Mark 14,32-36). Life for Jesus meant quite literally suffering the divine as well as the happenings of his human life: such was the total pattern of his obedience. But there is a further mystery of the phasing of activity and passivity in Jesus's life. During his public ministry Jesus revealed the glory of his Father in his works and words. But mature love cannot be fully revealed except in mutual giving and

receiving. The Passion of Jesus was necessary for the full revelation of divine glory. The Father had not only to be glorified by the Son, but the Son had to allow the Father to glorify him. He had to receive totally. He had to enter his Passion. Only thus could be made manifest the fulness of divine glory in the Trinity: the mutuality of divine love (John 13-17).

This leads us to a further discovery about passivity and passion, because it is of the essence of love that it is waiting: waiting for a response. For love must hope and believe because it has an object. But equally, it is vulnerable, capable of hurt, precisely because it is waiting for a response. This is suffering. So active passion generates the capacity for passive passion. The mystery of it all is that, however painful the experience, few would forego its pain or dependence. Any hitherto independent person who begins to love authentically enters into a new dimension of life's potential. Like autumn leaves in the wind, all is in disarray. There is no holding the leaves as they sail in the utter freedom of the wind. But the beauty of it remains.

What, in short, we are being invited to see is that the real mystery of life as open to transcendence is only reached when we accept to pass over from the active I'm-in-control, to the passive attitude of allowing life to happen to us. For the mystery at the heart of human life is the making actual of its potential for divine transfiguration. For all creation this means entering into passion because this is the truth: Resurrection comes and is always coming at the heart of the Passion. Still, what remains clear is that the stature of waiting is far beyond anything that we can explain.² It also is mystery, and as such unites the two poles of active and passive passion. T. S. Eliot captures the paradox in *East Coker*:³

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
 For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love
 For love would be love of the wrong thing; yet there is faith
 But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting . . .
 So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing . . .
 The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy
 Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony
 Of death and birth.

Passivity and woman

Passivity in our increasingly psyche-conscious age, however, inevitably leads us to 'woman', not simply as woman, but as the

feminine aspect of humanity: Jung's *anima* with all its symbolic undertones in the field of depth psychology.⁴

For centuries man appears to have been struggling to master the earth, until technological achievement seems to suggest that man, the worker, could be redundant to his world. Evolution, in our time, seems to be demanding not just sight or even foresight but insight: the capacity to explore the 'inside', the within of things. Human growth appears truly to demand that man move full-circle, in and through the shadow of the unconscious, to find and set free 'woman': the *anima*, who can interpret and find personal meaning in what man has actualized in creation.

Obviously enough on the biological level man is primarily active actor as woman is primarily passive receiver. But this obvious reality is not there to establish violent polarity, but rather a deeper realization of what is potentially present of masculine and feminine values in both man and woman. Lack of awareness of the counterbalancing of the conscious mind by the inner world of the unconscious has led to a one-sided development among both men and women. Advance for woman has so often meant becoming just like a stereotype of man, and so we have the travesty of woman come-of-age in the caricature of the 'organizational woman', seizing the role of male domination.

The future of our planet demands that we explore the values of woman: *anima* values. Like the Eastern Orthodox man of prayer, we need to learn how to stand with the mind in the heart, and so discover a more holistic approach to everything we do, precisely because we allow ourselves the time and space to receive, to listen, to wait, to enjoy and to be loved. It is not pure chance that contemplation is the gift of God to receptive passivity. True vision, real insight, require that we lay ourselves open to see reality as it is. Mostly we see through our own projections, as indeed, we fail to hear because we are not prepared to be changed. In contemplation the Greek Fathers literally 'looked at'. For we really arrive at understanding when we look, and go on looking, at any one manifestation of God in creation until we recognize, see and know, in this particular manifestation, God in his wholeness and nothing but God. Such an act of perception transforms the perceiver not what is perceived. It is this kind of transformation of perception that Ignatian contemplation is about. It begins with looking at Jesus in his humanity and ends by seeing the whole of creation with God's eyes. The contemplation on the Incarnation, in which

we are given the vantage point of the Blessed Trinity from which to see the whole world, and the Contemplation to Attain Love, in which we are invited to see God in all things, form a kind of *inclusio* either side of the contemplations of the Second, Third and Fourth Weeks, which are the process through which we learn how to see with the insight of God (Exx 101-109, 230-237).

