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CONTENTS

HAMLET'S HEROIC IDENTITY AND SUBMISSION TO 'PROVIDENCE'

By Alur Janakiram

Hamlet's heroic integrity, once taken for granted, has been subjected to severest scrutiny in the see-saw of modern criticism. As a countervailling trend to the Romantic idealisation, the denigration of Shakespeare's hero appears to be a firmly entrenched tradition persisting in some well-known twentieth century criticisms. A reference to certain representative critical statements on Hamlet's submission to 'Providence' makes an interesting reading, indicative of not only the varied opinion over the nature of that submission but even the significance of its relation to his inner integrity. The debate on this subject seems to be as open and unending as ever, as is evident from the attention given to it in some recent commentaries. It is proposed here to make a reappraisal of some of the central issues of this debate with the intention of probing the nature of the heroic image that emerges in the play's last movement. Such a probing, with the mythic-heroic norm as a frame of reference, might throw some fresh light on a crucial element of the play—the sort of self-identity the hero finally attains in his engagement with the world.

It is useful to quote at the very outset two of the much discussed passages from the play that have a bearing on the subject:

> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will— (V. ii. 10)

> We defy augury. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, it is not to come—if it be not to come, it will be now—if it be not now, yet it will come—the readiness is all: since no man knows aught of what he leaves, what is it to leave betimes? Let be.[1]
> (V. ii. 217)

Bradley's comment on these celebrated passages deserves to be

quoted here as the earliest specimen in this century of the strictures on this subject:

> On the contrary, they seem to express that kind of religious resignation which, however beautiful in one respect, deserves the name of *fatalism* rather than that of faith in Providence, because it is not united to any determination to do what is believed to be the will of Providence. In place of this determination, the Hamlet of the Fifth Act shows a kind of sad or indifferent self-abandonment, as if he secretly despaired of forcing himself to action, and were ready to leave his duty to some other power than his own.[2]

Bradley's equation of Hamlet's resignation with 'fatalism' and 'sad or indifferent self-abandonment. . .' has to be seen within the framework of his 'Melancholy' theory, a general psychological approach to 'character' he was so much concerned with. These Bradleyean undertones of criticism gradually merge into overtones of denigration as the century advances. The later questioning of the worth of the 'Sweet Prince', which has become an important strain in *Hamlet* criticism, has to be seen against the background of death-consciousness that not only was a major concern of the literature between the wars but also happens to be part of the play-structure. It is in this critical light that one should see Wilson Knight's famous identification of Hamlet with negative death-forces;[3] it is an example of the farthest limit which one-sided symbolist-imagist analyses sometimes lead up to. Similar sceptical attitudes toward Hamlet's nobility are also reflected in the commentaries of Tillyard, John Vyvyan and L. C. Knights. While Tillyard is content to observe that the Hamlet of the Fifth Act represents no 'regeneration', Vyvyan is more positive that the play is 'a study in degeneration from first to last', 'a death play'.[4] And L. C. Knights, who approaches the play for its 'problem of consciousness, of self-identity',[5] is also convinced that Hamlet's consciousness, the focal point of the play, is characterised by a fixation on death, negation and corruption of man and is without the growth of self-knowledge that Lear's dramatic career reveals. Even Hamlet's 'the readiness is all' attitude offers no mitigation either, according to this critic (p. 90):

> ...Hamlet's utterance can in no sense be regarded as indicating the goal towards which his consciousness, the central consciousness of the play, has been directed. What it represents rather is the paradoxical recognition of a truth glimpsed in defeat, and by this I mean defeat in terms of Hamlet's own highest standards. All that Hamlet is now ready for is to meet his death in playing the part of the avenger, the part imposed on him by the Ghost whose command had been for a sterile concentration on death and evil.

In a similar key is a more recent interpretation, Gunnar Boklund's reading of what he considers as Shakespeare's judgment on Hamlet the man:

> What is the judgment on Hamlet the man? Our impressions of Hamlet as he was before his father's death must necessarily be fragmentary and personal; according to Ophelia he was 'the expectancy and rose of the fair state', with a mind that was above all 'noble'. To us, however, this 'noble Hamlet' will have to remain a possibility, an ideal; to many, an illusion. What we have seen is how a hypersensitive, hyperintelligent, and witty, but a sadly inexperienced and morally unsophisticated young man is shaken to the core of his being by intimate contact *with what he considers unprecedented evil*....His course thus becomes one from one state of despair to another.[6]
>
> [italics supplied]

The contours of this 'despair', in Gunnar Boklund's reading, pass from the 'despair of thought' through 'despair of action' (i.e. killing of Polonius) to 'the despair of resignation', 'the negative balance of mind which the sorely tried may achieve by accepting the horrors of life as inevitable and natural'. It is to this last stage of 'despair of resignation', Boklund thinks, that Hamlet's submission to Divinity belongs.

> One should, as far as I can see, submit to God's will with joy, satisfaction, or at least a positive conviction and there is no sign of this in the case of Hamlet. When he

> allows things to happen to him, he does it in the belief that everything which takes place will be for the best and that he is no longer capable of performing his mission of revenge. The acceptance of the purposes of a power above him *implies a personal defeat*, which cannot but rankle within him. [italics mine]

As against this modern misreading of the Hamlet consciousness as oriented to negation and despair, there is happily no lack of sober judgments. Viewing the play as a series of encounters between self and a given role, Peter Ure[7] considers Hamlet's submission to Providence as the culmination of this interplay, to the extent that it ceases finally to be a commitment to the role of a passionate avenger—a role enacted fully and clearly by the 'foil' character Laertes. G. K. Hunter too regards Hamlet as a nobler representative of the heroic ideal.

> *Hamlet* represents a convulsive effort to move forward to the *heroism of individual* without abandoning the older social and religious framework of external action.[8]

Hamlet's heroism, then, transcends the limitation of other versions of it presented in the play—the Laertes passionate ideal of conduct or the Christian Stoical heroism of Horatio or even the pragmatic and unselfconscious military heroism of Fortinbras. Although Hamlet's 'readiness' is analogous, in Hunter's opinion, to the 'patience of a Christian martyr awaiting the blow', representing thus a movement towards standards of integrity in a world of flux, the final effect nonetheless is one of ambiguity, evident from the combination of the passive and the active, the personal and the ritual elements in Hamlet's final action. Even J. K. Walton sees in the Hamlet of the final Act a certain commingling of 'blood and judgment', a certain 'looking before and after'[9]—all proof of the hero's inner development. This comes very close to the response of W. B. Yeats for whom Hamlet was an 'image of heroic self-possession after combating the battle within.'[10] This response, far from being a subjective or romantic idealisation, has perhaps wider validity and acceptance.

II

At this stage of *Hamlet* criticism it is perhaps not too late, I believe, to ask: What are the motivational factors behind this unending debate over Hamlet's 'regeneration' or 'degeneration' in the last part of the play? In a nutshell the issue appears to be one of absolute *vs.* relative positions over the revenge-ethic, the pivotal centre of the play as well as the critical debate. For too long, it seems to me, critical swords have been crossed over the so-called 'muddle of two moralities, one avowed, the other not avowed, but both playing heavily and continuously on the central character.'[11] Some critics like Vyvyan and L. C. Knights seem to have got the play out of focus by making heavy weather of the incompatibility between the play's Christian framework and the revenge-ethic. A valid question to ask in this context is not why the two moralities are *muddled* up in the play but whether the dramatic juxtaposition of the two is not a meaningful presentation of the ambiguities of human experience. As an example of the ambivalence in the Elizabethan experience and attitudes towards the revenge-ethic, the Bond of Association of 1584 has been cited by Helen Gardner in her essay 'The Historical Approach'.

> The councillors who drafted this document, among them the pious Burghley, and the thousands up and down the country who signed it, pledged themselves 'in the presence of the eternal and ever-living God', whom they knew to have claimed vengeance as his prerogative, that, in the event of an attack on Elizabeth's person, they would 'prosecute to the death' any pretended successor to her throne by whom, or for whom, such an act should be attempted or counted. They swore 'to take the uttermost revenge on them. . . .'[12]

'And these,' Miss Gardner adds significantly, 'were the law-abiding and God-fearing men.' One might as well state that such contradictions are not confined to the Elizabethan Age alone. That revenge persists even today at a public (besides personal) level in the form of wars between nations, makes its

own comment on the basic human impulse to satisfy honour at various levels.

A quotation from a more direct source of the play would put this contradiction in its proper perspective. It is helpful to remember that Belleforest's 'Hamblet'[13] (as also Shakespeare's Hamlet) appears as a 'multiple' revenger against a 'multiple' criminal, in other words as God's 'executor and minister' against a despicable tyrant-murderer. Belleforest himself, for all his medieval piety, describes Hamlet's revenge as 'just' by citing examples from the Biblical matter.

> If vengeance ever seemed to have any shew of justice, it is then, when pietie and affection constraineth us to remember our fathers unjustly murdered, as the things whereby we are dispensed withal, and which seeke the means not to leave treason the murther unpunished: seeing David a holy and just King, and of nature simple, courteous, and debonaire, yet when he dyed he charged his soone Salomon (that succeeded him in his throane) not to suffer certaine men that had done him injurie to escape unpunished. Not that this holy King (as then ready to dye, and to give account before God of all his actions) was carefull or desirous of revenge, but to leave this example unto us, that *where the prince or countrey is interessed, the desire of revenge cannot by any meanes* (how small soever) *beare the title of condemnation*, but is rather *commendable* and Worthy of praise: for otherwise the good Kings of Juda, nor others had not pursued them to death that had offended their predecessors, if God himself had not inspired and ingraven that desire within their hearts.

Apart from this external source-testimony to Hamlet as a figure of *commendation* rather than *condemnation*, there is enough evidence in the play itself to support such a portrayal. The impressive range of details—Claudius's reference to Hamlet's freedom from 'contriving' (IV. vii. 135), Hamlet's public disclaimer of any 'purposed evil' to Laertes in his apology (V. ii. 252), and his later honourable behaviour as different from Laertes's treacherous conduct in the duel—all point toward the way Shakespeare's hero has been meant to be received.

However, the passage bearing on Polonious's death seems to be crucial, amenable as it is to both kinds of interpretation, the unfavourable having been the most favourite of Hamlet's detractors.

> For this same lord [*Pointing to Polonius*]
> I do repent: but Heaven hath pleased it so,
> To punish me with this, and this with me,
> That I must be their scourge and minister. (III. iv. 172)

A recent commentator[14] has interpreted this passage as revealing at best self-satisfaction or at worst callous indifference, and casts his dice in favour of the negative reading, conveniently ignoring the contritive sentiment in the line at the head of the passage. Such a reading does scant justice to the play or the Prince. The most negative interpretation that can be put over this passage is that it smacks of a certain amount of self-righteousness, a certain arrogation of the right to himself to be a Heaven's Justicer. Here, if anywhere, seems to lie some basis for Maynard Mack's contention[15] that Shakespeare's tragic heroes at times speak the idiom of over-statement. There is more tempting evidence in the play's source itself to warrant such a comment. Hamlet's oration to the Danes, in justification of his killing of his uncle, is a case in point:

> To you also it belongeth by dewty and reason commonly to defend and protect Hamlet, *the minister and executor of just vengeance*, who being jealous of your honour and your reputation, hath hazarded himself....It is I that have taken away the infamy of my country, and extinguished the fire that imbraced your fortunes...but it is you that are to recompence those that have well deserved, ...it is of you that I demand the price of my vertue and the recompence of my victory.[16]

The questions that compel our attention at this stage are quite basic to a discussion of Hamlet's heroic identity and integrity. Why has Shakespeare chosen to place in the *middle* of the play-structure an apparently self-righteous kind of self-image while its counterpart occurs in the source after the execu-

tion of the revenge-task? Does this self-image as Heaven's Justicer loom large in Hamlet's mind till the very end? These questions have not received the attention they deserve even from Hamlet's sternest detractors.

An analogy from the Orestes myth[17] might throw some fresh light here. It is evident that Orestes in both the *Electra* plays of Sophocles and Euripides is an avenger with a divine mission. With justifiable reasons, he looks upon himself as an avenger and a purifier of a family curse since he has been committed to this task by the Phoebus-Apollo oracle. There is some point then in his invocation to the gods to bless him:

> Land of my father, Gods of my country,
> Welcome me, grant me success in my coming,
> And you, too, house of my father,
> As your purifier I have come,
> In justice sent by the Gods.

A similar certitude is however lacking for Hamlet as he has only to go by the injuction of an ambiguous ghost. His early role as a self-doubter is part of an honest attempt to test the truth of the ghost's report. Once the truth is confirmed by the playlet, his later identity as 'Heaven's scourge and minister' might bespeak of either a righteous pride or callous self-abandonment, especially in a situation where the divine intervention through an oracle or any other form is not dramatically possible as in a ritualistic Greek tragedy. It should be a matter of some relevance and interest to examine if the identity of Hamlet divagates in any significant manner from that of Orestes or Belleforest's Hamblet.

Of all the changes in detail Shakespeare has made from his sources, the most significant addition to the story is perhaps the graveyard episode which is entirely Shakespeare's own creation. It is important for the sort of posture the hero has acquired in the interaction between his character and his situation. Hamlet's graveyard ruminations over the Death-disfigured skulls show what psychic distance he has travelled from the self-conscious righteousness of Belleforest's hero as well as some other heroes of antiquity.

Ham: To what *base uses* we may return, Horatio? Why may not imagination trace the *noble dust* of Alexander, till 'a find it stopping a bung-hole?
Hor: 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.
Ham: No, faith, not a jot, but to follow him thither with *modesty enough*, and likelihood to lead it, as thus—Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam whereto he was converted might they not stop a beer-barrel? (V. i. 197-206)

The reference to the 'noble dust' of Alexander and 'imperious Caesar', the ultimate limit of human ambition and achievement, is a significant pointer to the way Hamlet has come to see reality. The perception that a hero should have 'modesty enough' springs from an awareness of the 'mystery of human limitation', which is further underscored by the 'base uses' to which the great heroes of antiquity were reduced. Such an awareness amounts to, in other words, an acknowledgement of the operation of a vaster power than the human will, which implies not necessarily a 'personal defeat' but a new personal identity. It is this perception of humility or 'modesty' which sets the frame for Hamlet's final spirit of 'readiness is all. . . .' This confidence in Heaven, it may be noted, represents the final stage of a cyclical progression which can be traced back through the familiar words of the player-king, 'Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own' to the not-so-familiar words of Horatio at the play's start:

Hor: Have after—to what issue will this come?
Mar: Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.
Hor: Heaven will direct it. (I. iv. 89-91)

Hamlet's submission to Providence is, then, better considered in relation to the problem of heroic self-identity proper, a mythical norm of heroism described in its universal aspects in Joseph Campbell's study *The Hero with a Thousand Faces.*[18] As Campbell observes, such a spirit of surrender to the 'universal will' is necessary for the archetypal hero if he is not to lose 'in

the world of flux and action his centering in the principle of eternity', if he is to retain, on the other hand, his identity and integrity proper without the self-glorifying image of Heaven's justicer (p. 239):

> The battle-field is symbolic of field of life where every creature lives on the death of another. A realisation of the inevitable guilt of life may so sicken the heart that, like Hamlet or like Arjuna, one may refuse to go on with it. On the other hand, like most of the rest of us, one may invent a false, finally unjustified, image of oneself as an exceptional phenomenon in the world, not guilty as others are, but justified in one's inevitable sinning because one represents the good. Such self-righteousness leads to a misunderstanding, not only of oneself but of the nature of both man and the cosmos. The goal of the myth is to dispel the need for such life ignorance by effecting a reconciliation of the individual consciousness with the universal will. (p. 238)

The Orestes-situation has already been glanced at. The analogy of a few other mythic-heroic gestures would further confirm and clarify the point. It is significant that Hamlet's surrender to Divinity, on the verge of a ritualistic duel, comes very close to the gestures of Hector and Arjuna (the Eastern mythical hero) besides the Greek Orestes. Placed in slightly different situations, they all face the basic problem of *honour*, even if the problem may be less of a dilemma for Orestes than it is for Hector, Hamlet and Arjuna. The last three figures may be considered as remarkable versions of heroic dilemmas, of a hero caught between inner personal integrity (*honour* as an interior value) and the demands of the social code of war or revenge (*honour* as an exterior polar opposite).[19] The Hector of Shakespeare (*Troilus and Cressida*, II. ii. 4-20) and of Homer (*Iliad*, Book XXII) alike is responsive to the inner voice of Reason or the other 'honour' at its best, even though the final choice is in favour of the heroic mode of action. This seems to be the relevance of that famous inward debate of Hector as he waits before the gates for the revenge-hot Achilles.[20]

> ...Or what if I lay down my bossy shield and my stout helm, and lean my spear against the wall, and go of myself to meet noble Achilles and promise him that Helen, and with her all possessions that Alexandros brought in hollow ships to Troy, the beginning of strife, we will give to the sons of Atreus to take away, and therewithal to divide in half with the Achaians all else that this city holdeth:... But wherefore doth my heart debate thus? I might come into him and he would not pity or regard me at all, but presently slay me unarmed as... if I put off my armour....Better is it to join battle with all speed: let us know upon which of us twain the olympian shall bestow renown.

A similar concern for honour as integrity, although with a poignant sense of guilt of involvement, is also felt by Arjuna of the *Gita*[21] on an Eastern battle-ground:

> (35) These I would not consent to kill, though killed myself, O Madhusudana (Kṛsna), even for the Kingdom of the three Worlds; how much less for the sake of the earth?
>
> (39) Why should we not have the wisdom to turn away from this sin, O Janardana (Kṛsna), we who see the wrong in the destruction of the family?

The divine charioteer-guide Krishna, however, solves Arjuna's heroic dilemma by counselling him to fight in a spirit of non-attachment and of submission to a Higher will.

> (57) Surrendering in thought all actions to Me, regarding Me as the supreme, and resorting to steadfastness in understanding, do thou fix thy thought constantly on Me. (Ch. 18, p. 162)
>
> (38) Treating alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, then get ready for battle. Thus thou shall not incur sin. (Ch. II, p. 108)

And for Hamlet, too, the problem at its most basic level, is one of *honour* and action, for the Ghost's multiple command also contains this clause:

> But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,
> *Taint not thy mind*... (I. v. 84)

The important consideration is how these mythical figures react to the challenge of their situations in a similar spirit of surrender to a Higher Will. The submission of Arjuna or Orestes[22] leans on the positive side, reinforced as it is by a Divine Counsel or oracle. Of all the heroic gestures alluded to, Hector's posture alone deserves, perhaps, the name of fatalism. His awareness of having been doomed to fall, half-way through his encounter with Achilles, has all the qualities of fatalism, and becomes really tragic only when he decides to kick against the pricks with a final defiant gesture:

> Then Hector knew the truth in his heart and said: 'Ay me, now verily the gods have summoned me to death. I deemed the warrior Deiphobos was by my side but he is within the wall, and it was Athene who played me false. Now therefore is evil death come very near me, not far off, nor is there way of escape. This then was from of old the pleasure of Zeus and of the far-darting son of Zeus, who yet before were fain to succour me: but now my fate hath found me. At least let me not die without a struggle or ingloriously....' (1122)

Fatalistic resignation thus becomes Hector's final frame of mind rather than Hamlet's final mood of 'readiness': the sense of doom looming over the hero is expressed in the former situation in specifically *personal* terms while, in the latter case, only in *general* terms. The Biblical echoes in Hamlet's statement about the 'special providence in the fall of a sparrow' should not lead us to a neat summation of this response as that of a passive Christian-stoic hero.[23] Equally oversimplified is the other interpretation that equates 'readiness' with the 'ripeness' of a fruit about to fall, with the help of an analogy from Thomas Elyot's *Governour*:[24]

> 'Maturum' in Latin may be interpreted ripe or ready, as fruit when it is ripe, it is at the very point to be gathered and eaten. And every other thing when it is ready, it is at the instant after to be occupied. Therefore that word maturity, is translated to the acts of man, that when they be done with such moderation, that nothing in the doing may be seen superfluous or indigent, we may say, that they be maturely done.