Another *anima* value lies in the depth of intimacy which gives woman a feeling for life. Eve, in Hebrew, means 'Mother of the Living' (Gen 2,15). Man acts upon life, woman lives. She is close to life, aware of its slightest awakening or hidden movement, from the life-bearing function within her. She is concerned for the quality and personal experience of life: its nurture, growth and cherishing. She can believe and hope in the existence of life regardless of apparent darkness and death. She knows that love has the power to foster the faintest flicker of life. It is this patient and faithful attitude towards life that can lead woman into, and ultimately, through the Passion to find the Resurrection that she is always seeking. The same truth is beautifully portrayed through the parable in which the kingdom of heaven is likened to a woman who took some leaven and buried it in three measures of dough (Mt 13,33). Seemingly the leaven dies, but no, the life that quite literally rises in the dough is out of all proportion to the leaven that is buried. Out of the hidden and buried leaven will come the living and life-giving bread. The woman knows because she believes, she hopes and she loves. Here is a parable that blends into reality for woman in the Passion.

Labour and the passion

It was the formation of woman as Mother of the Living which gave Christ his opportunity of formulating the most profound law of life both natural and spiritual. In his farewell discourse the focus is upon his coming death (John 14-16). All that Jesus has to say is geared to helping his disciples through the difficult transition period, so that, not only will they not be trapped in the doubt and anguish of bereavement, but they will see, at least in hindsight, the whole experience as a necessary, if painful, way through to a totally new kind of life, such as he shared with the Father. He wanted to tell them that he understood their fear, their pain of loss, as well as their deep grief, but that this would have an end in a yet deeper and abiding joy, because his Spirit would return to dwell within their own hearts. To do this most effectively

Jesus chooses to relate the whole experience of the Paschal Mystery to the parable of the woman in labour (John 16,20-22).

You will be sorrowful but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is in travail she has sorrow because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world. So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no-one will take your joy from you.

Being taken into the Paschal Mystery means that God is waiting until Christ is born in all creation. For St Paul, likewise, everything about the process of giving birth seems to have something to say about the Passion as the process by which Resurrection comes in all creation (Rom 8,18-29). 'Groaning', 'waiting', and 'longing', all express the time process. The dying of Christ is the giving birth to new life for the Christian. The experience of Resurrection is the birth of Christ in the human soul.

Eckhart remained fascinated by this idea of the birth of Christ in the human soul, as any collection of his writings testifies. But it is particularly distinctive of St Ignatius to give real significance to productive labour, with its connotation of weariness, toiling and agony of body, mind and heart in the human condition of time and space. Significantly, the word enters in the contemplation of the Nativity before the public life begins. With a sweep of the pen, we are taken from the labour of birth to the labour of the Passion (Exx 116). Still, it remains even more telling that the third point of the Contemplation to Attain Love relates more specifically to the Third Week of the Passion in the Exercises.⁵ 'This is to consider how God works and labours for me in all creatures . . .' (Exx 236).

Such an understanding of labour would seem to have moved St Ignatius in a uniquely powerful way towards his own mysticism of the contemplative-in-action. He grasped the deepest poverty of mystical self-emptying in terms of a total outpouring of self-labour, so that Christ might be born in others, whatever the cost. The important thing was that all labour and all passion should be life-bearing until Christ should be formed in all. The import of the vision at La Storta was not simply the suffering of the Passion of Christ in dying, but a suffering of the Passion with Christ through bearing the weight of the cross, in the form of productive labour

for Christ. For most women in labour the difference between the pain of child-birth and any other pain lies in the fact that it is *productive*. So is the Passion of Christ. So must our entry into the Passion be. Such is the poignant plea of the *Dies Irae*:

Faint and weary Thou hast sought me
On the cross of suffering bought me,
Shall such labour nought avail me?⁶

Woman in labour can show the way.

Women in the Passion

Now perhaps, with this preliminary exploration into the terms of the title, we are ready to reflect upon some of the women in the Passion of Jesus, to see what light they can throw upon our understanding of woman and the Passion, in the context of the Third and Fourth Weeks of the Exercises.

The widow's mite (Mk 12, 4-44)

Mark has an interesting story of a widow as he brings the public ministry of Jesus to a close and turns his attention to his long Passion narrative. The account is simple but profound. Jesus is watching as a poor widow comes and puts two small coins into the treasury, but each phrase of his comment bears more than one level of meaning for anyone entering the Third Week. 'She out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living'. The most common experience of prayer on the Passion during the Third Week is precisely poverty: the poverty of no affective response to contemplation on the suffering of Jesus which should, it is felt, most call it forth. This is the state of the widow: awareness of her own poverty. But her response is still to put into the treasury everything she had: her whole living. She is, then, the most simple and yet profound symbol of that generosity for which St Ignatius asks on entering the Exercises and even more with the onset of the Third Week.

The woman's anointing for burial (Mk 14, 3-9 and Jn 12, 1-8)

Both Mark and John have the story of a woman anointing Jesus for burial, Mark the head and John the feet. For our purpose the differences of detail are not important.⁷ It is the theological significance of the anointing, the manner of the anointing and the

quality of the ointment that interest the evangelists. In both gospels, there is something lavish about the women's anointing. Costly ointment, like the tears of the Lucan version of the story, was simply to be poured out with no thought of saving anything: the classic picture and symbol of compunction, when the heart's core is being touched at a depth scarcely known to exist before the moment of goading itself.⁸ It is, however, in the response of Jesus that we have the full impact of the word we are meant to hear:

Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me . . . She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for my burying (Mk 14,6.8).

The woman's generosity is a beautiful thing because it is wholly for him. There is nothing to be gained for herself. It is simply a sign of pure passion. She could not articulate her meaning in words. But in anointing Jesus for his burial, she has accepted the consequences of his Passion and her own loss beforehand, without fully understanding what she has done. She can see no further than the burial, but she is prepared to wait for what will be. Is there more that we are meant to glimpse here in the anointing: the outpouring of the Spirit beyond the burial? The dead body of the Passion will give way to the risen body of Christ, the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor 15,45). Mark, however, adds: 'Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world what she has done will be told in memory of her' (Mk 14,9). And when this comment is linked to that of the Fourth Evangelist's, 'The whole house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment' (Jn 12,3), something of the cosmic significance of the Resurrection seems to be indicated. What will happen to the woman's name is but a sign of what her action symbolizes.

In the context of the Exercises, however, John's comment on the effects of the anointing would seem to suggest using St Ignatius's 'application of senses' method of prayer as a way of allowing oneself to be drawn *through* the Passion to the Resurrection.

There is a tendency to polarize views about the application of senses as a method of prayer, so that it is either about applying the physical senses to the subject of contemplation, or it has to do with the 'spiritual senses' and is a deep and simplified form of prayer. Yet, if we consider again the consequences of the Incarnation, perhaps we shall not be so demanding of an either-or

response. For the doctrine of the spiritual senses as applied to prayer has its foundation in the Incarnation. Since the Word was made flesh by the power of the Spirit, revelation enters humanity through all the senses. The flesh becomes the vehicle for the operations of the Spirit. It is not really a question of one or the other, but rather a case of penetration: an ever-deepening penetration of the sense-object by the physical senses until the Spirit takes possession of the depths of our being, and we are gifted with what we can only call spiritual senses. In this communion of centres, to set the spiritual and the physical in opposition does not really make sense, because there is communion and oneness experienced and not analyzed. In God's gift of contemplation we are present to the presence of God and so the spiritual senses come alive.