Prof. Knights's reading overstrains meaning beyond a point where it is difficult to sustain the analogy. The presence of diverse elements, both positive and negative, in Hamlet's response ('the interim is mine', 'We *defy* augury', 'the fall of a sparrow', 'readiness is all', 'Let be') offers opposition to any one-pointed reading of his submission as 'joyous'-positive or 'fatalistic'-negative. The mythic frame of reference clearly establishes it as analogous to the pattern of normative heroic identity, with a texture enriched by humility and excluding any inflated sense of righteousness. In a sense, this posture is appropriate to a latter-day ruminative heroism which, as Hunter[25] has rightly shown, is presented more as a mode of *being* than of simple 'activity' alone, and which in addition exhibits a wider spectrum of awareness—of the 'angelic' reason as also the 'quintessence of dust' in the microcosm of man. In a more important sense, Hamlet's submission also marks an important stage in 'his progress through the dialectic of Reason—Honour-Passion—an inner dialectic that is implicit in his major soliloquies from Act Two onwards. In so far as it recognises, as noted earlier, the primacy of a Higher Will over the human, this insight of submission is tantamount to a sober acceptance of the dualities in the nature of both "man and the cosmos".'

The complexity that characterises Hamlet's frame of mind just before the duel is also true of his subsequent behaviour in the duelsituation. It has been remarked often enough how he figures more as a 'patient' than an 'agent' in the last movement, and that the offensive that ought to be his is initiated by his adversary. This seems to be a significant reversal of a familiar revenge-pattern in which Belleforest's Amleth, Orestes and Hieronimo purposefully *contrive* the revenge-course to the

desired end. It has not gone unnoticed either that the dual active-passive, punisher-punished roles synchronise finally in Hamlet's execution of the hero-deed. The rhythm of the duel does culminate on a note of decisive action accompanied by a passionate gesture:

> Here, thou incestuous, murderous...Dane,
> Drink off this potion. Is thy union here? (V. ii. 323)

This ritualistic sacrifice is proof enough that Hamlet's behaviour is kept till the end within the range of the human heroic norm, and even the imagery of the final choral speeches leads us to think of him as a 'royal' soldier rather than a Saint-Prince. Horatio's summing up deepens our awareness of the vast design behind the recoil of devices on 'the inventor's heads' and the other 'plots and errors'. In Fortinbras's speech, however, the shift of attention is towards the protagonist himself: the weapons imagery[26] that clangs through the play as a strain culminated here in 'rites of war', 'soldier's music' and the ceremonial lifting of the body on to a stage, thereby linking Hamlet's end with the heroic death of a 'royal' 'soldier'. The concluding lines, with the symbolic suggestion of a battlefield, reinforce this image of a soldier who has *honourably* acquitted himself in the greater battle of life.

> Such a sight as this
> Becomes the *field*, but here shows much amiss.
> Go bid the soldiers shoot.

This comes a trifle close to a heroic vision, with a tragic emphasis, at the heart of the vision, on the paradoxes of the human situation and achievement.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London, 1961 ed.), p. 116.
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4. John Vyvyan, *The Shakespearian Ethic* (London, 1959), p. 55.
5. *An Approach to 'Hamlet'* (London, 1960), p. 44; the long quotation that follows is from the same source and the page number has been indicated in the text.
6. Gunnar Boklund, 'Judgment in *Hamlet*', *Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. Gerald W. Chapman (Princeton, 1965), pp. 135-6; the subsequent citations from the same source are on pp. 133-4.
7. 'Character and Role from Richard III to Hamlet', *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* 5: *Hamlet* (London, 1963): 'Submission to Providence seems to take precedence over dedication to Revenge...', p. 27.
8. G. K. Hunter, 'The Heroism of Hamlet', op. cit. (*Supra* n7), p. 108.
9. 'The Structure of *Hamlet*', op. cit. p. 88.
10. W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London, 1956), p. 47.
11. Patrick Cruttwell, 'The Morality of Hamlet—"Sweet Prince" or "Arrant Knave"?', *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* 5, p. 121.
12. *The Business of Criticism* (Oxford, 1959), p. 61.
13. The reference here is to the seventeenth century English translation 'The Hystorie of Hamblet' as reprinted in the New Variorum *Hamlet* edition, Vol. II (Dover Publications, New York, 1963). I have borrowed the epithet 'multiple' from Alfred Harbage, *As They Liked It* (Harper ed., New York, 1961), p. 94. The subsequent quotation from Belleforest is on p. 108 of the edition mentioned here.
14. Gunnar Boklund, op. cit. p. 131.
15. Maynard Mack, 'The Jacobean Shakespeare', *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* 1: *Jacobean Theatre* (London, 1960), p.13.
16. 'The Hystorie of Hamblet', op. cit. pp. 112-3.
17. The verse quotation that follows is taken from the *Electra* of Sophocles, tr. David Grene, *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, Vol. II, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1960), p. 335. For an excellent comparative structural analysis of the two myths of Orestes and Hamlet, see Jan Kott's essay 'Hamlet and Orestes' (tr. Boleslow Taborski), *PMLA* (LXXXII, 5, October 1967), pp. 303-13. The point of comparison between Hamlet's and Orestes's submission, however, has not been made in Jan Kott's essay.
18. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Meridian ed., New York, 1950). The burden of the argument in the latter half of my paper owes much to the cited passage (p. 238) from this admirable study of the world's mythological heroic images.
19. In relation to honour in both its relative and absolute senses, the dilemmas of Hamlet and Arjuna have been considered at a greater length elsewhere; see my forthcoming publication 'Arjuna and Hamlet: Two Moral Dilemmas', *Philosophy East and West* (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu), xviii, 1-2, 11-28.
20. *The Iliad of Homer*, BK. XXII, tr. E. Myers, *The Complete Works of Homer* (The Modern Library ed., New York), p. 404.
21. See Radhakrishnan's translation as reprinted in *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, eds. S. Radhakrishnan and Charles A. More (Princeton, New Jersey, 1957), p. 104. The citations that immediately follow are from the same source.
22. *The Iliad of Homer*, op. cit. p. 409.
23. This is the view put forth in Irving Ribner's *Patterns in Shakesprearian Tragedy*

(London, 1960), pp. 68-82. For Ribner, Hamlet is moving towards the ideal of Christian-Stoic-Philosopher hero embodied in Horatio.

24. Cited by L. C. Knights, *An Approach to 'Hamlet'*, pp. 88-9.
25. 'The Heroism of Hamlet', op. cit. p. 105.
26. The strain of weapons imagery in the play has been perceptively traced by Roger L. Cox in his 'Hamlet's Hamartia: Aristotle or St. Paul?', *Yale Review*, LV, 3, March 1966, pp. 347-64. 'The play disposes of an entire arsenal—daggers and rapiers, foils and targets, axes and partisans, slings and arrows, brazen cannon and "murd'ring pieces", peterds and mines...', p. 358. Cox reads the play in terms of Pauline conception of the pervasiveness of sin implicit in the Greek root word *Hamartia* as used in the Standard Revised Version of the Bible. It seems to me that Peter Alexander's reading of the play (*Hamlet: Father and Son*, Oxford, 1955) in terms of arete is perhaps more tenable and convincing than Cox's Christian approach to *Hamartia*. Instead of explaining away Hamlet's madness, as Cox does, as an aspect of *Hamartia*, it might be far more rewarding to regard it as analogous to the 'madness'—craftiness of Belleforest's hero, as also the craftiness enjoined on Orestes by the Apollo-Oracle.

PROCESS AND REALITY IN THE ODES OF KEATS

B. Das

We take but three steps from feathers to iron.
(Keats, Letter to Bailey, 13th March 1818)

Hic. And yet
No one denies to Keats his love of the world;
Remember his deliberate happiness.
Ille. His art is happy, but who knows his mind?
"Ego Dominus Tuus"
W.B. Yeats

Ever since Garrod pointed out that the odes of Keats except the *Ode to Autumn* were products of a single mood of indolence, critics have tried to examine their interrelationship and their opinions have differed. To cite a few recent ones: Douglas Bush while finding the odes to be variations on a single theme points out that the *Ode to Psyche* is 'devoid of explicit ideas, except as its animating idea is the power of the imagination to preserve and transmit direct sensuous experience.'[1] The poem does not reveal any conflict as such. John Holloway in *The Charted Mirror* examines the interconnection of the odes as growing out of single 'mood' instead of 'thought', this mood being one of indolence or melancholy and thinks that as a psychological document, 'they prove to be a complex and detailed poetic revelation of what Keats knew himself as the creative mood.'[2] On the other hand, Graham Hough seems to me to come closest to the truth about the nature of the odes when he says that they all deal with the 'theme of transience and permanency'.[3] But when he comes to the *Ode to Autumn* he discovers a relationship between it and the *Ode on Indolence* in which the moment is made self-sufficient so that 'there are no questions and no conflict in the poem: the season of ripeness and fulfilment is seen as though it is quite final.'[4]

These opinions appear to be partial and somewhat confusing, if not altogether contradictory. It is not surprising,

therefore, to find W. J. Bate, one of the finest critics of Keats, asserting that 'no single interpretation of the odes—still less of the odes as a group—satisfies anyone except the interpreter.'[5] The difficulty in these interpretations seems to be due to the treatment of the poems, isolated from the ideas that Keats was engrossed in during or preceding their composition, or isolated from his total poetic vision. Instead of regarding them as merely the products of a mood, it would be better if we examined the genesis of the mood. Such an approach will take us to the dominant thoughts or key-ideas of Keats and enable us to understand more clearly the nature and relationship of the poems. By referring to his 'thoughts' we may not regard Keats as an original thinker or philosopher, but it is clear from his letters that he had been thinking about philosophy and exploring certain ideas. In his letter to Taylor dated 24 April 1818, for example, he writes: 'I have been hovering for sometime between an exquisite sense of the luxurious and a love for Philosophy—were I calculated for the former I should be glad but as I am not I shall turn all my soul to the latter.'[6] With this we may compare his 'O for a life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts.'[7] During this period he examines the meaning of 'thoughts' and 'sensations' in relation to life to ascertain their meaning for himself. But as he thinks about the nature of existence, he is perplexed and so there is a sort of rationalisation in his statement: 'I shall never be a Reasoner because I care not to be in the right, when retired from bickering and in a proper philosophical temper.'[8] But there is a modest consciousness of his limitations to face the difficulties in:

> For in the world
> We jostle—but my flag is not unfurl'd
> On the Admiral staff—and to philosophize
> I dare not yet! Oh never will the prize,
> High reason, and the lore of good and ill
> Be my award.[9]

'The lore of good and ill' pursued him and as he became more and more engrossed in it he realized that he 'had to see beyond our bourn'[10] and this led on to 'Where to think is to be full of sorrow/And leaden-eyed despairs.'[11] This shows that Keats

pondered the nature and meaning of the human condition as he encountered dark and painful experiences in his own life. The nature of this thought is not confined to transience and permanence only, as Graham Hough thinks, but embraces a wider concept, that is, the relation of process to reality. It is a desire to understand the meaning and value of truth in relation to existence and an approach to his odes from this angle makes their relationship more comprehensible.

As has been said above, the introspective nature of Keats makes him 'perplexed in a world of doubts and fancies'[12] and this gives rise to a sort of philosophical melancholy or indolence which deepens in course of time on account of his excruciating personal experiences of life and drives him to the verge of despair but he does not succumb to it completely. The thoughts behind the odes are the product of an intense and acute contemplation of 'the agonies, the strife/Of human hearts:'[13] which in their turn are the result of 'Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and Oppression'[14] in the world. All these signify a process of change or transience as against the dim consciousness that 'there is certainly something real in the world.'[15] The quest for this reality is accentuated as his experience of disappointment, frustration, disease and death introduce a sort of dialectical cross-tension in his thoughts owing to a kind of innate scepticism. This is brought out in his idea of truth:

> Tradesmen say everything is worth what it will fetch, so probably every mental pursuit takes its reality and worth from the ardour of the pursuer—being in itself a nothing—Ethereal things may at least thus be real, divided under three heads—Things real—things semi-real and no things. Things real—such as existence of Sun Moon & Stars and passages of Shakespeare. Things semi-real such as Love, the clouds &c. which require a greeting of the spirit to make them wholly exist—and Nothings which are made Great and signified by an ardent pursuit—which, by the by, stamps the burgundy mark on the bottles of our Minds, in so much as they are able to 'consecrate whate'er they look upon.'[16]

It may not be profound philosophy but it indicates the incerti-

tude in his mind especially about the relationship between mind and matter or the absolute reality of perceived experiences and objects. It also points to his desire to understand the nature of reality by weighing the comparative value of essence and existence as he aspires to establish a 'fellowship with essence',[17] so that he would not be oppressed by the fear of the evanescence of all existence—the spectre of 'cormorant devouring time'[18] at the sight of which

> despondency besets
> Our Pillows and the fresh to-morrow morn.[19]

These are the experiences of the 'Chamber of Maiden-Thought'[20] but they do not drive him to stark despair or pessimism for he is in possession of 'a spiritual yeast' by which to 'act and strive and buffet with Circumstance'[21] and so he realises that he must, in order to gauge reality, burn through 'the fierce dispute betwixt damnation and impassioned clay.'[22] We may aptly refer here to the dissatisfaction of Yeats with the cult of aestheticism and his resolution to 'wither into truth.'[23] Keats similarly is not quite satisfied with the life of sensations in the world of Flora and Pan although the love of it remains a permanent aspect of his mental make-up. His intensely sensuous nature discovers ample beauty in the world of perception with its appeal to sight, sound, scent, touch and taste and on occasions he felt that 'the senses can reconcile what the mind and heart cannot.'[24] But this was not enough. All the time he is haunted by the thoughts of impermanence for 'But Beauty vanishes, beauty passes;/However rare—rare it be.'[25] But as he cannot see into the heart of things he clings to the experience of the moment—'nothing startles me beyond the Moment.'[26] This moment at the same time appears to him extremely fragile although it may enable him to enjoy 'a wind in summer', 'the pretty hummer', 'a musk-rose blowing'[27] which strike the high notes in the poetry of the earth. Mutability and mortality, however, destroy the moment as an entity and he seeks to know the intellectual value of it. This knowledge may free him from his perplexity. It is an agonising tension between the world of the senses and the world of love, fame and ambition and above both of them hangs the frightening vision of death, decay and

nothingness. The predominant mood of this period is described as follows:

> This morning I am in a sort of temper indolent and supremely careless:...My passions are all asleep from my having slumbered till nearly eleven and weakened the animal fibre all over me to a delightful sensation about three degrees on this side of faintness.[28]

This mood resembles the one described by Tennyson:

> Time driveth onward fast
> And in a little while our lips are dumb.
> Let us alone. What is it that will last?
> All things are taken from us, and become
> Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
> Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
> In ever climbing up the climbing wave?[29]

Keats however does not abandon the effort to probe into the 'Penetralium of mystery'[30] and 'strain at particles of light in the midst of a great darkness—without knowing the hearing of any one assertion of any one opinion.'[31] As such he is not quite sure if the world is 'a vale of tears' or 'the vale of Soul-making'.[32] But the sensuous beauty of nature at least makes him disinclined to accept the former view and hence he wants to push aside Melancholy—the one that is a product of 'Lethe', 'Wolf's-bane', 'nightshade', 'yew berries', the 'beetle' and the 'death-moth'. If at all Melancholy is to be accepted there is a better source—the contemplation of the transitoriness of beauty. Beauty is a source of joy for him and he does not want to forget it in melancholy. In other words, he wants Psyche or his soul 'to grasp the sorry scheme of things entire'[33] in order to know its meaning and truth. He feels that the soul must be watchful of the negative and positive aspects of life, of the temporal element in value, of the fleeting and revealing moment in contrast to the perpetual flow of time. The love between Cupid and Psyche being eternal is free from the 'weariness, the fever and the fret'[34] of this world of process 'Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes/Or new love pine at them beyond tomorrow.'[35]

This is pre-mortal immortality unlike the post-mortal immortality of the lovers depicted on the Grecian Urn. *Psyche* which is the earliest of the odes is, therefore, a kind of prologue to 'the agonies, the strife/Of human hearts'[36] which are recorded in the *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, *Ode on Melancholy* and *Ode on Indolence*. The love of immortal beings like Cupid and Psyche who are beyond time and hence beyond good and evil is set appropriately enough in the midst of 'hush'd, cool-rooted flowers' in contrast to the lovers in *Grecian Urn*, 'for ever panting' and 'breathing human passion', although at the same time it is superior to the human condition characterised by 'a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd/A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.'[37] The world of mythology is 'holy' and 'happy' because it is immune from decay and so his aspiration is to be Psyche's priest or the votary of the soul to discover the 'untrodden region of my mind' so that at the end he can become Psyche's oracle. This desire makes him study the 'branched thoughts' of his mind 'new grown with pleasant pain' in order that he may permanently acquire a 'wide quietness' and 'all soft delight'. But this longing for the calm of mind is only in the world of possibility—an ideal that is yet to be tested and proved upon the pulse.