In this gospel incident of the anointing we are taken into one of those rare contemplations in which the senses of smell and breathing seem to be given significance. For the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. It is notoriously difficult on occasions to find the specific source of a strong smell, as it is to get away from one. It reaches far beyond its own environment. Moreover, using the word 'sense' metaphorically, we speak of sensing an atmosphere. Its value in such a context lies in the all-pervasive nature of the experience, like the very air we breathe. It is interesting that we speak of the 'odour' of sanctity, and that evil 'stinks to high heaven'. And, although we speak of the discerning sense of smell, it is also a sense which gives an experience of oneness and wholeness. Just one scent can galvanize the whole of our unconscious, so that memory makes present the totality of a past event. St Bernard's famous *memoria Passionis praesentia visitationis* is relevant here.⁹ Anointing the body of Christ for his burial is a readiness to remember the Passion, to enter into it. The fragrance of the ointment is the *praesentia*, the sensing beforehand, of the coming of the risen Christ. Out of the one grows the other, like the fragrance from perfumed ointment. Again, anointing is a way of remaining with the Passion until the fragrance of the Resurrection begins to fill the whole of our house. Applying the senses to the Passion leads to the experience of the Spirit in the Resurrection. This is consolation.

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem (Lk 23, 27-31)

Only Luke gives us the encounter between Jesus loaded with his cross on the way to Calvary and the women of Jerusalem. Its

significance seems to lie in the way Jesus tells the women to handle their grief at the sight of his suffering. Seemingly they are asked not to waste their energy mourning for him. Instead Jesus turns their sorrow to their own situation and that of their children. Here is another way of handling the Passion: compassion for all human pain and injustice. World-sorrow and woe belong to the Third Week. The birth-pangs of all creation are its sharing in the Passion of Christ. Here is a way of calling forth a practical response for those who have already grasped the relationship between human injustice and the Passion of Christ.

Resurrection in the Passion: Third and Fourth Weeks

At this juncture it seems relevant to consider two incidents involving women which are normally placed in the context of the Fourth Week. The Resurrection is not really a separate event coming after the Passion is over. This way of expressing the Resurrection-experience is imposed upon our reflection precisely because we live in a time-space continuum. We can only really speak of happenings in a linear way. In Luke's Gospel especially, the time process dominates the whole method of narrative. The art of story, in which he excels, requires the gradual unfolding of events. But inevitably this human mode of communicating is limited. The mode of vision, and of visual art and symbol, allow some measure of synchronicity in which the eternal and the significant in what is happening may break through the confines of one earthly event.

This symbolic approach is adopted more readily by Mark and John, each evangelist in his own way, even while they retain the appearance of story, with a Passion narrative followed by the Resurrection. Moreover, it is clear from the structure of the Exercises that the Third and Fourth Weeks are not simply consecutive, but are meant to be seen as a sort of diptych. From the dynamic of the Exercises it is realized that it will take time to move from the Passion to the Resurrection; but what is important is the truth that the Resurrection grows *in* and *out* of the Passion in Christ's story and ours. The experience of the Passion is essential before what has been seen as call and election in the Second Week can be lived in terms of mission from Christ for others in the Fourth Week. The First Week forgives the past of our sinful selves and our sinful situation, as we acknowledge our needs. But the process of healing the ravages of that sinful situation takes time,

which in itself implies the Passion and our passion. The cross we are called upon to bear is the defect in our own personality that prevents us from showing ourselves in God's glory. Suffering concentrates our attention on the one thing necessary for healing: the Spirit of Christ who alone can deliver us; and it cannot be done by alleviation. Only penetration into the Passion, allowing it, in turn, to penetrate us, will lead us into Resurrection. The pain of the Passion is the transfiguration process.

Nowhere better in the gospels do we see this reality of the Passion as precursor and matrix of the Resurrection than in the dawning Resurrection incidents associated with women.

The women at the tomb (Mk 16, 1-9)

The short ending of Mark's Gospel is not a Resurrection appearance, but simply a Resurrection statement, and one that still has to be experienced. Marcan commentators still discuss the oddity of verse 8, and in particular the Greek preposition as an appropriate real ending for the gospel. But the fact remains that, theologically and even more spiritually, such an ending is highly symbolic of the continuous call and process, growing out of the Passion and into the Resurrection, that still has to be lived by those who believe in the risen Christ and come out into the Fourth Week and beyond into everyday life.