The pleasant pain that reminds us of the 'aching Pleasure' in *Melancholy*, however, turns into an unpleasant one as Fancy is unable to cheat him and his spirit is 'fevered in a contrary direction.'[38] The delight obtained from a moment of sensation in spite of its novelty fails to satisfy him as it cannot create an eternal present. So he attempts to discover some means by which the moment can be made eternal and he can acquire a knowledge of permanent value in the midst of process. Browning, too, wanted to turn the instant into eternity when faced with the experience of 'Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize today!'[39] and came to the conclusion that flesh helps the soul and soul helps the flesh but Keats is uncertain about the truth of appearances, the truth received through sensory perception alone. But some objects that are perceived are at least fixed and in contrast to the fleetingness of human life seem to be permanent, e.g. the 'bright star' which in his sonnet he describes as 'steadfast' or the 'north star' referred to in one of his letters.[40] Getting used to 'the privations of the pleasures of

sense',[41] he feels that his 'hopes are very paramount to my despair.'[42] It is this internal conflict that is perhaps at the back of his concept of 'Negative Capability' according to which 'a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any reaching after irritable fact and reason.'[43] That doctrine formulated in 1817 has, however, by 1819 become intolerable. He was bearing the full brunt of physical suffering and spiritual calamity and his doctrine can be compared with the nature of the tragic experience as formulated by I.A. Richards:

> It is essential to recognise that in the full tragic experience there is no suppression. The mind does not shy away from anything, it does not protect itself with any illusion, it stands uncomforted, unintimidated, alone and self-reliant. The test of its success is whether it can face what is before it and respond to it without any of the innumerable subterfuges by which it ordinarily dodges the full development of experience.[44]

Keats was confronting this kind of experience, discarding as far as possible the subterfuge of the luxuries of the senses. As he says, 'I feel I can bear anything,—any misery, even imprisonment',[45] and this capacity he develops by letting his mind to 'be a thoroughfare for all thoughts. Not a select party.'[46] The sensual vision that is still strong in him, however, begins to be valued in terms of permanence. It is a phase in which the quest is for value in permanent objects so that there may be a refinement of 'one's sensual vision into a sort of northern star which can never cease to be open lidded and steadfast over the wonders of the great power.'[47] The wide-awake Psyche seeking 'a wide quietness' faces the realities of life to discover if they are meaningful like the north star. The result of this is the recognition of the paradoxical nature of pleasure and pain. It is, therefore, a subtle transition to a quest for permanent value since pleasure and pain are inseparable and the essence of existence can be apprehended by accepting that fact. Then only Psyche may be able, like Saturn,

> to bear all naked truths,

And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty.[48]

At the centre of the dark odes—*Nightingale*, *Melancholy* and *Indolence* and, partially, *Grecian Urn*—there is a dialectical pattern woven out of the relation of life and death, transience and permanence, joy and sorrow, light and darkness, *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*—or more generally, appearance and reality, or, as J. W. Bate puts it, 'in a sense the theme of all Keats's odes except "Psyche"—is that of process, and either the acceptance of it, or the hope to escape from it, or both in dramatic interplay with each other.'[49] The penetrating analysis of *Nightingale* by F. R. Leavis[50] reveals this pattern clearly. Keats is 'half in love with easeful death'[51]—the other half of his mind is drawn powerfully to *natura naturata* as he guesses each sweet in 'embalmed darkness'. This urge towards joy in life and nature or the Richardsian impulse to approach is countered by the impulse to retreat arising from the fear of its change and extinction which makes him suspect that there is more lasting joy in essence than in existence, in being than in becoming, in Beauty that is Truth than in 'Beauty that cannot keep her lustrous eyes beyond tomorrow.' It is such a vision of life that is presented in the odes. Pleasure is found in the 'blissful clouds of summer indolence' but the indolence itself signifies the poet's inability to penetrate beyond the Vale of Tears that life appears to him to be. The same sense is echoed in 'the aching Pleasure nigh' and the 'bursting' of 'joy's grape' in *Melancholy*. But the consciousness that the pleasures of the senses are ephemeral urges him to seek their permanent qualitative value. So he is anxious to understand the nature of the co-existence of 'Veil'd Melancholy' in the very temple of Delight and resolve the paradox inherent in the situation. It is this paradox that 'perplexes and retards' his 'dull brain'. In *Nightingale* there is again the attempt to perpetuate the moment in 'Now more than ever seems it rich to die' which reminds us of a similar egotistical involvement in Othello's 'If it were now to die/ 'Twere now to be most happy';[52] but this involvement is unsatisfactory to Keats who criticised Wordsworth's 'egotistical sublime'[53] and he does not really want to 'become a sod' to be nightingale's 'high requiem' and

accept illusion as reality. In other words permanence through death would not enable him to participate in earthly life—even if death appears to be 'life's high meed'[54] for the time being. The quest for novelty and satisfaction through process is, therefore, set aside when the nature of reality breaks in upon him as imperishable beauty transcending mortality. The 'holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination'[55] are now related to permanent value as he has 'the fine point of his soul taken off to become fit for this world.'[56] But in the dark odes this fitness is still under formation. The key words in the third stanza of *Nightingale* are images of process—'fade', 'dissolve', 'shakes', 'dies'—which point to the triumph of time over physical existence. 'Hungry generations', similarly, is a symbol of life circumscribed by necessity and it is contrasted with the permanent value of the nightingale's song, not the nightingale itself. In *Indolence*, Poesy cannot, however, be yet equal to 'drowsy noons' and in *Melancholy* the poet's advice is: 'Glut thy sorrow in a morning rose.' All these images show how powerful is the idea of process in the poet's mind. The idea is, however, all the time being grasped, examined and sought to be comprehended. In *Grecian Urn* this is accomplished most satisfactorily. The same processes of life and love and death are the theme of this poem also but the emphasis upon the absolute, the essence, is here, as Kenneth Burke[57] has shown, more pronounced. Each of the incidents depicted on the urn can be thought of as an exquisite moment in time but the paradox of existence present in *Nightingale* or *Melancholy* that was being faced by taking hold of one of the propositions involved is, in the *Grecian Urn*, sought to be resolved transcendentally. Hence we get the sense of an eternal present in:

> Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
> Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
> Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
> Pipe to the spirit, ditties of no tone:

In the dark odes each moment is an entity having an identity but incapable of being the vehicle of truth since its quality to defy time and change is not realised. As such each moment is to be judged in a temporal sequence only. Now the poet

realises that Psyche can achieve a genuine 'wide quietness' by going through 'Purgatory Blind' and the nature of necessity in life is described in a letter to his brother:

> The most interesting question that can come before us is, How far by the persevering endeavours of a seldom appearing Socrates Mankind may be made happy—I can imagine such happiness carried to an extreme—but what it must end in?—Death—and who could in such a case bear with death—the whole troubles of life which are now frittered away in a series of years, would then be accumulated for the last days of a being who instead of hailing its approach, would leave this world as Eve left Paradise. But in truth I do not at all believe in this sort of perfectability—the nature of the world will not admit of it—the inhabitants of the world will correspond to itself. Let the fish Philosophise the ice away from the Rivers in winter time and they shall be at continual play in the tepid delight of Summer.[58]

The contrast between the ice of winter and the delight of summer indicates the belief in the inexorable nature of necessity. It is repeated in another statement: 'This is the Circumstances are like Clouds continually gathering and bursting—While we are laughing the seed of some trouble is put into the wide arable land of events—while we are laughing it sprouts it grows and suddenly bears a poison fruit which we must pluck—'[59]

Indolence, *Melancholy* and *Nightingale* were written during the spring and summer of 1819 but they are steeped in the thoughts of death, decay and change. Man cannot do away with necessity as the fish cannot do away with the ice —but nevertheless 'the thought that we are mortal makes us groan.'[60] The groans can, however, be stopped by listening to the ditties of no tone which can be made possible only by an immersion, at the first instance, in the destructive element. Though *Grecian Urn* shows the destructive power of time, it also shows a redemption from it in the realisation of the Platonic idea of beauty or its essence incarnated in art. This beauty is similar to Yeats's 'terrible beauty'[61] and is a product of a tragic sense of life which

assimilates the whole of experience of necessity and acquires the status of truth. It is an apprehension of reality through the experience of and participation in process and hence a genuine knowledge of the relationship of the essence of beauty and truth. The truth of art in a life of process was also sought by Yeats:

> Consume my heart away; sick with desire
> And fastened to a dying animal,
> It knows not what it is; and gather me
> Into the artifice of eternity.[62]

But Keats is not content merely with the world of artifice. The hovering between 'an exquisite sense of the luxurious and a love for Philosophy'[63] has practically come to an end with knowledge that is no longer a source of sorrow or 'philosophy that will not clip an angel's wings.'[64] We, therefore, feel that one of his early statements that 'scenery is fine—but human nature is finer'[65] is no longer merely a hypostatisation. The assertive tone in the last two lines of *Grecian Urn* can be compared with the tone of denial in the lines on beauty in *Melancholy* and *Nightingale:* 'She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die' and 'Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes.' Likewise the 'quietness' and 'silence' in the *Grecian Urn* can be contrasted with 'the weariness, the fever and the fret' in *Nightingale.* In the *Grecian Urn* itself the 'quietness' is contrasted with the pre-mortal processes of 'A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.' In this poem, however, the poet realises that post-mortal immortality is at least possible through beauty. And this idea points back to 'Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird' in *Nightingale.* The immortality of the bird's song is similar to the immortality of the urn except that in the latter poem the realisation is positive. As we pass on from the world of process to the world of reality we pass from heat to cold since now the physical and mental planes are united in truth. It is a new quietness that has been actually experienced in life or 'proved upon the pulse' unlike the wished-for wise quietness in *Psyche.* We may regard it as a calm of mind that issues out of an understanding and acceptance of the truth about human life and human passions—it is a result of spiritual strength.

Such a quietness naturally anticipates the vision of ripeness and 'mellow fruitfulness' in the *Ode to Autumn*. The meaning of this poem will perhaps be better understood by a reference to Keats's sonnet on the 'Human Seasons' in which he compares human life to a cycle of four seasons. The 'winter of pale misfeature' is amply revealed in the thoughts of the odes that we have so far discussed. The attempt to resolve the conflict between summer and spring on the one hand and winter on the other—a metaphor embracing Keats's whole range of thoughts about human life—which we saw in *Grecian Urn*—finds its fullest exposition in *Autumn*. The poem symbolises serenity and contentment resulting from a maturity and ripeness of mind that accepts with equanimity the inevitability of the change of summer and spring and so can 'let fair things/Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook.' The transience of the visible world does no longer disturb him as in *Indolence* and *Melancholy* and *Nightingale* because of his realised fellowship with essence and the Platonic idea of *Endymion* that 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever' is now a conviction with him. Beauty can be a perennial joy only when its temporal sense is transcended, that is, eternity and novelty are now interconnected in a metaphysical sense. Keats is aware of the relationship between process and reality which used to frighten him.

This relationship, however, does not mean that in *Autumn* 'Ripeness is all', as in Shakespeare, or that there is no conflict as Graham Hough thinks. In it the memory of the evanescence of the beauty of spring persists in: 'Where are the songs of spring?' It reminds us of 'Mid-May's eldest child/The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine' in *Nightingale* or 'never even bid the spring adieu' in *Grecian Urn* or 'Tho' in her lids hung the sweet tears of May' in *Indolence*. But in *Autumn* there is no desperate clinging to the world of perception or the life of sensations. There is no nostalgia in the imagery of process—the end of the 'songs of spring' or 'the clammy cells' being 'overbrimmed' by summer—since there is another music of autumn which he accepts with satisfaction. The whole tone of the poem is indicated by words like 'mellow', 'soft' while 'fruitfulness' suggests the positive vision that he has reached. This serenity and repose can be contrasted with the frenzied thoughts about death and destruction present in the other odes. It is this posi-

tive ability to discern beauty amidst ugliness or joy in the midst of sorrow that brings in the 'fruitfulness' emerging from the paradox of 'While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day' in which 'bloom' gets its sense of permanence in association with 'dying' while 'barred' points to a sense of an obstacle that has been overcome, that is, necessity is no longer frightening enough to drive him to a mood of escapism—to 'fade far away' nor to the dilemma, 'if joy is sorrow or sorrow is joy.'[66] Now Keats can not only listen to the individual music of autumn but can also accept the experience of change in: 'Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies!' The last two verbs in the line show that life and death are no longer contraries but parts of total reality. This capacity to bear all 'naked truths' enables him to realise in terms of his myth of seasons that 'warm days shall never cease.' It is a positive awareness of happiness in a spiritual sense.

The *Ode to Autumn* as such does not belong to a different mood as Garrod thinks, nor are the ripeness and fulfilment regarded as quite final. It is a dramatisation of a particular kind of experience that is subsumed under the myth of seasons symbolising human life for Keats as a poet. It is an illustration of T. S. Eliot's theory that the man who suffers and the mind which creates are separate and as such it is an escape from personality.[67] Keats had a similar view when he said that the poet has no personality.[68] The tranquillity and serenity of the ode have little relation with the life of Keats during the period of its composition. As such the poem is a triumph of impersonality in great literature. It is the impersonality that Keats wished his Psyche to acquire when he began to write the odes. As a matter of fact this wish is there from the beginning in lines like—'And can I bid these joys farewell?/Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life', in *Sleep and Poetry*, but it is in the odes, especially in *Grecian Urn* and *Autumn* and in the vision of *Hyperion*—'to bear all naked truths/And to envisage circumstance, all calm,/That is the top of sovereignty'—that it is consummated.

If we regard *Psyche* as the poet's thesis about 'wide quietness' through an acquaintance with reality or by 'dying into life' then we can look upon *Indolence*, *Melancholy*, *Nightingale* as a sort of antithesis. *Grecian Urn* is a bridge between these odes

and *Autumn*. The whole gamut of experiences or processes recorded in these poems can be summed up in Keats's own words:

> After dark vapours have oppress'd our plains
> For a long dreary season, comes a day
> Born of the gentle south, and clears away
> From the sick heavens all unseemly strain.[69]

It is a progress from an awareness of death-in-life to that of life-in-death, an awareness of reality in the midst of process. In other words in the odes we see a conflict resembling the *either/or* pattern of Kirkegaard and it ends in a resolution that accepts *both* as constituting reality. As a matter of fact from a statement in one of his early letters we come to know about such an awareness. He is speculating about happiness and points out that a complex mind exists 'partly on Sensation and partly on thought'[70] but he also feels that to know truth or to have a 'philosophic Mind'[71] one must have sufficient experience of the realities of existence. The 'mighty abstract Idea of... Beauty in all things'[72] will not be satisfactory and convincing until the intelligent heart plays its part. Hence a 'World of Pains and troubles'[73] is absolutely necessary to 'school an Intelligence and make it a Soul.'[74] Man is a creature of circumstances which are the touchstones of his heart. As Keats says,

> I mean, I began by seeking how man was formed by circumstances—and what are circumstances?—but touchstones of his heart? and what are touchstones? but proovings of his heart?—and what are proovings of his heart but fortifiers or alterers of his nature?—and what is his altered nature but his Soul?—and what was his Soul before it came into the world and had these proovings and alterations and perfectionings?—An intelligence—without identity—and how is this Identity to be made? Through the medium of the Heart? And is the heart to become this Medium but in a world of Circumstances?[75]

If we substitute 'Psyche' for 'Soul' and 'process' for 'Circumstances' in the above passage remembering at the same time

to take 'intelligence' and 'heart' together as we do, for example, in the case of D. H. Lawrence, we can obtain a fairly credible account of the theme and meaning of the odes. Keats never grew 'high-rife/With Old Philosophy.'[76] Much of the insight into life that he got was intuitive and personal. And the progress of his mind that we see in the odes clearly shows a preference for permanent value over value in permanent objects. But as he remained a sceptic at heart till the end he never accepted either of the values as ultimate as, for example, Rilke did in a mystical way the reality of death. Hence it will not be proper to blame Keats for failing to make this distinction as Graham Hough does. The reality that he was convinced of is clearly brought out in the odes and makes them indubitably great poetry—almost a testament of his own ideas about the poet and his vision that has been, to borrow a term from F. R. Leavis, 'enacted' in the poems themselves.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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THE BECKET FABLE IN TENNYSON AND ELIOT AND FRY

By S. C. Nirula

This paper proposes to examine three verse plays dealing with what I shall call the Becket Fable.[1] The enigmatic involution of Becket's relationship with his monarch culminated in his violent end. Besides historians, poets have been inspired to make use of his life and death as a theme for plays. There is something of the quality of a fable in the situation of religion pitted against state interest, and it is grist to the mill of dramatic purpose. Instinct with interest it acquires topicality no less ubiquitous than that of a fable. Besides, the individual character of Thomas, as portrayed in the studies made on his life,[2] is replete with dramatic quality equal to that of Oedipus or Hamlet. Furthermore, having receded into history, his character and life have acquired an aura of the marvellous akin to the Gioconda smile; and 'the miraculous, the marvellous, and the mysterious are the only subjects that admit of truly poetic treatment.'[3]

In a play a fable may be used as an illustration and may thus remain a thing apart. Or it may form an extended incident having undergone contextual change. Or it may constitute the whole play providing it with the skeleton of the plot. Attitudinizing then imparts to it the dimension of meaning, and a raw tale is transmuted. 'They are the natural materials of art,'[4] says Mrs. Langer of myths, legends and fairy tales.

The simple Aesop's fable,[5] of a self-condemned widow waiting to die in her husband's tomb, has in the context of present-day world been transfigured into an exquisitely delightful and yet a profound play in which, to say the least, the will to live triumphs over the Freudian death-wish; and love breathes life into death itself. The play referred to is Christopher Fry's *A Phoenix Too Frequent*.[6] In the last scene Dynamene says:

> ...And now we can give his death
> The power of life...

...That I should be able to feel
He moves again in the world accomplishing
Our welfare...[7]

The Aesop's fable is quoted in full for a comparison with the play.

> At Ephesus, many years ago, a woman who had lost a well-loved husband, placed his body in a coffin, and nothing would induce her to tear herself from it. She lived continually in his tomb, mourning her loss, and by this example of chaste widowhood she gained high repute. One day some thieves who had robbed the temple of Zeus were punished for their sacrilege by crucifixon. To prevent anyone from removing their dead bodies, soldiers were placed on guard near the tomb in which the woman had shut herself up. It happened one night that one of the soldiers was thirsty, he begged a drink of water from the woman's slave-girl, who was attending her mistress as she retired to bed after sitting up late working by lamp-light. The door stood a little ajar, and looking through it the soldier saw the widow. She was a fine figure of a woman and so beautiful that he fell passionately in love with her on the spot. As his desire gradually became uncontrollable, he applied his ingenuity to inventing innumerable pretexts for seeing her more often. These daily meetings made her more willing to yield to his advances, until at length her heart was enslaved. So it was with her that this watchful sentinel began spending his night—with the result that a corpse disappeared from one of the crosses. In great consternation the man told his mistress what had happened. That model of wifely constancy was ready with her answer. 'There is no need to be afraid', she said—and gave him her husband's body to hang on the cross, so that he might escape punishment for his neglect of duty.
>
> By this foul deed the woman lost her former good name and became a byword of iniquity.

Thus an ordinary and bare incident becomes an extended

image in the hands of a poet to make a profound comment upon life, made rich with the sunshine and laughter of a finished comedy.

The life and death of Thomas à Becket too has been treated like a fable by Eliot, Tennyson and Fry besides four others. But before Tennyson three other English poets were attracted by the Becket fable and wrote plays based on it.

A study of the plays by the English playwrights reveals that the attitude towards this historical personage has been undergoing a gradual change from hidebound national and religious prejudice to a very objective and secular viewpoint. His shrine was desecrated by the order of Henry VIII. The king said, 'There was nothing in his life and exterior conversation whereby he should be called a saint, but rather a rebel and a traitor to his prince.'[8] And until Joseph Berington's book on Becket appeared in the year 1790 he was attacked as one. Later, the nineteenth century historians such as Stubbs, Green and Freeman brought to light facts relating to his personal life and relationship with Henry II, and tried to analyse the causes leading to his ultimate downfall.

Directly as recorded by the playwrights or indirectly from the study of their works, we can gather an idea of the purpose with which different playwrights chose Becket and his relationship with Henry II as a theme for their plays. In the year 1840 this Becket fable inspired the first play without religious intentions, *Thomas à Becket: a Dramatic Chronicle*; the poet was George Darley. It bears an unmistakable stamp of the Romantic movement. Darley was an instance of faint echoes of the Romantic movement. He took upon himself the task of writing a series of plays to celebrate the 'development of England'. Patriotic fervour moved him to raise 'national monuments, on some eminence of our Poetic mountain, to a few among the many heroes of our race, sleeping even yet with no memorial there, or one hidden beneath the moss of age.'[9] He has said in his preface that he felt he was 'bound to point the attention of my brother authors towards it.' His accomplishment is only partial though. The play remains an instance of 'intentional fallacy'; for it falls short of being a memorial to a hero. In this uneven play Becket emerges as an irascible, vindictive and ambitious man, who dies with a curse, rather than a prayer

on his lips committing his soul and cause to the will of God.

Tennyson was not only keenly aware of the shift in the intellectual scene of his time but he also responded to the change taking place. With his sensitive mind he searched for reasons underlying social, political and religious changes in the society. Hallam Lord Tennyson said of his father:

> All his life he enjoyed discovering the causes of Historical and Social movements, and had a strong desire to revise unfair judgements, and an eager delight in the analysis of human motives and character.[10]

It was his purpose to reinterpret British history of that period which was not touched upon by Shakespeare. He attempted in a trilogy to demonstrate the emergence of Britain towards consciousness of individuality and freedom, and the shedding of the overweening influence of the Church of Rome. His play *Becket* is the second part of the historical trilogy; the first is *Harold* and the third, *Queen Mary*.

In the dramatized series of historical events he depicts the capitulation of an old order and ushering in of a new. The precept embodied in the Becket fable is the waning of the foreign and undesirable Papal authority of Rome in England. *Harold* in the main is the story of the conflict between Normans and Saxons, the outcome of which was the cementing of the racial differences in England. *Queen Mary* depicts the ultimate cessation of the authority of the Pope of Rome in England.

In Becket's death Tennyson found almost readymade material answering his need. Becket as an individual was of the stature of a conceptual tragic hero. His fortunes decline, and he dies. He represented a decadent order. This ideally suited the purpose to demonstrate the fall of Papacy in England.