The simple fact is that the story in itself is one about women whose only initial concern is the anointing of the dead body of Jesus. They are staying with their pain, but they want to do something for Jesus. They have not lost their faith in the person of Jesus, because they love him. Affectivity keeps them present during the Passion. They endure with Jesus. But they do not go further. They do not, cannot, go beyond the Passion. They do not understand the message given by the interpreting angel. But it is clear; and it is the message that we are being asked to hear throughout the Passion. It is the climax of the Passion: Christ's and ours. Every word now is important. One phrase grows out of the other:

Do not be amazed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.
He has risen, he is not here . . . Go, tell his disciples and Peter:
He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him . . .

But the women

went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid (Mk 16,6-8).

The paralysis of fear prevented the women moving out of the Passion and into the Resurrection. They could not wait at the tomb. Mark depicts the disciples unable to remain with Jesus during the Passion: the passivity of the Passion was too much for these erstwhile strong and active men. But the women remained, their compassionate love kept them near to Jesus in his suffering even though they could do nothing but grieve and simply stay with him. But the growth of the women from the Passion to the Resurrection is arrested. They cannot move beyond the dead body and the empty tomb. They do not really believe in the Resurrection. They are confused and so they do not stay to seek further, neither do they give the message.

This story gives us one level of response to the Passion. It also illustrates the type of blockage that can prevent the onset of the Resurrection in the making of the Exercises, and indeed in our lives. It also suggests ways in which an understanding of depth psychology may help us in spiritual direction. Woman or the *anima* can lead man *into* the unconscious; man or the *animus* can help us to *survey* the unconscious. Sometimes we need to be led into our own depths so that God may take us further on our way. At other times we need to be saved from being overwhelmed by the deep waters and set on course again. In this story of the trembling women, a further waiting and seeking are called for, such as belong to trust. But they are not here, they belong to another woman's story.

Mary Magdalene at the tomb (Jn 20,1-2; 11-18)

In the writing of the Fourth Gospel no word is simply what it is: so we must listen carefully for the symbolic resonance of the words. Mary Magdalene, like the women, makes her return to the tomb while it is still dark. If hope seems gone, Mary will still come back seeking the body of Jesus. Mary remembers Jesus as the man who knows her past, and who, in forgiving her, gave her back to herself. For Mary, it is not just the Lord's body, but the Jesus who had loved and affirmed her who has been taken away. Mary does not belong to that group of disciples who are now filled with remorse at their denial and desertion of Jesus. Hers is not

now the pain of guilt or failure. Her suffering is the pure pain of loss. The sense of loss is more inward and interior than the sense of guilt or failure. It pierces to the very core of being, to the sense of being loved, being valued and being given meaning. Jesus loved Mary with an awareness that forgiveness came to her because 'she had loved much' (Lk 7,47). Mary knew this because he had spoken her new name in her heart, and she had come to be, in him, by his word.

Returning to the empty tomb, Mary went back in memory to her first 'turning back'. She was remembering her conversion, and again the tears began to flow: tears of compunction in which deep sorrow for sin, longing desire and the passion of love flow together as one. It was the goad of God awakening her to his coming even in his absence, like a spear opening the wound of love. The empty tomb echoed the hollow emptiness of her heart, sensing nothing but the pain of yearning. But, unlike the women, she does *not* go away. She turns back *again* and lingers by the empty tomb. Then she stoops to look into it. But still she weeps, and to the angels' question, 'Why are you weeping?' she can only express her experience of loss: 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him'. But, saying this, the evangelist underlines, 'she turned round'. She turns again, another conversion. Turning round, she sees Jesus as a stranger, the known hidden in the unknown. But she does not give up. Like the lover in the Canticle, she goes on seeking (Cant 3,1-3). Jesus appearing as a gardener, adds to the question of the angels, his own question, 'Whom do you seek?' To weeping in the Passion must be added seeking for the Resurrection. Mary is ready to go on hoping for she knows not what, as she is ready for labour beyond her natural strength. 'Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away'. She seeks Jesus with the whole of her being. She is, therefore, ready for his coming, and she hears when Jesus speaks her name: 'Mary'.