In his scrupulous attempt to be true to History Tennyson has made the play unwieldy with numerous scenes impeding the action of the play, which are insignificant in so far as the purpose of the play is concerned. The subplot of Henry's amorous indiscretions, and jealous intrigues of Fitzurse and Eleanor against Rosamund is not integral to the play; and instead of intensifying the total effect it detracts from it. The only unity in the play is that of the chronicle.

The action is not evenly spread over the length of the play. The Prologue and Act I, effiectively executed as they are, form half the length of the play. A lot could be gained towards the structural unity and thus the total effect of the play from either complete deletion or much pruning of the scene at Northampton, Act I, Sc. 3, which is protracted and tedious although in keeping with historical fact. Such others are the love-scenes between Henry and Rosamund in Act II, Sc. 1 and Scenes 1 and 2 in Act III. The superfluity pointed out is justified from the standpoint of the purpose of the play: portrayal of the decadence and disintegration of Papacy in England.

There is something fake about the stylized version of Tennyson's *Becket*. In Act I towards the end of Sc. 1, with Herbert of Bosham, Becket works himself up into a fever-pitch of emotion, almost a tantrum, which properly should have been the noble and mighty rage of one of the chief representatives of the Church Triumphant. His fulminations sound vacuous, and he seems to be stalking about on stilts. Tennyson, perhaps, gives him a character which spells his doom and in his image shows reflected the downfall of Papacy. His conduct is more like a religious charlatan. One of the speeches must be examined at some length to see exactly what is being suggested: in Act I, Sc. 1. He has hardly worn the mitre when he says:

> I served King Henry well as Chancellor;
> I am his no more, and I must serve the Church.
> This Canterbury is only less than Rome,
> And all my doubts I fling from me like dust,
> Winnow and scatter all scruples to the wind,
> And all the puissance of the warrior,
> And all the wisdom of the Chancellor;
> And all the heaped experience of life,
> I cast upon the side of Canterbury—
> Our holy mother Canterbury, who sits
> With tattered robes. Laics and barons thro'
> The random gifts of careless kings, have graspt
> Her livings, her advowsons, granges, farms,
> Her goodly acres—we will make whole;
> Not one rood lost. And for these Royal customs,
> These ancient Royal customs—they are Royal

Not of the Church—and let them be anathema,
And all that speak for them anathema.[11]

These are some of the blemishes in the play. There are others too; but these are shortcomings of craftsmanship and of execution. And if his purpose of taking up the Becket fable could be considered independently of execution, success in some measure may be granted to him.

Being his friend and Chancellor it was convenient for Henry to manoeuvre the election of Becket as the Archbishop of Canterbury. Henry had been painfully conscious of the power of Theobald and of Anselm before him. Also the chaotic state in which he inherited the kingdom from his grandfather, Henry I, was a cause of perpetual worry for him. Theobald's death gave Henry his chance to have an Archbishop of his own choice and to circumscribe the Church in the subduing influence of the law of the land. Yet Becket remained to be representative of a power failing in strength because of the malefactions that had crept into the religious order. One instance from the play would be enough to indicate the successful execution of the purpose: It is from Act II, Sc. 2, after Walter Map had scoffed at Roman Church at length and left; says Becket:

Map Scoffs at Rome. I all but hold with Map.
Save for myself no Rome were left in England
All had been his. Why should this Rome, this Rome
Still choose Barabbas rather than the Christ.
Absolve the left-hand thief and damn the right?
Take fees of Tyranny, wink at sacrilege,
.....condemn
The blameless exile?
Herbert: I would thou hadst been the Holy Father.
Becket: I would have done my utmost to keep Rome holy.
I would have made Rome know she is still Rome—
Who stands aghast at her eternal self
And shakes at mortal kings—her vacillation
Avarice, craft,—O God how many an innocent
Has left his bones upon the way to Rome
Unwept, uncared for. Yea—on my own self

The king had had no power except for Rome.
But Rome, Rome, Rome![12]

This is more than an acknowledgement of the venal condition of the Church. It is a hopeless and desperate cry of the one who is aware of the tarnished glory of the Church, the corruption of its righteousness and unrelenting rigidity and orthodoxy of principle and its irredeemably degraded condition. Yet he is helpless to stay the Church from heading towards its inevitable catastrophe in spite of his willingness to lay down his life. In Act III, Sc. 3 he says:

But I just die for that which never dies
. . . . . .
It must be so, friend, the wolves of England
Must murder her one shepherd that the sheep
May feed in peace.[13]

and again in Act V, Sc. 2 he invokes Rome, not the Rome that is, but the image of Rome he has in his heart, and he says:

. . . I would stand
Clothed in full authority of Rome,
Mailed in perfect panoply of faith,
First of the foremost of their files who die
For God. . . .[14]

That most of the time he speaks like a supercilious religious windbag may be attributed to the author's intentional detractions. Nevertheless his acceptance of death is unflinching—almost too willing to escape accusation of a trace of ambition for martyrdom—and his death symbolizes the fall of Papistical authority in England.

Eliot's choice of the Becket fable suited his purpose admirably. His intention was not only to celebrate Christian Martyrdom, but also to point out its significance and its need—today greater than before. Also to show that a Christian Martyrdom is always a design of God, and that preparation is a prerequisite for the experience of the Divine and submission of the self to be a sacrifice for the cause of Faith.

By the violence of Becket's sacrifice, the audience not only participate in the celebration of his martyrdom but are also powerfully made to think of the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. 'Although religion and religious controversy was popular in intellectual circles at the time, the theatre was little concerned with the preoccupation of the intellectuals',[15] says Gerald Weales. The theatre-going public was suspicious and shied away at the slightest hint of change from the familiar fare for their entertainment. Henry Arthur Jones laments the fact when he says of the common man's idea of the composition of human life 'as being six-sevenths secular and one-seventh sacred, and they do not wish this convenient fiction disturbed or examined.'[16] Thus in his play *Murder in the Cathedral* Eliot was not only able to establish an immediate rapport with the audience but fully conveyed to them the meaning he had injected into the Becket fable. 'Through creating direct links at various points with his audience the poet has made his work into continuous invitation to celebrate in religious fellowship the spiritual triumph of a saint. . . . The drama becomes again an instrument of community',[17] remarks Ronald Peacock.

Eliot excluded from his play many intricate and involved aspects of the life of Thomas à Becket. Any other issue would have alloyed the stark and powerful portrayal of Martyrdom. Everything else in the fable is keyed and subordinated to this central purpose. He has in Becket created an archetype of the Christian martyr. In this I am at variance with Alethea Hayter (referred to elsewhere), who in her brilliant Wedmore lecture makes the contention that Becket is more of a poet than a Martyr. The poets have through him explored their poetic awareness and imagination. She gives a list of characteristics of Becket and points out that such characteristics make a poet and not a martyr. For though there's predestination about a martyrdom nowhere is it laid down or proved by the history of martyrs that a martyr shall be a monk or an ascetic. Indeed it is time, occasion and the cause that exalts a death to martyrdom. To prove her point, the meaning of Becket's exposure to the temptations is stretched out and transposed onto Eliot as a poet or onto the poets as such. She makes her point in the exposition; but, all told, this would be a very limited view of both Becket and poets. Embodied in Becket are all the three func-

tioning elements in progression towards culmination in the experience of the Divine: 'purgation of the will; the need for the soul to divest itself of the love of created beings' and the experience of the Divine by rejection of images.'[18]

The fourth tempter says to Becket:

> What earthly glory, of king or emperor,
> What earthly pride, that is not poverty
> Compared with richness of heavenly grandeur?
> Seek the way of martyrdom....
> *Thomas:* Who are you tempting me with my own desires?...
> *Tempter:* I offer what you desire....
> *Thomas:*...You only offer
> Dreams to damnation.
> *Tempter:* You have often dreamt them.
> *Thomas*: Is there no way, in my soul's sickness,
> Does not lead to damnation in pride?
> . . . . . .
> Can I neither act nor suffer
> Without perdition?[19]

Thus the fourth tempter brings him face to face with will, the agent of damnation. As if to put him to shame for his ignorance, with some diabolical instinct the tempter repeats the words to him which Becket had uttered referring to the ignorance of the poor women of Canterbury directly after his return from France. He had said:

> You know and you do not know, what it is to act or suffer.
> You know and do not know, that action is suffering,
> And suffering action. Neither does the agent suffer
> Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
> In an eternal action, an eternal patience
> To which all consent that it may be willed
> And which all must suffer that they may will it,
> That the pattern may subsist, that the wheel may turn and still
> Be forever still.[20]

Yet it takes time before the words become experience and reali-

zation to him and bring about the changed orientation in his will. We cannot but agree with Hugh Kenner[21] who suggests that the change of orientation of Becket's will is the central theme of the play. It is the fourth tempter that sets him thinking by bringing him face to face with his will. Perhaps he has not slept nights: he pondered cogitated and contemplated,[22] and then was able to resolve the conundrum which the fourth tempter had awakened him into. So that even in his Christmas sermon he dwelt on what was uppermost in his mind. He said:

> Still less is a Christian Martyrdom the effect of man's will to become a Saint, as a man by willing and contriving may become a ruler of men. A martyrdom is always the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and lead them back to His ways. It is never the design of man: for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of being a martyr.[23]

It is the hidden desire for the glory of being a martyr with which the fourth tempter confronts him and which he overcomes. Thus having transcended the shortfall within and having 'made perfect my will'[24] he submitted himself, now a 'just man' to the will of God. 'Like a bold lion should be without fear: and for my Lord I am ready to die'[25] and dying commends his soul and cause of the Church to a galaxy of Saints. Not only does he have full experience of the divine but also becomes for the people an active witness of the Divine Fact.

It is the fourth tempter whom he could conquer with some difficulty and achieved the purgation of his will. The others he anticipated, and not because of sage clairvoyance; but being an intelligent and experienced man of the world he knew that at the crucial moment of consummation there shall be a 'strife with shadows.'[26] And also that the time between realization and consummation is the most difficult to bear: 'Heavier the interval than the consummation.'[27] He has lived through the life of pleasure and luxury: known moments of great dangers and glorious victories; in the court intrigues, like a master chess-player, played the barons one against the other to keep them subdued; consequently the first, second, and the third

tempters were imbecile and mere shadows for him. 'You come twenty years too late,'[28] he says to the first; and to the second, 'I was the King, his arm, his better reason/But what was once exaltation/Would now be only mean descent.'[29] Only Becket who had overcome sordid attractions of life could utter such words of moral superiority and detachment. 'Pursue your treacheries as you have done before:/No one shall say that I betrayed the king,'[30] and brushes aside the third tempter who offered him the Norman cooperation of the barons to rule England. For him a collusion with the barons is 'the desperate exercise of failing power.'[31]

The meaning that Eliot gives to the Becket fable fully issues from the figure of Thomas who achieved complete emancipation from all the human bondages and above all from the clutches of the treacherous will and became in truth 'the instrument of God'.

Christopher Fry, like Tennyson and Eliot, made no bones about his purpose in taking up the period of history in which Becket lived and died. He states clearly in the foreword of *Curtmantle*[32] that the play has two themes: 'one a progression towards a portrait of Henry....The other theme is Law, or rather the interplay of different laws: civil, canon, moral, aesthetic, and laws of God; and how they belong and do not belong to each other.'[33] By virtue of his theme, in Fry's play, Becket is only a leading figure. And towards the end of the second act of the play he is killed. The play, centrally being devoted to the study of the character of Henry, does not end there. But nor does the memory of Becket from Henry's mind, who loved him in his own possessive way; nor from that of Eleanor's who admired him intellectually as an understanding friend. Young Henry and Geoffery never ceased to marvel at the influence Becket could have on their lives from beyond his grave. And of course, there are the monks who were disappointed in seeking a hearing with the king and cursed him in the name of the 'Blessed Thomas'.[34]

Tennyson and Eliot both had a definite meaning to give to the death of Becket. Unlike them, Fry in his play treats his life. Becket in his play comes alive as a historical personage, a courtier, a Chancellor, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and above all Henry's friend the earnestness of whose character

led him into the tedious intractable course of argument between Church and State, as old as Anselm, precipitating in his death. All this has been brought to life in the pointed and unblemished poetry of *Curtmantle.*

The dimension of eternal mystery[35] that surrounds us is obtruded upon by the action of the king. He clamps down upon Becket the Archbishopric in spite of warnings of Becket to the contrary. It is this action of Henry's that triggers off a chain reaction unwinding the repercussions in time, culminating in the murder of Becket. Becket's intuition does dimly apprehend premonitions of the calamity with which he warned Henry:

> But listen to the things I fear. However much
> We both imperatively want it otherwise
> You're dividing us, and, what is more, forcing
> Yourself and me, indeed, the whole kingdom,
> Into a kind of intrusion on the human mystery,
> Where we may not know what it is we're doing,
> What powers we are serving, or what is being made of us.
> Or even understand the conclusion when it comes.[36]

But he is so prepossessed by the idea of creating a framework of law for the country he inherited in a state of chaos that he cannot be jolted into realizing the dangers of his intention. He presumes the concomitant harmony and efficiency of efforts for the proposed work to ensue from the arrangement he had planned:

> . . .if King and Archbishop
> Can work in affection, the Church will be content
> And calm. If not, waste of hours, energy,
> Opportunity: and much loss
> And peril to souls will come of it; and worse;
> Loss of time we need, to give England
> An incorruptible scaffolding of law
> To last her longer than her cliffs.[37]

The conflict engendered gathered violence. It churned up the history of the time. Becket as he came to be, when he took

over as the Primate of England, did not quite answer to the image of Becket Henry had in his mind. From the Becket Henry had known the Becket that revealed himself was so contrary that an encounter between the two couldn't but result in conflict. Henry was outraged, and he could not reconcile himself to Becket's staying away from him after he went to Canterbury. Very ironically he remarks:

> There's a child in him: he loves himself
> In a new frock. That's it.[38]

He looks back at their past relations and wonders:

> What's been the truth about him over these years?

because so far as he understood him over those years:

> The whole motive and labour of his mind,...was the wise conduct of this poor, tormented kingdom.[39]

So much, indeed, was his own concern with establishment of law and order in the country[40] that nothing could induce him to compromise his objective—he was only too aware of the anarchy that had resulted from the power the Church had acquired during Anselm. In his efforts to restore order in the kingdom so immense had been Becket's support to him in the past that he doubted not Becket's intention to be identical with his. He suffered from what may be termed as the 'Transferred Intention'. And this complex Transferred Intention was caused by his self-centred though deep love for Becket and implicit faith in his sincerity. There wasn't a trace of a doubt of any possible disparity, disagreement or bifurcation of purpose between them at any time. Becket on the other hand, only too earnest of intention, thought he had acted wisely in relinquishing the Chancellorship:

> I am one man, not two. My heart and reason
> Both give me the same answer
> *Henry:* I see no heart.
> What reason?

Becket: You give me spiritual charge of the kingdom.
I take it, then, the kingdom's need
Is that I should carry this charge in good earnest.
Henry: The kingdom, not a country parish. You know
Very well the need of the kingdom you serve.
. . . . . .
Because the king's truth is the truth you still believe.[41]

This is earnestness versus earnestness. And thus the interplay of canonical and state laws deepens and goes on becoming deeper after Becket refuses to put his seal to ratify the customs of the land so dear to Henry's heart. This infuriates him:

There is hardly one thing I have reached out for
In these last months, which hasn't been obstructed
From Canterbury.[42]

He has good reason to go haywire. And more so when during the argument—almost verging upon altercation, over dispensation of law; its letter and spirit; its just applicability, without any discrimination between common men and the clerics: the significance of mercy and forgiveness to the criminals; the comparative range of powers of the Church and the State, in which Becket stretches the argument in favour of the Church to an extreme of sounding like a fanatic:

What you see as the freedom of the state
Within the law, I fear, as the enslavement
Of that other state of man, which, and in
Which only, he can know his perfect freedom.[43]

In the myopic concern of maintaining 'the dignity of the Church' the welfare of the people, which sometime had been his concern, was pushed into penumbra. And if Henry couldn't compromise his customs, so couldn't Becket understand Henry's secularity:

The will of the people is the will of God.

But it is impossible for Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury,

to realize, or submit to the fact that the time of Pope Calixtus was half a century past, when in 1122 in the Concordat of Worms[44] he had shown that the Church in Rome was indeed the religious and secular head of the Empire. Henry very strongly voices the ascendant secularism of his time:

> Your old immunity is over, you're trapped
> In a change of the world, my lords, which men deserve
> And are going to be given. The man who gets in the way
> Is of no more consequence than a skull
> Kicked about by oafs in a field.
> And that's what he will come to.[45]

However much Becket may try to establish the supremacy of the kingdom of heaven over the kingdom of man to Henry—

> And in so far
> As you live, Henry, like the rest of us
> In a universe of powers outside your government:
> . . . . . .
> . . .you owe your obedience to the Church—[46]

Henry remains unshaken in his belief that the law of the land must be equally applicable to all men:

> Either there are laws for every man
> And he is one; or there are no laws.[47]

And besides the court accuses the clerics of having fattened on usurped acquisitions and of having pawned the country to Rome: 'They've got hold of the country beyond anything ever known. Grabbing lands that haven't been theirs for a generation.'[48]

The tempo of the argument mounts to a trenchant pitch of virulent sarcasm. But if Henry in his vituperation sounds like a godless heretic, Becket prevaricates and indulges in sophistry. His acceptance of the customs is with reservation which stings Henry to the quick. And it is no less than audacity to the king's court when Becket comes bearing his cross to appear for trial. If they don't seem to find a point of conciliation it

is because both are stunted by their earnestness of purpose and allegiance to their cause. The growing power of the Church which hampers Henry's work is contrary to the interest of the State; and Henry's purpose, of giving England law of equity, is a menace to the 'dignity of the Church' which Becket tenaciously upholds. Besides, they bring to bear on the cause they champion their individual impetuosity, and religious fervour. The conflict between two abstract entities, Religion and State, degenerates into squabbling of two headstrong opponents. Almost like a goddess from the olympian heights Eleanor remarks to Marshal:

> Warped and withered, Marshal, to the size of two men.
> We are not going to see the great issues contending,
> Nor the new spirit of England being forged in fire.
> We shall see the kicks and blows of men in rage,
> Both losing sight of the cause. The high names
> Of God and State are now displaced
> By hurt pride, self-distrust, foiled ambition,
> And the rest of our common luggage.[49]

The ideas and ideals undergo metamorphosis. If at all peace was forged between the two mighty contenders it was a flimsy peace, precariously balanced on a pin, and with a slight quiver it was blown into bits. The king who had made as many concessions as Becket ferreted out of him, now looked forward to hammering out the 'scaffolding of law' in harmony and co-operation with Becket. He gets riled when the news of the excommunication of all those who participated in young Henry's coronation is given to him.

Their duel had reached the crest of a surging billow. But, that it was not his intention to get 'this turbulent priest' killed is not only established by the penance he submitted to and the contrition he expressed:

> It was never my guilt; only the rage of words
> But, if I think so, I diminish nothing.
> I accept it all, if I can be rid of it all.[50]

Through the movement of the verse Fry has given the words,

the tone and the occasion in which they are spoken make the truth in them almost unimpeachable, yet it may be doubted that there was a subliminal intention of which the words in rage were spontaneous expression. But we cannot but believe the almost last few words he utters to Roger when he lies dying on a feather mattress in Le Mans surrounded by his native people:

> When you can, write for me to the Prior, tell him I think with concern of the difficulties which are his. . . . Say, they (the monks who had cursed him in the name of 'Blessed Thomas') did harshly, to bring Becket out of the grave.[51]

He was human. He must hold Becket in deepest affection of his heart to think of him with such regard at the time of being in sight of God's kingdom.

From Cattermole to Fry the Becket fable has lived through a history of kaleidoscopic patterns; but the patterns have been given to it by the sensibility of the times it lived through. For there is indeed a plasticity and resilience in myths and fables, which is proven by the fact that creative writers in all ages have drawn on the wealth of myths and fables of their cultures. It is not only that a myth or a fable has acquired different shapes from different treatments but the creative imagination of the authors have shot through it as if to illumine a fresh aspect and depth. It can be likened to an uncut diamond to which shape and polish is given by the discoverer. Thus the Becket fable as it has come to be used swells with added dimensions of meaning and significance.

Cattermole was the first to produce a play. He was a parson and an avowed anti-papist. The meaning he gave to the Becket fable was in keeping with his religious prejudice. The Becket he portrayed was self-seeking, treacherous, rebellious and ambitious. The purpose obviously was to expose to public scorn the Papistical imposition of Roman high-handedness on English liberties, the figure of Becket representing Rome in England. In the next play by Aubrey de Vere, forty years later, the Becket fable underwent a radical change. It came to be interpreted in a manner just the reverse of Parson Cattermole's. Vilification of Becket in history and the dramatic diatribe of

Cattermole's provoked the Roman Catholic in de Vere. His play was in the tone of polemical defence of Thomas à Becket. He made Becket personify Christian ideals and a champion of people's liberties against the despotic impositions of Henry's new-fangled customs, framed to deprive the Church of its supremacy over the State. For them the Becket fable remained a stalking horse for religious controversy. Eliot, Fry and Tennyson used his life and situation differently from one another. It is instinct with theatrical possibility, which may be explored differently by other poets at some other time. For it has come to be a fable. And it will ever be a metaphor through which will be expressed the awareness of the experience of living, and the meaning the sensitive minds give to History and Religion.

APPENDIX

In his exposition of Aristotle's view that poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular, T. R. Henn in his book *The Harvest Of Tragedy* (Methuen, 1956) says: 'For if the Epic, Myth, Fable or History representing as they did the religious and cultural heritage of the Greeks, were a living and continuous force in the present, the business of the dramatist was to communicate them so that, in the pattern of their interrelationships, they formed as it were components or facets of total sum of wisdom.' . . . 'The myth or fable could often be seen in certain perspective as concerning political or social problems in contemporary Athens.' . . . 'The adherence of the Greeks to the material of myth, fable, epic and ballad gave particular sanction, weight and foreknowledge to the whole structure of the drama. . . . In our own time we can note one kind of advantage enjoyed by writers using religious or Biblical subjects, and varying degrees of success achieved by, say, *Murder in the Cathedral* compared with John Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln*. There are probably advantages in using material so well known, that liberties may be taken. . . .' . . . 'A fable which has vague popular basis probably offers the best prospects to the dramatist; the story has popular sanction, is received unhesitatingly as having happened; yet is not intractable to be remoulded completely.' . . . . 'The dramatist's problem is to extend the signi-

ficance of the play beyond that of an individual or domestic system of references. Such extension is readily available in various kinds of fable where their very character presupposes a significance beyond the immediate personalities involved.' . . . 'But any fable limited, whether intrinsically or by the passing of time, to narrowly historical or personal interests must be so handled as to provide some quality of universality.'

This quality of universality is what Yeats called 'Emotion of Multitude'.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A Fable is made. Its purpose is to embody a precept. A myth on the other hand grows around a character or an event of history. There is something of both in the character and life of Thomas à Becket. He is a historical personage and his life and death have been used by poets for purposes different from one another. See also Appendix I.
2. Between the years 1840 and 1900 thirty or more books were written on Becket. His latest biographers are: Father Knowles, Mr Robert Speaight and Alfred Duggan.
3. Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven, 1944), pp. 156-8.
4. Mrs Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling And Form* (New York, 1953), p. 274.
5. S. A. Hanford, *Fables of Aesop* (The Penguin Classics, 1954), pp. 209-10.
6. Christopher Fry, *A Phoenix Too Frequent* (Oxford, 1946).
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8. Quoted by Alethea Hayter, *Thomas à Becket And The Dramatists, Essays by Divers Hands*, XXXV, 1966.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Alfred Tennyson, *Poetical Works* (Oxford, 1963), p. 653.
12. Ibid. p. 674.
13. Ibid. p. 681.
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17. Ronald Peacock, *The Poet in the Theatre* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1946), p. 4.
18. Norman Nicholson, *Man And Literature* (S. C. M. Press, 1943), p. 199. Charles Williams writing in *Theology Today*, Vol. X, p. 226, discusses the concept of the Negative way to God by rejection of images.
19. T. S. Eliot, *Collected Plays* (Faber & Faber, London, 1962), p. 27.
20. Ibid. p. 28.
21. Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet* (University Paperbacks, 1965), p. 239.

22. T. S. Eliot, *Collected Plays* (Faber & Faber, 1962), p. 33.
23. Ibid. p. 33.
24. Ibid. p. 43.
25. Ibid. p. 46.
26. Ibid. p. 18.
27. Ibid. p. 18.
28. Ibid. p. 19.
29. Ibid. p. 22.
30. Ibid. p. 24.
31. Ibid. p. 24.
32. Christopher Fry, *Curtmantle* (Oxford, 1961).
33. Foreword, *Curtmantle*, pp. viii-ix.
34. *Curtmantle*, p. 95.
35. Fry's whole work is an attempt to give a feel of this elusive but a very palpable entity of human life, of which we rarely, remotely and obliquely become aware for a fleeting moment.
36. Ibid. p. 22.
37. Ibid. p. 23.
38. Ibid. p. 28.
39. Ibid. p. 29.
40. Fry has quoted in his Foreword of *Curtmantle*, p. vii, Sir Winston Churchill's *History of the English Speaking People*, Vol. II: 'he had laid the foundation of the English Common Law, upon which succeeding generations would build. Changes in the design would arise, but its main outlines would not be altered.'
41. *Curtmantle*, p. 31.
42. Ibid. p. 32..
43. Ibid. p. 40
44. The Concordat of Worms, however, left the issue of Dominium Mundi undecided, which gave rise to seething activity during Hohenstaufen period against the Theocratic Concept of the Holy Roman Empire.
45. *Curtmantle*, p. 42.
46. Ibid. p. 33.
47. Ibid. p. 47.
48. Ibid. p. 43.
49. Ibid. p. 48.
50. Ibid. p. 78.
51. Ibid. p. 95.

TREATMENT OF RELIGION IN HARDY'S *JUDE THE OBSCURE*

By S. L. Pandit

To any casual student of Thomas Hardy it is clear that his last novel, *Jude the Obscure* (published in 1895), was, among other things, a tremendous and passionate expression of social protest, much more explosive in its impact on the minds of the Victorians than *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was destined to be, for somewhat different reasons, for a later generation of reading public. The sound and fury provoked by *Jude* may appear a rather primitive and puerile reaction in the context of social thinking today. Nevertheless, many dispassionate students of literature may now feel that this exposition of social satire is a little overdone by Hardy in *Jude* and that, artistically speaking, the result is not as satisfactory as, say, in *Tess of the D' Urbervilles*. In spite of such criticism, *Jude the Obscure* remains a great masterpiece of human expression, for flawlessness has never seriously been claimed as a criterion for genuine greatness in literary art; and there is no doubt that *Jude's* creator put his whole soul into its making to an extent that may not be claimed even for *Tess*.

Jude the Obscure raises many fundamental questions which have stirred the minds of men since the time they began to think consciously of the problems of human existence. But the book fails to give any clear-cut answers to most of these questions. On the other hand, some of the leading questions posed by *Tess* are, by comparison, susceptible to solutions. Not so in the case of *Jude*. It retains to the end the unfathomable incomprehensibility and mystery of life itself. Moreover, as another unfailing sign of its intrinsic greatness, the novel presents a wide variety of mood and incident that age cannot wither nor custom stale.

Among the many other fundamental issues of social living raised in *Jude* may be listed Hardy's attitude towards religion, towards the basic doctrinal forms of Western Christianity as practised and believed in by most of his contemporaries. It is evident that a dominating feature of the novel, as represented in the shifting opinions and attitudes of its two prin

characters (Jude Fawley and Susana Bridehead), is an exposition of a persistent antagonism between the conventional Christian way of life and a certain kind of agnosticism that may be termed *paganism*, for want of a better word.

To begin with, in his comparative ignorance both of life and book-learning, Jude sets much store by the Christian doctrine and for many years dreams passionately of acquiring, at the leading traditional seat of learning and religious orthodoxy in England, the necessary academic qualifications for becoming a regular pastor of the Anglican Church. But, as his creator has hinted at very early in the novel, deep down in his consciousness Jude feels an irresistible fascination for some vague kind of pre-Christian paganism. During his initial painful efforts to acquire unaided a working knowledge of Greek and Latin, we are told, the only time that Jude could attend to his lessons was while driving his aunt's cart loaded with bread to be distributed among her customers in the neighbouring countryside, while the horse found his way as best as he might in the semi-darkness of an early dawn or the dim twilight of an evening. Says the novelist:

> On a day when Fawley was getting quite advanced, being now about sixteen, and had been stumbling through the 'Carmen Saeculare', on his way home, he found himself to be passing over the high edge of the plateau by the Brown House. The light had changed, and it was the sense of this which had caused him to look up. The sun was going down, and the full moon was rising simultaneously behind the woods in the opposite quarter. His mind had become so impregnated with the poem that he stopped the horse, alighted, and glancing round to see that nobody was in sight, knelt down on the roadside bank with open book. He turned first to the shiny goddess, who seemed to look so softly and critically at his doings, then to the disappearing luminary on the other hand, as he began:
>
> 'Phoebe silvarumque potens Diana!'
>
> The horse stood still till he had finished the hymn, which Jude repeated under the sway of a polytheistic fancy that

he would never have thought of humouring in broad daylight.[1]

But this feeling is still vague, instinctive, and incipient; and Jude has to travel long before he ceases to have a blind faith in the established order of things. As against this, Sue Bridehead, from her very first appearance in the novel, strikes one as an intellectually incurable and supremely self-confident nonconformist. Even before she meets Jude, she has to go through an experience that leads to a minor crisis in her otherwise placid course of existence at Christminster. While taking a solitary afternoon stroll into the countryside outside the university town, she comes across on the road a black-haired foreigner carrying for sale a number of plaster statuettes. After examining his wares closely for some time, she purchases from him a Venus and an Apollo and covertly, almost with a feeling of guilt, carries this 'heathen load into the most Christian city in the country'[2] and to the secrecy of her chamber, evasively telling her sanctimonious landlady, Miss Fontover, that she has just purchased the casts of two saints, St. Peter and Mary Magdalene. Later, when Miss Fontover discovers the identity of these nude figures, she breaks and crushes them under her feet. This leads to a difference between her and Sue who is, as a consequence, driven to leave her lodgings and to seek her cousin, Jude Fawley, for help in this emergency; and, as the readers of the novel know, she then drifts on towards Richard Phillotson. But her spirit at this stage is unbending and she is prepared to stand up to anyone in defence of her honestly held convictions or a lack of them.

It will be seen that during the early days of Sue's association with Jude the latter has to be generally on the defensive before Sue while mentioning anything smacking of Christian affiliations. For instance, once, in the course of their discussion of a programme of sight-seeing, the following conversation takes place, revealing their respective attitudes at this time:

'Well—Wardour Castle. And then we can do Fonthill if we like—all in the same afternoon.'

'Wardour is Gothic ruins—and I hate Gothic!'

'No. Quite otherwise. It is a classic building—Corinthian, I think; with a lot of pictures.'

'Ah—that will do. I like the sound of Corinthian. We'll go.'[3]

Some time later, arguing with Jude on what she regards as the emptiness of the mythical glory of Christminster, Sue expresses herself rather vehemently: 'The mediaevalism of Christminster must go, be sloughed off, or Christminster itself will have to go,' quoting the following line as if to clinch the issue:

O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted gods![4]

There follows a lengthy argument ending as given below:

'And what a literary enormity this is,' she said, as she glanced into the pages of Solomon's Song. 'I mean the synopsis at the head of each chapter, explaining away the real nature of that rhapsody. You needn't be alarmed: nobody claims inspiration for the chapter headings, Indeed, many divines treat them with contempt. It seems the drollest thing to think of the four-and-twenty elders, or bishops, or whatever number they were, sitting with long faces and writing down such stuff.'

Jude looked pained. 'You are quite Voltairean!' he murmured.

'Indeed? Then I won't say any more, except that people have no right to falsify the Bible! I *hate* such humbug as could attempt to plaster over with the ecclesiastical abstractions such ecstatic, natural, human love as lies in that great and passionate song!' Her speech had grown spirited, and almost petulant at his rebuke, and her eyes moist. 'I *wish* I had a friend here to support me; but nobody is ever on my side!'

'But my dear Sue, my very dear Sue, I am not against you!' he said, taking her hand, and surprised at her introducing personal feeling into mere argument.[5]

As the story progresses, Sue is a little put out to learn that

Jude is already married to Arabella and can hardly hide her feelings. When Jude protests that he does not love Arabella and that he has stayed away from her for years, her sarcastic reaction is quite characteristic of her scoffing attitude towards Jude's religiosity at this juncture: 'How strange of you to stay apart from her like this! You, such a religious man. How will the demi-gods in your Pantheon—I mean those legendary persons you call saints—intercede for you after this?'[6]

Apparently, in a mood of unthinking desperation, Sue decides to marry Phillotson and informs Jude of this decision by a letter, requesting him at the same time to give her away. The following words of biting sarcasm in this letter are, again, symptomatic of her attitude towards established religion at this stage of her life:

> I have been looking at the marriage service in the Prayer Book and it seems to me very humiliating that a giver-away should be required at all. According to the ceremony as there printed, my bridegroom chooses me of his own will and pleasure; but I don't choose him. Somebody *gives* me to him, like a she-ass or she-goat, or any other domestic animal. Bless your exalted views of woman, O Churchman![7]

In a similar vein, she later speaks of a woman's lawfully married husband as 'the chamber-officer appointed by the bishop's licence to receive her love.'[8]

In due course, Jude's resistance breaks down under the twin pressures of the hammer blows of Sue's rebellious intellect and of his own instinctive propensities, so that he exclaims, 'I'll never care about my doctrines or my religion any more!'[9] And Sue's reaction to this passionate outburst is thoroughly in keeping with the unorthodox views held by her at the time: 'I am certain one ought to be allowed to undo what one has done so ignorantly! I daresay it happens to lots of women; only they submit, and I kick.... When people of a later age look back upon the barbarous customs and superstitions of the times that we have the unhappiness to live in, what *will* they say!'[10]

At long last, Jude and Sue are driven to live together, to put it in proper Christian phraseology, 'in sin'; for, in spite of

Jude's keen desire to have their relationship legalized—both now being free to do so—Sue cannot be brought round to take this step, because she believes that 'legal marriage is a hopelessly vulgar institution.'[11] Jude's baffled comment is rather interesting:

> Sue, you seem when you are like this to be one of the women of some grand old civilization, whom I used to read about in my bygone, wasted, classical days, rather than a denizen of a mere Christian country. I almost expect you to say at these times that you have just been talking to some friend whom you met in the Via Sacra, about the latest news of Octavia or Livia; or have been listening to Aspasia's eloquence, or have been watching Praxiteles chiselling away at his latest Venus, while Phryne made complaint that she was tired of posing.[12]

In the course of the story, till she reaches what may be called the major crisis of her existence in the death of her two children through the agency of that abnormal child of sorrow, Little Father Time, the bitter fruit of the unhappy union between Jude and Arabella, she is the chief exponent of this undercurrent of antagonism towards Christianity. She seems, till then, obsessed with some kind of pagan fatalism which 'makes her feel as if a tragic doom overhung their (Jude's and hers) family, as it did the house of Atreus';[13] so that the flowers in the bride's hand, when they together inadvertently stray into a church where a wedding is on, appear to her perfervid imagination 'sadly like the garland which decked the heifers of sacrifice in old times.'[14]

So the star-crossed lovers argue round and round their problems till Jude, in due course, submits to the vehement and rebellious intellect of Sue. But the tragedy of the children's death, set in ironic contrast against the background of the festivities of Remembrance Week at Christminster, completely unhinges Sue Bridehead. Here Hardy seems to have taken some care to prepare his readers for this strange denouement. For, even before she feels the impact of this dread event, as a clear premonition of what is coming, Sue seems to feel a kind of inexplicable fear at a distant sight of Phillotson in the festive

crowd outside one of the college buildings. This is what she says to Jude on the occasion:

> 'Although I know it is all right with our plans, I felt a curious dread of him; an awe, or terror, of conventions I don't believe in. It comes over me at times like a sort of creeping paralysis, and makes me so sad!'[15]

The tragedy of the Children's death and the totality of the circumstances attending it completely disrupt some invisible moorings of Sue's deepest spiritual being. Or, is it meant to be a culminating consequence of all the tortures she had already undergone? Most unexpectedly, she now turns about to an almost superstitious belief in rigid conformity; and, their roles now completely reversed, Jude argues with her that they had done no wrong against Nature or Man or even the First Cause, whatever the attributes of that Unseen Power may be. But Sue is disconsolate and puts it mournfully:

> 'We must conform! All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures, and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God!'[16]

The reversed argument goes on and on for some time, but leads to no understanding. But, in Sue's case, this mental transformation is never meant to be presented as a genuine conversion, or as one more triumph for the angels and a discomfiture for the Prince of Darkness. It is, on the contrary, the woeful spectacle of the complete cracking of an essentially noble soul and a free intellect in their unequal fight against the adverse circumstances of life. In his sorrow Jude bitterly remarks, 'My good heavens—how we change places!'[17] And this remark brings home to us the stark tragedy of the situation.

No vehement pleadings of Jude can now move Sue to change her attitude towards their erstwhile relationship, to what Jude rightly regards as 'Nature's own marriage.'[18] A little later he adds, 'Can this be the girl who brought the Pagan deities into this most Christian city?—who mimicked Miss Fontover when she crushed them with her heel?—quoted Gibbon, and Shelley,

and Mill? Where are dear Apollo, and dear Venus now!'[19] The extremely harrowing nature of this unending argument between the lovers may be contrasted with the comparatively playful mutual raillery of intellectual companionship of the years gone by. Sue is now bent upon going back to Phillotson, her 'only lawfully wedded spouse', and thus, in the words of Jude, 'doing an immoral thing for moral reasons.'[20] Sensing dimly somehow the enormity of Sue's mental volte-face, the unsophisticated Mrs. Edlin later comments, 'Upon my life I don't call that religion.'[21] And before this unending controversy between Jude and Sue can be brought to any conclusive understanding, the story moves towards its intensely tragic close; a premature and forlorn death for Jude and, what is worse, a nightmarish life-in-death for Sue. There is, however, just a little comfort in the last detached comment upon Sue's fate and his own, by Jude, while he resignedly waits for his end under the shadow of the city of his dreams and is uttering some rambling words in the presence of the unlettered but understanding Mrs. Edlin: 'She was once a woman whose intellect was to mine like a star to a benzoline lamp: who saw all *my* superstitions as cobwebs that she could brush away with a word. Then bitter affliction came to us, and her intellect broke, and she veered round to darkness. Strange difference of sex, that time and circumstance, which enlarge the views of most men, narrow the views of women almost invariably. And now the ultimate horror has come—her giving herself like this to what she loathes, in her enslavement to forms!—she, so sensitive, so shrinking, that the very wind seemed to blow on her with a touch of deference. . . . As for Sue and me when we were at our own best, long ago—when our minds were clear, and our love of truth fearless—the time was not ripe for us. Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us. And so the resistance they met with brought reaction in her, and recklessness and ruin on me!'[22] The rest is silence.