Yet again, the evangelist underlines the movement, 'she turned'. This is a further conversion, simple but total. She addresses him as 'Master'. All the experience of their past relationship is made present in that word, and in the gesture that seeks to embrace Jesus. The words of the Canticle could be hers: 'I have found him whom my soul loves and I will not let him go' (Cant 3,4). Here the active passion of love and the passive passion of waiting meet as the fruit of her labour.

So far, we are still in the context of the Passion, but Mary is teaching us a response that goes beyond that of the women at the empty tomb. She returns, turns back, turns round, and turning, sees. She asks and seeks. While it was still dark, she draws upon the memory of where Jesus has been for her. She refuses to accept that lostness is the end of the process. Her hope goes beyond hopelessness. Like a blade of grass pushing up beneath heavy concrete, relentlessly she seeks the light. Her faith, her hope and her love are all in the waiting. And in that blind stirring of love, that is becoming a passionate living flame, Resurrection's dawn is silently breaking through the innermost heart of her loss. Mary is not dead because Jesus is not dead.

But the Resurrection is still coming. This is the mystery. There is yet another 'turning' for Mary. 'Do not cling to me' says Jesus. She was not to cling to the knowing she had of him. There was more yet to come. She is being taken into communion with the Father as Jesus prepares to give her their shared life in the Spirit: the *Consolator optime*. No longer was Jesus to be simply *with* her in the flesh. The presence of the Spirit of Christ was to be *within* her. Now she must show, in some small way, that she has grasped not just the love story of Jesus and Mary but also the mystery of Jesus *in* Mary. She must, therefore, turn again, turn back to where she had started, and know the place for the first time, because now she knows it new, in God. She must turn back and tell her story, give her 'confessions': the memory of the great things God had done in her. She must bear witness, through the story of her own life, to God's saving love in her, and so lead others to run back to Jesus. In her, therefore, memory of the Passion becomes the Resurrection, as she bears witness in the process of the mission: 'I have seen the Lord'.

Mary is prepared to let go of Jesus in the flesh to do what he asked of her, going out into the future. Always we must seek and go beyond where we are, never resting. Now, becomes 'Passion' when we are called to go further. There, where he goes before us, is 'Resurrection'. Resurrection is a symbol of purification from what we can grasp, because God wants to give us more.

Perhaps no one has better expressed the doctrine of perfection as perpetual progress better than St Gregory of Nyssa, as he speaks of being 'transformed from glory to glory and never arriving at any limit of perfection'.¹⁰ Yet, in the very open-endedness of the structure of the Exercises, St Ignatius again and again leads us to

make that movement out of the Passion and into the Resurrection, in the particular, practical way that is relevant to our own lives here and now. There is a Fourth Week in the Exercises, and that is where we return to the life that must be lived now. The Third Week is not the end of the process; this is what Mary Magdalene teaches us about the Passion.

Mary the Mother of Jesus and the Passion (Jn 19,25-27)

Mary Magdalene has to go through the empty tomb process before she can come to the Resurrection. She has to learn to let go of all that has been in order to receive what God is giving her now. Longing for things to stay as they are or to return to where they were can be a barrier to actual change. Mary had to accept this loss and so receive her liberation in the poverty of seeking. Mary the Mother of Jesus arrives at the Resurrection reality in the Passion. The sign of real resurrection is the readiness to move away from 'my' pain to compassion for the world's suffering. This was true of Mary at the foot of the cross.

The first mention of Mary in the Fourth Gospel prepares the way for the Passion. For, when Mary asks Jesus to save a newly-married couple embarrassment as the wine runs short at their marriage feast in Cana, Jesus says that his hour has not yet come (Jn 2,1-11). For the Fourth Evangelist, Jesus's 'hour' is the hour of his Passion and Resurrection.

The significance of this hour is highlighted, as we have seen, in Jesus's last discourse, as he uses the image of the woman in labour to help his disciples overcome the pain that separation from him will entail. The woman has sorrow because her 'hour' has come (Jn 16,20-22). For the Fourth Evangelist, however, the image of the woman in labour becomes reality lived and experienced in Mary. For Mary is a woman in labour in the Passion. It is here that she shows us the full implication of her passivity before the will of God, summed up in her response at the Annunciation: 'Let it be to me according to your word' (Lk 1,38), and in her word to the stewards at Cana, 'Do whatever he tells you' (Jn 2,5).

The Passion of Jesus is Mary's 'compassion'. Through her acceptance of the Passion she shares in the labour of Christ. This she demonstrates in two passive modes of action signifying total presence. Mary *stands*, she remains steadfast, at the foot of the cross. There is no turning in upon her legitimate grief. She simply stands: a symbol of the strength of enduring faith; the patience of

perfect meekness before all that could be done to her son. She is present and she suffers. Then, she *receives* not merely the dead body of her son, human anguish enough as the great artists of the Pietà capture for us, *but* she receives *in place* of her son the disciple of Jesus and, in receiving him, becomes the Mother of the Church.

Here, then, Mary takes on the labour of Christ's Passion. She shares actively with him in building up the whole body of Christ by helping to bring Christ to birth in others, seeing in them, as does the Father, none other than her well-beloved son. What other lesson remains? This is where St Ignatius wants us at the end of the Fourth Week, ready to labour with Christ, like Mary, for the glory of the Trinity. But Mary is there already, at the foot of the cross. For her it is the glory tree, not just the gallows of death.¹¹

Conclusion

We come, then, full-circle, back to H-wing in Durham gaol. The women in Jesus's passion story teach the way for woman and the Passion. It is a way of faith and hope, because of love, God's love. It refuses to accept the Passion as the end of life's process. The risen Christ is always coming. To believe this, regardless of apparent death and desolation, and to wait in hope for his coming is wisdom of heart.

To contemplate this human wisdom,
To contemplate this presence as it acts,
Slowly unravelling the mystery of pain,
Has been a task both joyful and severe.

Partaking wisdom, I have been given
The sum of many difficult acts of grace,
A vital fervour disciplined to patience.
This cup holds grief and balm in equal measure,
Light, darkness. Who drinks from it must change.

Wisdom can only give when someone takes,
To take you I go deeper into darkness
Than I could dare until this crucial year.
To take you I must take myself to judgment,
Accepting what can never be fulfilled
My life, at best, poised on a knife-edge
between what art would ask and what life takes;

Yet I am lavish with riches made from loss.
I summon up fresh courage from your courage.

Before we part, give me your love.
I'll use it as the key to solitude.¹²

NOTES

¹ For a discussion of 'Passion', cf among others May, Rollo: *Love and will* (London, 1970); Frankl, Victor: *The doctor and the soul* (Penguin, 1973); Bernard, Charles A.: *Théologie affective* (Editions du Cerf, 1984); Centner, David: 'Freedom and the night of St John of the Cross' in *Carmelite Studies* 2 (1982), pp 3-80.

² For inspiration on human passivity cf Vanstone, Canon H.: *The stature of waiting* (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1982).

³ Eliot, T. S.: *The four quartets* (Faber Paperbacks, 1944), p 28.

⁴ Cf Jung, C. G.: *The archetypes and the collective unconscious*, *Collected works*, vol 9 (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), pp 54-72.

⁵ Buckley, Michael: 'Contemplation to attain love' in *The Way Supplement* 24 (Spring 1975), pp 54-72.

⁶ From the sequence for the *Mass of the dead* in the Roman Missal, a translation of the lines: 'Quaerens me sedisti lassus, Redemisti Crucem passus, Tantus labor non sit cassus'.

⁷ Matthew 26,6-18 simply follows Mark's account. Luke 7,36-50 has some parallels but is not placed in the context of the Passion.

⁸ Cf Walsh, James (ed): *The cloud of unknowing*, chapter 44 and footnotes p 204, (S.P.C.K., 1981).

⁹ Gardner (ed): *De diligendo Deo* (1915).

¹⁰ *On perfection* (P.G. 46 285 B-C), translation of *From glory to glory* (Edition Daniélou and Musurillo, 1962), pp 83-84.

¹¹ Cf Gardner, Helen (ed): 'The dream of the rood' in *The Faber book of religious verse* (1972), pp 25-29.

¹² Sarton, May: in *New poems: a durable fire* (Norton, New York, 1972).