Before this analysis of an important aspect of *Jude the Obscure* is brought to a close, one might pause and consider what Hardy's views on religion exactly were. Obviously, his personal belief approximated to some kind of an intellectual paganism and he could not, on his own showing, be regarded as an orthodox Christian. But, surely, one who has expressed with such

deep understanding and sympathy the immense sorrows and the little joys of human existence could never be an opponent of the simple Christian ethics based on tolerance, charity, and love. Apparently, what he was up against was the sanctimonious certitude of Christian theology and all the cant and humbug of the so-called Christian way of life as followed in the West. This view may be reinforced by those soul-stirring words addressed by Jude to Sue, at their final parting in the church at Marygreen, when he was going over in retrospect the unmitigated agony of the unresolved crisis of their strange and unconventional mutual relationship. Says he, 'Sue! we are acting by the letter; and "the letter killeth!" '[23] Appropriately enough, these scriptural words of deep import, 'The letter killeth', appear also on the little page of the book. Obviously, Hardy intended this to embody the quintessence of the significance of this sombre book.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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3. Ibid. p. 143.
4. Ibid. p. 157.
5. Ibid. pp. 159-60.
6. Ibid. p. 174.
7. Ibid. p. 178.
8. Ibid. p. 213.
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10. Ibid. p. 224.
11. Ibid. p. 280.
12. Ibid. pp. 280-81.
13. Ibid. p. 292.
14. Ibid. p. 297.
15. Ibid. p. 340.
16. Ibid. p. 354.
17. Ibid. p. 359.
18. Ibid. p. 363.
19. Ibid. p. 364.
20. Ibid. p. 366.
21. Ibid. p. 378.
22. Ibid. p. 414.
23. Ibid. p. 402.

LAWRENCE'S IDEA OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS

By S. K. Desai

This is an attempt at formulating Lawrence's system (Lawrence, of course, would never have liked the word 'system' in connection with his ideas) of aesthetics, on the basis of a study of his letters, critical essays and his portrayal of artists in his major novels. Lawrence is not, in fact, a systematic thinker, but since he is one of the most integrated geniuses among creative writers, one can discover in his ideas about any subject, whether expressed in the form of overt statements or in terms of concrete fiction, a certain consistency and inter-relatedness, and speak of the Lawrentian philosophy. In this article, there is an attempt to see whether we can speak of the Lawrentian philosophy of art.

One of the perennial themes of aesthetic theory is the relation between art and life. Lawrence does not believe that life is *there* before the artist for him to 'imitate', or that it is there within him in his 'imagination' waiting to express itself through one medium or the other. According to Lawrence, 'life *consists* in the achieving of a pure relationship between ourselves and the living universe about us. . . . This, if we know it, is our life and our eternity: the subtle, perfected relation between me and my whole circumambient universe.' Art, says Lawrence, is one of the ways of achieving and revealing 'the relation between man and his circumambient universe at the living moment.' For Lawrence there is no dichotomy between art and life, and the level of art is not different from that of life. Loerke, in *Women in Love*, represents the art-for-art's-sake view, with which Lawrence has no sympathy. 'It is a work of art,' says Loerke, 'it is a picture of nothing, of absolutely nothing, it has no relation with the everyday world of this or other, there is no connection between them, absolutely none, they are two different and distinct planes of existence. . . you *must not* confuse the relative world of action with the absolute world of art.' Ursula, one of the Lawrentian norms in the novel, reacts strongly to this view and asserts: 'The world of art is only the truth about the real

world, that's all—but you are too far gone to see it.' 'The truth about the real world' means the truth about the relation between the artist and the universe. Ursula, for instance, is quick enough to see in Loerke's picture of a naked girl riding a horse his own stock, hide-bound brutality and his perverse relationship with the girl whom he loved and tortured and then ignored. Lawrence describes very vividly the relationship between art and the artist on the one hand and art and the 'universe' on the other, in his famous passage on Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers':

> ...his painting does not represent the sunflower itself. We shall never know what the sunflower itself is.... The vision on the canvas is a third thing, utterly intangible and inexplicable, the offspring of the sunflower itself and Van Gogh himself.... It is a revelation of the perfected relation, at a certain moment, between a man and a sunflower. It is neither man-in-the-mirror nor flower-in-the-mirror, neither is it above or below or across anything. It is between everything, in the fourth dimension.

This is a remarkably lucid description of what exactly a work of art is. So far, Lawrence is perfectly acceptable...Now, the next question is: What, according to Lawrence, is the nature of this relationship between the artist and his circumambient universe? What aspect of his personality gets into this relationship? Here we have the characteristic Lawrentian emphasis on INTUITION.

> By intuition alone can man *really* be aware of man, or of the living, substantial world. By intuition alone can man live and know either woman or world, and by intuition alone can he bring forth again images of magic awareness which we call art.

In the chapter 'Sketch-Book' of *Women in Love*, there is a poetic description of the intuitive vision that Gudrun has of the water-plants. Seated like a Buddhist, she stares at the water-plants, and 'she could feel their turgid fleshy structure as in a sensuous vision, she *knew* how they rose out of the mud, she

knew how they thrust out from themselves, how they stood stiff and succulent against the air.' '...Gudrun, absorbed in a stupor of apprehension of surging water-plants, sat crouched on the shoal, drawing, not looking up for a long time, and then staring unconsciously, absorbedly at the rigid, naked, succulent stems.' What we have to bear in mind is that Gudrun's 'vision' is as much connected with the water-plants as with some inner aspect of her personality...Lawrence insists that the consciousness that produces art is predominantly intuitive-instinctive and not mental-conceptual. In other words, it is the Unconscious that actively participates in the creative process. In *Sons and Lovers*, Lawrence describes how Paul paints 'unconsciously; with his mother's warmth inside him like strength, and how it is Miriam who stimulates him into knowledge of the work he has finished unconsciously. Lawrence has the Bergsonian belief in intuition; he thinks that only intuition helps you penetrate, by a kind of sympathy, to the real nature of the object, that intuition is essentially a discovering instrument. 'The essential quality of poetry,' says Lawrence, 'is that it makes a new effort of attention and "discovers" a new world within the known world.'

Lawrence suggests that the emergence of significant images, symbols and myths is associated with the working of the Unconscious (which is divine and universal, in essence). In *The Rainbow*, Lawrence describes how Will Brangwen carves, during the days of courtship, a phoenix on the butter-stamper that he makes for Anna.

> ...over him too the darkness of obscurity settled. He seemed to be hidden in a tense, electric darkness, in which his soul, his life was intensely active, but without his aid or attention. His mind was obscured. He worked swiftly and mechanically.... (p. 117)

Here we have a vivid portrayal of the process of symbol-making. That the phoenix is the very symbol of the relationship between Will and Anna is made clear by associating the image of the hawk with Will and that of the flames with Anna. Later, his 'vision' tries to express itself in the 'Creation of Eve'. But when his unthinking wife wilfully breaks his vision, he chops up the

whole panel and puts it in the fire. Both the phoenix and the Creation of Eve are symbols which emerge out of the Unconscious, electrified into activity by the complex unconscious relationship between Will and Anna. Sometimes, instead of the symbols arising from the depth of the Unconscious, the external objects might get charged by the artist's Unconscious 'awareness' and consequently grow into symbols. This phenomenon is beautifully described in *Sons and Lovers*—in the chapter 'Lad-and-girl Love.' One evening, with Miriam sitting beside him, Paul paints a picture of pine trees, and he discovers a little later that the pine trees flaring up at sunset are really symbolic of the truth of Miriam's personality which he has grasped unconsciously and intuitively. He blurts out, entangling himself in his own speech: 'Even your joy is like a flame coming off a sadness. . . because you are different inside, like a pine tree and then you flare up; but you are not like an ordinary tree, with fidgety leaves and jolly.' . . . In *The Plumed Serpent*, Lawrence depicts the creation of myth, shows how the racial unconscious of the Mexicans creates the myth of the god Quetzalcoatl. What is wrong with this myth is that it is (to use Lawrence's own terminology) the product of Lawrence's mental-conceptual fancy and not of genuine, quivering intuition, not of a mind in a kind of living tension.

Lawrence believes that genuine creative activity is the function of the mind in a kind of living tension. He depicts how Paul works away at his painting on the day on which his father has an accident in the mine. Later, Paul is said to have finished a picture—one that satisfied him—on the day of his mother's death. After the mother's death, this tension is gone and everything seems to go smash for him and he cannot paint. Similarly, Will Brangwen is interested in his wood carving only until there is a tension between him and Anna. Once he submits to her and is content to live, 'unready for fulfilment', he cannot create at all. And when after 20 years he goes back to wood carving, he finds that he has knowledge and skill but no vision. 'Polarity' is the name that Lawrence has given to this living creative tension. Graham Hough describes this tension as something achieved between opposites (may be between individuals or between psychic forces within an individual)—a state of still tension, life-sustaining and life-creating, forbidding forever the

mingling of the opposites, and maintaining both in a state of mutual complementary balance. Lawrence suggests that without 'polarity' art becomes mechanical and meaningless, just a matter of cleverness and craftsmanship. Without polarity, without vision, Will Brangwen tries his hand at various arts like modelling, painting, jewellery, metalwork, but in all these fields he produces little imitative things with no meaning. Similarly, the 'mind-lifer' Clifford Chatterley is a clever, intellectual writer who writes stories, 'curious, very personal stories about people he had known. Clever, rather spiteful, and yet, in some mysterious way, meaningless.' To Lawrence, technique, craftsmanship, 'form' are extremely insignificant and, in themselves, meaningless, and too much interest in them is either childish or perverse.

What Lawrence ultimately emphasises is 'life' with a capital L. 'Nothing is important but life,' says Lawrence. 'And for myself, I can absolutely see life nowhere but in the living.' It is this predilection for 'life' that makes him feel that the novel is the supreme form of art. 'The novel is the one bright book of life,' he asserts. 'Only in the novel are *all* things given full play, or at least, they may be given full play. . . .' According to Lawrence, life is most alive at the present moment, the immediate present, the Now. Hence he considers 'the seething poetry of the incarnate Now' as supreme, 'beyond even the everlasting gems of the before and the after.' 'Life, the ever-present, knows no finality, no finished crystallisation'; the quality of life consists in its inconclusiveness, in its immediacy, and poetry that expresses this quality, that captures the 'insurgent naked throb of the instant moment' is, according to his logic, more valuable than poetry of the past or of the future. All this means that what we generally call significance, values, form, are all subsidiary to the quality of immediacy and the living interrelatedness that Lawrence expects from literature. The novel, according to him, 'is the highest example of subtle interrelatedness that man has discovered.' His one criterion appears to be the amount of this interrelatedness that a work of art contains. And this, according to him, is the 'morality' of art. 'Morality,' says Lawrence, 'is that delicate, for ever trembling and changing, *balance* between me and my circumambient universe, which precedes and accompanies a true relatedness.' A work of art

that deliberately emphasises one particular value or one dominant 'idea' or 'purpose' is, in Lawrence's opinion, immoral.

It is interesting to see that Lawrence seldom discusses the problem of form in a work of art. He appears to associate form, technique, craftsmanship, etc. with the conscious, intellectual aspect of the mind and as such considers them utterly subsidiary. In a letter to Edward Marsh he is dragged into a discussion on scansion, and he readily escapes by inventing his own instinctive way of scansion. ('I always wonder if the Greeks and Romans really did scan, or if scansion wasn't a thing invented afterwards by the schoolmaster.') Lawrence does not see any pattern in any poetry, except probably the 'hidden emotional pattern.' He just sees a poem as 'one complete thing'. Does this mean that, like Bradley, he rejects the antithesis between form and content? Probably he does. The phrase 'one complete thing' suggests that, to Lawrence, a work of art is an organic unity of related elements, and that form is no independent thing, imposed as from outside upon an independent subject-matter, but is the perfectly natural and inevitable development of expression.

What has Lawrence to say about how to appraise a work of art? Except the test of 'Life' in a work of art, the revelation of interrelatedness, he has no other criteria or formulas to judge a work of art. All criticism, he says, is mere rationalisation of what one *feels* instinctively about a work of art. Miriam appreciates a picture drawn by Paul thus:

> 'Why do I like it so?...'
> 'Why do you?'
> 'I don't know. It seems so true.'

That is the only thing one can say. 'The touchstone is emotion, not reason,' says Lawrence. 'We judge a work of art by its effect on our sincere and vital emotion, and nothing else. All the critical twiddle-twaddle about style and form, all the pseudo-scientific classifying and analysing of books in an imitation-botanical fashion, is mere impertinence and mostly dull jargon' (p. 118). But whose emotion is valuable? Any Tom, Dick and Harry's? No. Lawrence says, 'A critic must be able to *feel* the impact of a work of art in all its complexity and its

force. To do so he must be a man of force and complexity himself, which few critics are.' Lawrence says a critic should be a man who is 'emotionally educated', not scholastically. 'The more scholastically educated a man is generally, the more he is an emotional boor.' With Lawrence, appreciation and criticism are essentially subjective, and the only things that he expects from a critic are sincerity, honesty and a clear knowledge of his feelings. The critic can use any standard he likes, but the only thing is that he must clearly say, 'This the standard I judge by.'

What, in the final analysis, is his approach to art? It is not aesthetic, nor formalistic, nor ethical, nor psychological. It is, one might say, '*vitalistic*', in its insistence on life, and romantic, in its emphasis on intuition, vision, the unconscious and the subjective. Lawrence's most valuable contribution to aesthetics is probably his lucid intuitive, analysis of the creative process, which he, as one of the supreme artists of this age, knew from the inside. (That is the reason why I have called this paper *Lawrence's idea of the creative process*, instead of 'Lawrence's aesthetics.')

DEATH IN DE LA MARE'S POETRY

By A. C. Samanta

> He was, of course, perfectly aware of the dream-like quality of his poetry; he cultivated fantasy, he aimed consciously at entrancement. But he was not wholly aware of the hazards for a poet in postulating, as he repeatedly does, a dichotomy between 'the day's travail' and 'the garden of the Lord's in which he is enchanted by the dream that brings poetry.'[1]

De la Mare is usually dismissed as a belated romantic. In the history of ideas he is placed as one who faces the 'steep of time' like the knight and horse who are ideologically isolated in *The Song of Finis*. Hence he falls back upon the dreams of man and aspirations of children. The aim of this paper is to throw light on the fact that de la Mare's central preoccupations are varied aspects of life in its complexity. One of these aspects is death.

II

In *De Profundis* we come across an objective and dispassionate statement of the condition of death. The poem is a brief and laconic expression of the condition of death.

> You will not be cold there
> You will not wish to see your face in mirror
>
> There will be no heaviness,
> Since you will not be able to lift a finger;
>
> There will be no recognition;
> 'Why. . . the last time we met, I brought you some flowers.'

The isolation or loneliness of death is expressed economically in an apparently perfunctory manner. He is in the timeless region. The space-time continuum has lost its meaning for

him. The isolation is perfect. Sense and sensibility have been detached from each other. Thus we find that death is treated as termination after which there is nothing.

By following the same groove of thought we can have an access into the poem *Good Bye*. The naturalistic attitude tightens its grip on the poet's mind when he eternises negation in the following image. The burnt-out candle is the image of the dead man which can be placed in the psychometrical order, for in him the spark of life is consumed by nihilistic forces of death. Thus the dead man is confronted with nothingness which shadows and envelops the frontiers of existence and proves that it is the only dominant objective reality. Even the 'wasting incense' which is beyond the power of the dead man to sense tacitly ushers into the periphery of existence and in turn is made occult under the powers of nothingness. Even the hunting cry outside with the dead man lying within becomes metaphorically dotted in a line formless and incongruous and seems esoteric in the context.

Naturalism is an aesthetic attitude which has evolved out of the scientific outlook and a predominantly thorough-going searching analysis of the phenomenon called life. Thus with a rational trend it leads to the materialistic approach to the fact of death. Hence the creative vision in *A Sign* absorbs into its scope the presentation of life as a rhythm and the termination of it as death. This rhythm is placed in the context of a flux within stern naturalistic boundaries. Though the levels of perception belong to categories of subtle insight they do not step outside a pragmatic sanction and a tactile base. First of all we come to happening at the naturalistic level.

> The fly on the window-pane bedazedly strumming
> Ice on water brooks their clear chimes dumbing
> How shall I know that the end of things is coming?

At the cosmic level:

> And Venus, proud and beautiful, goes down to meet
> the day
>
> Pale in phosphorence of the greensea spray
> How shall I know the end of things is coming?

At the mythical level:

> The drummers will be drumming, the fiddlers at their thrumming
> . . . . . .
> Heaven's solemn seraph stoopt weary o'er his summing,
> The palsied fingers plucking, the way-worn feet numbing–
> And the end of things coming.

Each one of the phases dissolves into the subsequent one with incipient force which verges on the preternatural. This is an attitude to death which could only be evolved in an age of science and technology. This is a purely mechanical attitude which revolves round the technical manoeuvring of a machine. The switch is on and the machine glides forth with its display of infallible internal correspondence between the parts. When the switch is off the wheels of motion are clogged and an order of stillness is infused into it. Thus the rhythm of the process of happening will slow down at all the above-mentioned levels and the termination or cessation is death. Though life is presented as a rhythm which is the proof of the tenure of the flux, it creates an illusion of resources and power emanating from within. But the circumambient realities are too harsh, inexorable and exacting in their laws. The dimensions of life are thus squeezed into a contracted world. The poem breathes a sense of defeat. The poet's stern materialistic gaze is camouflaged within an introspective genius. Genius manifests itself in finding a rhythm within the intractable material called life.

Similar realism is the cynosure of the poem *The Bottle* in which death harbours an escape from reality into the eternity of nothingness. 'Wickets out into the dark that swings but one way/Infinite hush is an ocean of silence.'

> As the poet writes
> And none
> Can silence the soul
> Wearied of self and of life
> Earth's darkness and dole
> More secretly, deeply....But finally?

The soul alienated from itself cannot hold fast any longer and seeks entry into the realm of death. Death comes as a rest which is an emancipation. It is the end of all ends of life—'Infinite hush'. The materialistic texture of the poet's vision is clear. The shattered spirit disintegrates and takes an abortive stand on the face of the dimensions of reality with which it fails to connect itself.

> Life it seems is death in life, but death is the death of death and beginning of an unshadowed life more intense than the present one.[2]

In spite of his clear-sightedness the poet's stern materialistic gaze is softened by the mystery of life and its complexity and manifold implications. Thus he finds it a many-splendoured thing and he develops a creative insight into different possibilities of the here and the hereafter, the immanence and transcendence. The relevant evidences can be collected from *The Song of the Mad Prince*, *Where is thy victory?* and *Dust to Dust.*

In the first of these poems the poet gives a picture of death which is almost Shakespearian in its transformation.

> 'Green dusk for dreams
> Moss for a pillow?'
> Where rests she now her head,
> Bathed in eve's loveliness?

As Duffin states, the negative peace of Lucy is made positive and vital. In a sense it is true, for death here is adsorption into nature. The dimensions of death are increased. We are reminded of Lawrence's 'Entire cosmos has dissolved into the self.' She is dissolved into elements and she is free from terrestrial burdens. But this is not Wordsworthian, rather it reminds us of 'Full fathom five thy father lies.'

'Life's troubled bubble broken'—It is 'an entering upon peace which puts term to the troublous wakefulness of life.'[3] Death is ineffectual, to end or tear apart; it shall complete life and establish an endless union.

> So dear is this poor dying even,

Seeing thou shalt be, touched, heard, seen
Better than when dust stood between.

With the beloved alive if the poet dies it is dying into life. With the sentient soul he will be capable of reaching the verges of passion. It is a world where we try to think what remains after and what was there before. The final scheme of life in which death is transcended is not there in this poem. To this effect we can collect evidence from the poem *Dust to Dust.* The poet has intimations of immortality from the mysterious darkness from which he had come and to which he would go. Life after death is pictured in the studiedly metaphysical concept of the Gardens of the Dead from which wafts the wind to the world of living. Life after death would be perfectmost of God's creation.

III

So far in the foregoing discussion we have met with two principally dominating attitudes towards death, the materialistic and idealistic. His creative vision is all-embracing and with truth and integrity the poet lays it bare. On the one hand he heavily rests on reality and is so solidly anchored in it. Let us detach this aspect from the bulk of the materials presented in his poems, so that we can see it clearly and see it whole. In *HI* the poet writes

Bang! Now the animal
Is dead and dumb and done
. . . . . Oh, what fun;

The possibility of a new beginning which the poet points out in *The Traveller* is unthinkable here. We are reminded of *The Bottle,* 'Aeons away'. The sense of glory in death is a misnomer. After the world of 1914 the idea of a representative of an age emanating from supreme deity having a share in the government of the Universe could not stand beneath the rigours of the intellectual climate. The pressure of the age is too exacting. The intellectual logic supersedes the emotional. A similar point

of view is presented in *Shadow(B)* wherein the poet finds nothingness in the core of life and rises almost into the existential position. In life there is fear of nothingness. Death comes at the end putting an end to this fear. Rose is the symbol of beauty but it is accompanied by a murderous whisper which is the reality about it. The beautiful and destructive stay together.

> Stalks out from shadow, when drawn's the blind
> A warning Nothing....
> Oh climb thou down from fool's disdain;
> Stoop thy cold lips to rag and sore;
> Kiss the gaunt cheek while yet remains
> Life's blood in it.

The poet extends his advice to leave the intellectual prison—the ivory tower—and come to terms with reality and reconcile oneself with it. Shadow tells that existence is nothing. We must condition our dreams to accept reality 'to kiss the gaunt cheek while yet remains life's blood in it'. When life's blood is stilled it is the state of death. The attitude towards death is one of acceptance, no longer callous rather it is sensible and enlightened. The fear that entered in *The Bottle* with 'wicket out ajar into dark that swings but one way' is overcome in the context of this poem where the poet's perception steps out of the grosser fold of materialism and assumes a technical perfection, thoroughness and profundity when it almost touches the existential bases. The poet's understanding and explication of life are keen and mature. He shows rare penetration, poise, and illuminated insight in all these poems.

IV

> 'Nothingness' was always a deep desire with de la Mare but it was an individual thing, a dreamless sleep of the spirit, lovely to contemplate if unadventurous; now it involves the terrifying prospect of a life-less world.[4]

From a study of de la Mare's poems and the evidences in hand we observe that death is not the last word in his poems. He is not

satisfied with materialistic attitude towards death. There is a corrective vision. This aspect is the unique pattern of de la Marian vision and a characteristic of his inspiration and insight. In *Farewell* the sense of beauty is stated as a value of life. It is idealised. Past lives only due to memory and memory may meet its end along with life. Beauty as a value and glory of creation will persist to fascinate man endlessly. Death may mean the termination of life, but values which made life throb with aspiration shall outlive death. The dead lovers of beauty live through the past acquiring a traditional pattern that enlightens the perception of every fresh onlooker. Beauty is like God, which takes and gives. We are reminded of Coleridge's 'O lady! We receive but what we give. In us alone the nature lives.' The poem has the attitude that the fact of or thought of death is not forbidding to the faculty of enjoying the perennial joy of beauty. The sense of death lends more joy to beauty and intensifies one's sense of beauty. The same value provokes the poet's vision to cut into the entrails of the flux called life an easily fused substance as stated in *Not That Way*. In this flux one element added to another makes it more fusible. Our aspiration for love through beauty is a common fact. The poet discovers startlingly enough that in this we veer with death. Our aspiration is for love the positive value but our attainment is death the negative potential. Beauty serves the cause of death although beauty is the representative of love.

> Alas that beauty hangs her powers
> For lure of his demoniac powers:
> . . . . . .
> That mine in frenzy of longing beats
> Still lusting for these gross deceits (*Not That Way*)

Although we realise that beauty may be deceptive or a servant of death, heart rises in love towards beauty. We can easily infer from the correlatives presented by these two poems that de la Mare is hinting at something like 'transcendent consciousness' or 'universal memory'—this is tantamount to what Duffin would call 'a lyric space-time continuum'. These hints become clear in the context of the transcendental overtones of the poem

Farewell. Whatever is lovely has gained from the eye and self of the dead lovers of beauty.

> Let as night
> Steal thy sense in deathly slumber
> Till to delight thou have paid thy utmost blessing
> Since that all things thou wouldst praise
> Beauty took from those who loved them
> In other days.

The poem *Where is Thy Victory?* explores the possibility of memory and vision after death. There is a sense of uneasiness in the concept of 'perplexed ashes' even when transcendence is meant. There is a note of interrogation in this as well as in a few other poems such as *What?* and *Where?* It may be borne in mind that in poems such as *Farewell* where he transcends in a sense there is a sense of vagueness about it. It is the failure of idealistic attitude on the one hand and romantic aspirations on the other. For de la Mare so heavily rests on reality that he is unable to transcend the material phenomenon of death. In the final outcome poems which might have presented 'star-holes into eternity' are instead impressions of life. The impressions are as interesting and may be as valuable as the cerebrations of a philosopher. In *Dust to Dust* there is an identification of death with Cupid. It is an invitation to Death. He also wants to rouse ecstasies in heart. The poet states that the spirit is bound by the sense. Sense belongs to the mundane world whereas spirit belongs to the eternal world.

> Sleep is well for the dreamless head
> At no breath astonished
> From the Gardens of the Dead
> I the immortal harps hear ring
> By Babylon's river languishing
> Heavenly Archer, loose thy string.

He who has no spiritual aspiration does not bother about life after death. 'Dreamless head' sleeps peacefully. Intimations of immortality have no meaning for him. But for the poet it brings the 'tidings of a bliss foregone'. We are reminded of

Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode'. 'Gardens of the Dead' is associated with Babylonian civilisation, the height and perfection of civilisation. Life after death would be perfectmost of God's creation. 'Harps' associated with Gardens of the Dead is a traditional metaphor. It brings into our mind a characteristic romantic concept of Aeolian harp. Gardens of the Dead as told earlier is a studiedly metaphysical concept.

V

From the above study of the poet's attitudes it is clear that there is a positive swing in favour of idealism so far as the scale of values is concerned. De la Mare presents a complex mind in quest of truth. The poet's sensibility seems to rebel against materialism. This fact may be understood with reference to the natural process in which de la Mare's vision is evolving. It must not blur our perception of the fact that the untrammelled vision is gradually acquiring form and stature through flawless hints put forth by the forces of revelation in the poet's soul. De la Mare cannot be called an escapist for he is always handling themes centring round positive values. On the other hand he has not been a leader in the 'new' and the revolutionary, his gifts being essentially lyrical as *Farewell* is a lyrical rapture joy being stated in its exuberance and vivacity. Thematically he is akin to Wordsworth. Just as Wordsworth's skylark was faithful to the kindred points in home and heaven, de la Mare represents the kindred point in home and Wordsworth the kindred point in Heaven. Owing to his place in the history of ideas de la Mare's vision is squeezed into a contracted world. De la Mare may be placed in the border line where materialism ends and idealism begins.

> It is not easy to find new things in poetry or to say the old things freshly. But genius can be flexible enough to accommodate itself to tradition.[5]

This is a testimony to the creative fecundity in de la Mare. The poet always tries to add to the synthetic fold or texture of his vision, mending and shaping it as the flux of life comes in

waves before his mind, each subsequent wave rising higher than the previous one and growing rich and preponderant in its impact on the poet's mind. As Duffin states:

> One of the truths established in the course of *The Traveller* is that right feeling comes from right thinking, that is from imaginative understanding. The crisis of the poem occurs when the pilgrim awakes to a recognition of 'mind supreme' in the earth over which he is journeying—an allegory of man's discovery of the spiritual nature of the Universe. The new knowledge effects a change in his outlook on life shown in the differing natures of the two visions one before and one after illumination. The first is the pessimist's dream of man debased and destroyed, of man's evil ways breeding a poison in his blood that shall bring about his extinction. The later corrective vision is that of triumphant failures, the cravers for something out of reach, following impassioned love to a goal beyond the grave.[6]

In The Song of the Mad Prince there is a similar dualistic attitude 'All time's delight has she for narrow bed/Life's troubled bubble broken.' Death is unmistakably a cessation. Though the dimensions of death are increased it is the materialistic attitude. 'Narrow bed' is the consummation of all that was looked forward to in life. This has its counterpart in the phrase 'Peacock Pie' which implies destruction of loveliness or delicacy and good food which are also juxtaposed with death. But idealism darts forth like a shooting star when the poet writes

> Who said 'where sleeps she now her head,
> Where rests she now her head,
> Bathed in eve's loveliness?—'
> That's what I said.

For the mad prince the fact of the death of his beloved is difficult to understand and he assimilates it only when his consciousness undergoes a jerk and a revulsion. There is pause after 'loveliness' indicating the belated shocking realisation of the agony when the prince nods his head and in cramping

despair says 'that's what I said.' Through metaphysical technique death is made the objective correlative which leads the poet to values such as loveliness, ripeness, sleep and rest. Death is negative whereas values are positive, but in a mood of transformation, the two elements bearing no link apparently coalesce into a reciprocal unity. In the poem *The Owl* the two attitudes are jostling against each other for ascendance in the poet's mind. But the idealistic attitude supersedes whereas the materialistic approach goes to the background. In the first stanza the owl is the symbol of death. When it hoots at night the sleeper on the verge of dreaming is disturbed. The spirit that rose into the dizzy splendour of a dream retraces its step and embraces its treasure called life. It is beset with

> the ancient dread
> of man, when cold root or stone
> Pillowed roofless head?

This is a reference to the racial unconscious or the 'collective unconscious' of Jung, implicating life as the greatest of all values and death as its quiet mortal enemy. Thus the space-time dimensions infest the spirit and tie it to a reality hard in its core and tyrannous. In the second stanza the tables are turned when after death the spirit which is intrinsically true to itself in spite of the binding of the sense has gone beyond the reach of the phenomenal world. Its stature is no longer dwarfed by reality. It dissolves into a category of experience which transcends the empirical world.

> Clangs not at last the hour
> When roof shelters not;
> And the ears are deaf,
> And all fears forgot
> Since the spirit too far has fared
> For summoning scream
> of any strange fowl on earth
> To shatter its dream?

By 'dream' the poet implies an extension or conquest of the spirit into a higher order of Being more sublime than gross,

characterised by suspension of space-time continuum. This extension is far too disproportionately enveloping so that the kindred point in the racial unconscious which is relatively lowered down into a grosser place can hardly have anything beyond a grosser appeal. Thus the second stanza does not creatively emerge from the first one. The unresolved contrast between the two attitudes is strikingly apparent. The romantic aspiration to transcend death is abortive as the poet is unable to evolve any final conclusive scheme of transcendence. On the other hand the poet is in two minds and is on the verge of falling back on reality. In this connection we may allude to de la Mare's place in the history of ideas. The rigours of the contemporary climate and the spirit of the time have dwarfed the stature of his idealistic aspirations and have reduced it to 'mortal longingness'. The pressure of the age in which he is destined to be born is too exacting.

> ...the restless changing quality of life oppresses the poet making life a burden, a riddle, an endless war between contrarieties.[7]

In *Waiting* we come across the juxtaposition of the two attitudes which throw light on each other though they run parallel to each other.

> 'Waiting to...'
> 'Who is?'
> 'We are.....'
> 'Was that the night-owl's cry?'
> 'I heard not. But see! the evening star;
> And listen! the ocean's solacing sigh.'

Night owl is the symbol of death whereas evening star represents the star of Bethlehem which appeared before the birth of Christ. Ocean's solacing sigh comes in the wake of a contemplative glance at the reservoir of the soul of the dead as they will be presented before the throne of God on the Day of Judgment. Peace and harmony thus prevail. The second voice states: '"Waiting?"— / Waiting what for?', the first replies with a ponderous accent 'To die.' The first voice represents the mater-

ialistic attitude implicating death as the end or cessation. It is not free from an undertone of cynicism which is the offshoot of positivism which states that we can have no knowledge beyond the phenomenon and our knowledge is absolute. It leads to a certainty or assurance with regard to its own meaning, whereas the second voice which is idealistic in its leanings is vaguely hopeful. It may be the offshoot of faith in Christianity; it aims at an indulgence in hope in life, redemption and transcendence. It is Tennysonian hope without any certainty or clarity of reason. The same pattern of the poet's vision is evident in the poem *The Death-Dream*. There were intimations of the death of the lover to the beloved in the rapt phantasma of a dream. She wakes up to lose herself in a vague fear and vacuum of the soul and finds that the relationship is proved a nullity. The lover goes through the possibilities intent in the psychological manoeuvring of the dream. Was it time whispering from a future date who told the beloved that the poet may die? Or was it the psychological symptom of the decaying love gradually growing decadent? Thus we find that with death love dies. The poem through its cloudy entrails hints at transience which reigns supreme in this order of existence. The poem in its concluding lines switches over to the idealistic vision which signifies that the intellect straining itself into different possibilities finds the emotional logic unanswerable.

> Or haply was it I who cut of dream
> Stole but a little way where shadows course
> Called back to thee across the eternal stream?

From the fearsome consciousness of the beloved apprehending the lover's death, he takes a decisive transitional step into the 'Gardens of the Dead' into which he might have fared in dream and called the beloved across the eternal stream of life. Probably the beloved's dream is a repercussion of this adventurous inroad into the other-worldly realm. The wheels of thought have gone a full circle and the end shows a kaleidoscopic change of vision.

VI

From the above discussion it is easy to understand de la Mare, but to misunderstand him is easier. It would be a mistaken view to hold that in the context of tradition de la Mare presents a jarring vision full of insoluble materials. It is easy to conclude that the poet's vision is scanted by basically strange inadequacies. What de la Mare is after is truth. Unto this end he brings in a steadfast mind and passionate devotion. His is an inquisitive mind out with a mission, the mission being to correlate the observing eye with the introspecting mind. The singularity of his daring finds the approval of the reader on account of the striking balance achieved between the two. The scope of this statement can be verified with reference to the poem *Where?*

Where is my love—
In silence and shadow she lies,
Under the April-grey calm waste of the skies,
And a bird above,
In the darkness tender and clear
Keeps saying over and over, Love lies here;
Not that she's dead;
Only her soul is flown
Out of its last pure earthly mansion;
And cries instead
In the darkness, tender and clear;
Like the voice of a bird in the leaves,
Love—Love lies here.

The poem offers a clear differentiation between 'shadow' and 'darkness'. 'Shadow' is associated with hints of death in life. It is also hinged with the realisation that the existence is nothing and after death nothingness runs into eternity and becomes conceptual understood better in the light of its empirical base in life. Darkness is the intense unshadowed darkness mysterious and inscrutable allied with the creation and the first cause. In this poem bird and soul belong to a common world enveloped by darkness and this is the mysterious darkness of creation. There is a search for permanence of the soul through love, an

attempt to make love an intelligent and creative principle but the poet succeeds in only establishing it as a purely worldly emotion which dies with life. Thus the soul transcends whereas love dies. This on the first glance looks like a contradictory attitude. But the word 'darkness' requires further analysis. It is an attempt to determine the position of love in the context of death. Love continues to be a worldly emotion. Thus within this attitude the bulks of materialism and idealistic world emitting forth baffling gestures with regard to each other softly coalesce and instead of a recoil there is floating and intermingling of ideas in the poet's vision.

The intermingling of ideas can be further traced from another point of view. The soul after death is existent but incapable of activity. It is potent but incapable of sentience. The soul is detached from body and lives in darkness but it is potent. At the same time bird is the voice of nature and the soul is absorbed into nature. In *The Song of the Mad Prince* where death is transformed by tracing it as absorption into nature is the embryonic form of this concept. This poem *Where?* thus is full of symbolical and transcendental overtones.

Thirdly we have to mark that about the order of transcendence de la Mare is silent. This tells us about the manner of emergence of de la Mare's vision which is rising up to the repletion reaping the full harvest out of its singularly complex span of his individuality. De la Mare plants his foot solidly, firmly and unswervingly on reality but explores the possibilities of his own vision in a quest. The span of the vision is like an arc which stretches over the two worlds materialistic and idealistic, the gulf between the two being the most preponderant note. The arc at the beginning is bare and barren but gradually the shades intermingle dissolving into each other and drawing forth their colour from the receptacle of poet's genius.

Lastly, we come to the final shape and stature of his vision the inevitable concomitants of what has gone before. The poet has attained in *What?* a rare poise and integration between the introspecting moods and observant eye. Achievement of this integration is the consummation of poetic experience for de la Mare.

What dost thou surely know?

What will the truth remain,
When from the world of men you go
To the unknown again?

The value of knowledge, thinking and hope derived thereby is relevant in the context of life. Product of intellect will die. There is an uncertainty about the nature of truth which will persist eternally. There is an ambiguity regarding the undertone and overtone in the word 'truth'. Truth as perceived by mind has an empirical centre and the limitations are more or less pragmatic. But through the overtones the other meaning of truth in the cosmic sense remains veiled. The ambiguity is resolved when we think of the 'mind supreme' in the universe deciphered by 'the Traveller' who found death as at once a disintegration and a transcendence.

Life that came from the unknown goes back to the 'unknown again'. The beginning of creation is enveloped by darkness and after death the soul goes back to the same darkness detached from 'the last pure earthly mansion'. De la Mare seems to have dressed his point of view with a materialistic camouflage. But through chinks and crevices idealism darts forth and the final impression is one of harmony. 'The spirit herkens on/for tidings of a bliss foregone' (*Dust to Dust*).

When the wise men face death they fall back upon a quiet acceptance of necessity. They have a simple half-understood vision as inconsequential as that of a flower. Before they can tell what it is they pass away. What is there after death is unknown. There is a suggestion that something is there. We are reminded of *Immortality Ode* of Wordsworth, where the poet talks about the 'Immortal sea.' He gives the characteristic romantic twist to the same when horizons widen before us and mysticism is transparent. 'Trailing clouds of glory' do we come. The poet feels joy at the thought that he has vague recollections of his glorious past even in his manhood and expresses his gratitude that even in his later life he has memories of the fits of idealism in childhood which enable him to have occasional glimpses of eternity. Wordsworth was a herald of the romantic upheaval whereas de la Mare stands in unimaginable loneliness upon a 'steep of time' like the knight and his horse in *The Song of Finis*. After years that have gone by, the dimensions of

Wordsworth's world have lost their bases. De la Mare shows a complex sensibility drawing forth upon an inexhaustible creative potential.

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LETTERS OF W. B. YEATS TO KATHARINE TYNAN —A STUDY

By Baidya Nath Prasad

Letters of W. B. Yeats to Katharine Tynan, an Irish contemporary and close friend, reveal intimate glimpses of the great poet's formative period in London. Katharine Tynan was, in fact, his senior by a few years and her collection of poems, *Louise de La Valliere*, was published a year before Yeats's *Mosada* was printed in *Dublin University Review* in 1886. But she was, for a time, Yeats's partner on his literary pilgrimage and shared his intimate thoughts. In the Introduction to the *Letters of W. B. Yeats to Katharine Tynan*, Roger McHugh says:

> He and she had in common their literary interests and their enthusiasm for Ireland and Parnell. . . . Katharine Tynan was the person who, apart from his family, knew him best. So it is not surprising that he revealed more of himself to her than to any of his correspondents of that period.

The years[1] these letters throw light on were unusually full and alive for W. B. Yeats. He lived at a great rate intellectually and emotionally. The themes and preoccupations which extracted allegiance throughout his poetic career were established during this period. He came into contact with many persons and theories and his final refusals, withdrawals and involvements were firmly outlined. It is true that he did not reveal his total self in those letters, all the aspects of his artistic personality, but he revealed many of its most important aspects and phases. This is a remarkable characteristic of these letters because 'it is evident from a reading of the collection of his letters edited by Allan Wade and published in 1954, that he would reveal a certain side of himself to one or another friend, corresponding with one on political, with another on theatrical, another on esoteric subjects.'[2] Never again was W. B. Yeats to reveal so many aspects of his personality to any one correspondent.

The background of these letters is London. London was hateful to him. In his very first letter he wrote:

> London is just as dull and dirty as my memory of it. I do not like it one whit better.[3]

In more than one letter he writes uncharitably about London. 'Horrible,' 'Dreadful' are the epithets which he liberally uses in connection with that city.[4] About literary figures of London he is not less uncharitable. 'London literary folk seem to divide into two classes; the stupid men with brains and the clever ones without any. . . . The latter is the most numerous—young men possessing only an indolent and restless talent that warms nothing and lights nothing.'[5]

Behind this irrational hatred of London is the fanatical Irish nationalist's heart. In fact his first ambition was to give Ireland a distinct literary personality. In his very first letter he says: 'I feel more and more that we shall have a school of Irish poetry—founded on Irish myth and history—a neo-romantic movement.'[6] Later on he advises Katharine Tynan:

> . . . remember by being Irish as you can, you will be more original and true to yourself and in the long run more interesting, even to English readers.[7]

Yeats himself tried to become very Irish. *The Wanderings of Oisin* published in 1889 gives a poetic treatment to an Irish legend. *John Sherman* and *Dhoya*, published in 1891, describe Irish types and are typically Irish stories. *The Countess Cathleen* published in 1892 is a drama with the theme of an Irish legend. He also edited during this period *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* and *Irish Fairy Tales*. He wrote introduction to *Stories from Carleton* and contributed Introduction and notes to *Representative Irish Tales* which were compiled by him. But Yeats's attitude to old Celtic myths and legends was not that of an anthropologist. His 'aim was never to revive legends in the spirit of the devoted antiquarian: he was a poet in search of a theme. . . he never meant to "collect" his lore without subjecting it to poetic transmutations.'[8] He formulated his ideas clearly in a letter to Katharine Tynan, dated December 21, 1888:

> I do not mean that we should not go to old ballads and poems for inspiration but we should search them for new methods of expressing ourselves.[9]

In 1905 he wrote:

> The greatest thing I thought was to convince them that we were critics and writers before all else and not heady and undiscriminating enthusiasts.[10]

This Irish element was present in his work throughout his long poetic career, but his letters to Katharine Tynan show that he has a precise and clear idea of the function of this element in the creative alchemy. He could not accept as poetry what was mere nationalistic propaganda. He was attempting to forge with his younger contemporary, Joyce, the uncreated conscience of his race.

The letters to Katharine Tynan reveal his struggle to achieve this artistic ideal. He perceived that he could achieve this goal only by becoming a great poet. 'No poetry has a right to live merely because it is good. It must be *the Best of Its kind*.'[11] He has not yet been able to write poetry which is 'best of its kind' but he has a clear conception of his poetic ideals and shows a rare insight when criticizing his own work. About his published poem *Mosada* he wrote to Katharine Tynan:

> I have noticed some things about my poetry I did not know before. . .for instance, that it is almost all a flight into fairyland from the real world, and a summons to that flight. The Chorus to the *Stolen Child* sums it up—that it is not the poetry of insight and knowledge, but of longing and complaint—the cry of the heart against necessity. I hope some day to alter that and to write poetry of insight and knowledge.[12]

Yeats's early poetry has been accused of affecting a withdrawal away from actuality and into a world which is indifferent to adult interests. This view of the early creative works of the poet has got such a currency that it clouds the fact that the poet was himself acutely conscious of his weakness and was

trying hard to overcome it. A year before his first major poem *The Wanderings of Oisin* was published he wrote to Katharine Tynan: 'I am not very fond of retrospective art. I do not think that pleasure we get from old methods of looking at things—methods we have long given up ourselves—belongs to the best literature.'[13]

Yeats was not a naturalist and he did not describe, in his early poems, the surface of reality. His going back to the Irish legends and myths seems to be a withdrawal; it was, in truth, a heroic effort to convey an intensified vision of reality and experience. In one of his letters to Katharine Tynan he says: 'Ellis says my poems are not rough but the style is one people will have to get used to.'[14] Yeats was making an understatement. People had to be used not only to his style but also to his attitude to reality.

His first major work *The Wanderings of Oisin* is an emblem of this attitude. The wanderings of Oisin make us aware of the three different aspects of the truth. The method employed by Yeats was the one applied by Dante to shape the experience of reality. He knew that the poem would arouse opposition. He wrote to Katharine Tynan immediately after the publication of the book:

> 'Oisin' will rouse much opposition because it has much more imaginative energy than any other poem in the book (*The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems*). To many people nothing seems sincere but the commonplace.[15]

Yeats's description of the creative processes associated with *The Wanderings of Oisin* shows his awareness of the fundamental principles of poetics. He wrote the following to Katharine Tynan about *The Wanderings of Oisin:*

> The second part is much more coherent than I had hoped. . . . It is the most inspired and the least artistic. The last has most art. . . . It was the greatest effort of all my writings. When I had finished I brought it round to read to my uncle George Pollexfen and could hardly read, so collapsed I was. . . . Not that I ever wrote more than a few lines in a day. But those few lines took me hours. . . .

> With the other parts I am disappointed—these seem only shadows of what I saw. But the third must have got itself expressed—it kept me from sleep for too long. Yet the second is more deep and poetic. It is not inspiration which exhausts one, but art. The first parts I felt. I saw the second.[16]

This significant letter shows that Yeats was aware of the dichotomy between 'Inspiration' and 'art', between the seer and the poet—the maker, between 'seeing' and 'feeling'. *The Wanderings of Oisin* does not have, according to the poet, a faultless structure because the poet could not bridge the gulf between 'inspiration' and 'art'.

This piece of penetrating self-criticism shows that this young poet's head was not turned by the favourable reception of *The Wanderings of Oisin* and he knew that he had to travel a long way to achieve real poetic fulfilment.

Later on in the letter quoted above Yeats says:

> The early poems I know to be quite coherent, and at no time are there clouds in my details, for I hate the soft modern manner.[17]

The love of clarity and concreteness is evident from this. W. B. Yeats, except for a very early and brief honeymoon with Swinburnian vagueness, knew the limitations of that poetic manner.

He formulates his poetic preferences in his criticism of Katharine Tynan's poetry and his letters to the latter contain many such remarks. He says:

> Your recent poems have been beautiful. . .so full of calm and temperence as well as the old qualities of energy and beauty.[18]

His admiration is tempered with genuine criticism:

> Certainly your colouring is a great power but you should be careful to make it embody yourself. . .keep it always secondary to the theme, never being the colourist for the mere sake of colour.[19]

> This time you have...described things from without—more picturesquely than poetically. Your old Knight [reference to a poem] is very fine—but as to the rest, you have sacrificed all things to colour.[20]

Very early in his poetic career, Yeats understood the possibilities of verse drama. In 1889 he wrote to Katherine Tynan: 'To me the dramatic is by far the pleasantest poetic form.'[21] He wrote *The Countess Cathleen* during this period. His verse-dramas were different from the realistic dramas written during that time. 'He rejected decisively the realism that Ibsen and Shaw were already heightening into a formidable aesthetic and philosophy of life.'[22] In this he was indebted to his friend Laura. He writes to Katharine Tynan:

> Laura is to me always a pleasant memory. She woke me up from the metallic sleep of science and set me writing my first play.[23]

He also knew the difficulties of writing verse-drama. In 1906 he wrote to Katharine Tynan:

> The difficulties of holding an audience with verse are ten times greater than those with the prose play. Modern audience has lost the habit of careful listening.[24]

However, besides showing that the love for dramatic poetry was firmly established in Yeats, the letters to Katharine Tynan do not contain much on this subject. His views on verse-drama have been expressed in a more elaborate manner and in greater detail to his other correspondents.

Yeats was not solely interested in his self and his own poetry. The Letters written to Katharine Tynan show his responsiveness to the world around him. His remarks about his contemporaries indicate his preferences and attitudes. About Morris, an important poet of that time, he says: 'I find much in his [Morris's] philosophy of life altogether alien.'[25]

In spite of his involvement in the politics of a backward and poor nation, socialism failed to attract him. About Morris's socialism he says: 'Though I think socialism good work, I am

not sure that it is my work.'[26] His views on Bernard Shaw are rather uncharitable. He says: 'Last night at Morris's I met Bernard Shaw, who is certainly very witty. But, like most people who have wit rather than humour, his mind is maybe somewhat wanting in depth. However, his stories are good, they say.'[27] There is a passing mention of Thoreau and Whitman, very early in these letters (in fact in the fourth): 'There is a society at whose meetings Michael Field (Miss Bradley) is to be seen sometimes. It is called the "Society of New Life" and seeks to carry out some of the ideas of Thoreau and Whitman.'[28] The tone of the letter suggests that Yeats was not interested in their ideas. About Tolstoy he has this to offer:

> I am reading Tolstoi—great and joyless. The only joyless man in literature, so different from Turgenev. He seems to describe all things, whether beautiful or ugly, painful or pleasant, with the same impartial, indifferent joylessness.[29]

His other contemporaries—Meredith and Henley—are compared in one of his letters to Katharine Tynan. He found in Meredith far more 'suavity' and 'serenity' than he had expected. Henley was far more 'cobwebby' after them and not very spontaneous. Henley's form was always 'preconceived' and never 'accidental'. About Henley he writes:

> His poems are forced into a mould. I dislike the school to which he belongs. A poem should be a law to itself as plants and beasts are. It may ever be so much finished, but all finish should merely make plain that law.[30]

Yeats demonstrates his critical power in his analysis of the heroines of 'neo-romantic London poets, namely, Swinburne, Morris and Rossetti and their satellites.' He feels that 'they are essentially men's heroines, with no separate life of their own.' Tennyson's are, he believes, less heroic than any of the others and less passionate and splendid but are realized, as far as they go, more completely, much more like actual, everyday people. He thinks that 'Browning's heroines are actualized like Tennyson's but are not so much types as his and much more of the

brain than his and much less of the heart.' Rossetti's heroines, he feels, 'are a more spiritual version of the same type as Swinburne's and Morris's. They are only apologies for ideas on the subject.' He concludes:

> The heroines of the neo-romantic school are powerful in conception, shadowy and unreal in execution; Browning['s] and Tennyson['s], poor in conception and perfectly realised in execution.[31]

* * * * *

The critical remarks of Yeats mentioned above show that he refused to share socialist ideas and did not love realism which was a rage in contemporary literary circles. He was interested in occult, theosophy and symbolism—which did not arouse much enthusiasm in important intellectual circles. This love of the unbeaten track, this desire to explore aspects of reality and human existence which defied rational and scientific analysis, should have earned praise for him. Unfortunately, for exploring the occult, Yeats was dismissed lightly as a thinker, although he was later accorded the status of a great poet. In a poem written on the occasion of Yeats's death, W. H. Auden said that 'although Yeats was "silly like us" [and surely "like us" was put in to temper the accusation of "silliness"] he would be "pardoned" under "a foreign code of conscience" for writing well.'[32] And yet Yeats was not 'silly'. He visited institutions dealing with occult not in a mood of surrender but of exploration.

He came into personal contact with Madame Blavatsky in 1888. Although he became an active member of the Esoteric Circle of the Theosophical Society, his references to Madame Blavatsky and Theosophical Society in his letters to Katharine Tynan are not always reverential. In many of his letters he narrates many funny details about them. On p. 45 of Roger McHugh's collection of the *Letters of W. B. Yeats to Katharine Tynan*, Yeats writes:

> A sad incident happened at Madame Blavatsky's lately, I hear. A big materialist sat on the astral double of a

> poor young Indian. It was sitting on the sofa and he was too material to be able to see it. Certainly a sad accident.[33]

The tone used in narrating this incident is not that of a firm believer in Theosophist doctrines. He adopts similar tone in at least four of his letters to Katharine Tynan. 'Possibly the reason was that after the latter's early dabbling in things occult she had become completely sceptical to them and Yeats did not want to embarrass her.'[34] But he did not hesitate to confess that he and the Theosophists were good friends and allies, and that they were in possession of a good philosophy.'[35]

He discussed the doctrine of afterlife in reference to Miss Kavanagh who had died young:

> I feel sure that we take up our half-done labours in other lives and carry them to conclusion. If it were not so, the best of lives were not worth living and the universe would have no order and purpose.[36]

Yeats was convinced of the unpopular character of his interests but his belief in his convictions was firm. He wrote to Katharine Tynan: 'Probably if I decide to publish these things I shall get called all sorts of names—impostor, liar and the rest—for in this way does official science carry on its trade. But you do not care for magic and its fortunes and your Church's enemy is also materialism. To prove the action of man's will, man's soul, outside his body would bring down the whole thing—crash—at least for all who believed one.'[37]

His attitude to tradition was critical. Blake was his favourite because he had done to his own mind a great deal of good in liberating him from 'formulas and theories of several kinds'. He writes:

> You will find it a difficult task, this Blake interpretation, but one that will open up for you, as it has for me, new kinds of poetic feeling and thought.[38]

The regions of occult, symbolism and mysticism were more deeply and elaborately explored by him in later years but these

letters show that his major interests were clearly established during this period.

* * * * *

Are these the letters of a young man to a young woman? Yes, but they are more the letters of a young poet to another young poet. Therefore Yeats does not reveal in these letters the tender vibrations of his psyche related to Eros: instead they reveal his poetic preoccupations, intellectual interests and creative processes. It is true that he cares for the feelings of Katharine Tynan when he tries to hide his infatuation for Maud Gonne. He writes to her evidently in reply to her remonstrations:

> Who told you that I am 'taken up with Miss Gonne'? I think that she is very good looking and that is all I think about her. What you say of her fondness for sensation is probably true. . . . She had a borrowed interest, reminding me of Laura Armstrong without Laura's wild dash of half-insane genius.[39]

Yeats felt passionately about Laura. And yet he writes:

> Do not mistake me, she is only as a myth and a symbol. Will you forgive me having talked of her? She interests me far more than Miss Gonne does and yet is only as a myth and a symbol.[40]

Such remarks show that Yeats was conscious of the woman in Katharine Tynan but he was more conscious of the vibrations in his literary soul.

There are some beautiful descriptions of natural beauty in these letters. Contrast these with the impression Dorothy Wellesley, one of his important last correspondents, had of him when she says: 'Yeats did not. . . draw much inspiration from Nature. . . his lack of observation concerning natural beauty was almost an active obsession.'[41]

Yeats writes to Katharine Tynan about a creeper: 'After breakfast I got out on the roof under the balcony and arranged

a creeper that climbs over it. Everything seemed so delighted at the going of the East Wind—so peaceful and delighted. It almost seemed that if you listened you could hear the sap rising in the branches—bubble, bubble.'[42]

The following is about the birds:

> How the robins and the sparrows in the virginia creeper are singing away....Your robins will be singing away likewise, maybe, and the sparrows chirping. Mine are all busy making their nests, carrying away small things from off the balcony and sometimes tugging at a grass blade in the garden underneath.[43]

This about the flowers:

> How saddening is the old age of the year. All summer the wooden pilasters of the balcony have been covered with the greenest leaves and pinkest sweetpie flower. Now even the horse-chestnut has begun to wither. The chestnuts fall every now and then with quite a loud rustle and thud, and the whole house at the garden side is covered with a crimson ruin on creeper and sunflowers are all leaning down, weighted by their heavy seeds.[44]

Observations like these show that in his letters to Katharine Tynan, Yeats does not have the stern face of a literary theorist. It is true that literary issues predominate in these letters but the tone adopted by the writer is human and intimate. He never allows his face to be petrified into a mask or a pose. The style is simple and intimate and reveals a face which is at times mellow with happiness, at times creased with despair and at times red with anger. He was to recreate these fruitful years in his *Autobiographies*, but that book is a 'Stylistic arrangement of Experience',[45] a severe patterning of events and at some places hides rather than reveals.

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THE THEORY OF THE 'OBJECTIVE CORRELATIVE'

By J. P. Sen

Sir, the objective correlative is love.
It vapourizes not inside the heart
Like fogs of happiness or despair, it is
Of mass, space, energy, composited.

And touchable. What vagaries the heart
Turns feeling to, their object turns to love
Round, square, and tall as any classical stone
As any human form, correlative.

Roy Harvey Pearce[1] thus sums up poetically his ideas regarding the theory of the 'objective correlative', which is undoubtedly one of the most important critical concepts of T. S. Eliot. It exercised a tremendous influence on the critical temper of the twentieth century. The theory of the 'objective correlative' has not only foreshadowed Richards's correlation of verbal media but also deeply inspired the New Critics, who started searching the structures of meaning lying below the levels of plot and character for the complex pattern of the 'objective correlatives' through which the poet expresses his emotions and meanings. Wilson Knight, for example, who is considered to be one of the greatest exponents of this school, thinks that Shakespeare's total picture of life can be reconstructed in the chains of meaning conveyed by the dramatist through the 'objective correlatives' employed by him. Although Wilson Knight never says so openly, this is the basis of his criticism of Shakespeare and it is significant that T. S. Eliot wrote a Foreword to Wilson Knight's most considerable book of critical essays on Shakespeare, *The Wheel of Fire*.

In the concept of the 'objective correlative', Eliot's doctrine of poetic impersonality finds its most classic formulation. Eliot's Impersonalist theory of poetry presupposes that although the poet starts with a basic emotion, he finds for this emotion a

body of expressive symbols in which emotions, feelings and thoughts are so inextricably fused that they become the formula for the original emotion. It is the intensity of this fusion which may be said to account for the poetic quality of a poem. The personal emotions are thus transmuted in the fused images and ideas and become the symbolic representation for them. In other words, whenever we think of the emotion, we shall think of it in terms of the 'objective correlative' with which the poet has clothed it. In his concept of the 'objective correlative' Eliot is thus seeking some definite token for the correct and artistic presentation of the personal emotions without the poet having to explain or justify them. It is for this reason that it has been pointed out that in his theory of the 'objective correlative', Eliot is preoccupied with the problem as to 'how affective meanings are translated into poetry.'[2]

As Eliot formulated his doctrine of the 'objective correlative' in his essay on *Hamlet and his Problems*,[3] it would indeed be proper to consider his theory and to illustrate it with reference to Shakespeare's great tragedy, which Eliot calls 'an artistic failure'.[4] The reason for this is that the central theme or the dominant emotion of the play, which is the feeling of a son towards a guilty mother, is for Eliot 'an intractable material'. And in this play, Shakespeare fails to find the proper 'objective correlative' for Hamlet's feelings. As Eliot goes on to explain:

> The artistic 'inevitability' lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion; and this is precisely what is deficient in Hamlet. Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in *excess* of the facts as they appear.[5]

What Eliot means in the above passage may be expressed thus: Hamlet's disgust with life is not fully motivated by the marriage of his mother and the suspected murder of his father. In other words, Hamlet's disillusionment is occasioned by the guilt of his mother but 'his mother is not an adequate equivalent for it; his disgust envelops and exceeds her.'[6] It is thus a feeling which Hamlet cannot understand, he cannot objectify it, and it, therefore, remains to poison life and obstruct action. Eliot

even goes to the extent of identifying the emotions of Hamlet with those of Shakespeare when he says:

> In the character Hamlet it is the buffoonery of an emotion which can find no outlet in action; in the dramatist it is the buffoonery of an emotion which he cannot express in art.[7]

It is against this background that Eliot elaborates his theory thus:

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.[8]

On a close analysis of the above statement, it becomes apparent that his concept of the 'objective correlative' is a continuation and application of his Impersonal theory of poetry, which is based on the idea that it is neither the intensity of the emotion nor the greatness of its components that determines the poetic quality of a poem but what matters is the intensity of the fusion, and one of the ways in which the poet achieves this intensity is through the embodiment of an emotion in a concrete object. As Eliot himself puts it:

> the artist keeps them alive by his ability to intensify the world to his emotions.[9]

Matthiessen,[10] however, thinks that the theory of the 'objective correlative' indicates that Eliot conceives all poetry as dramatic. Matthiessen is justified in so far as he uses the word 'dramatic' in the sense of concrete objectification. In keeping with Eliot's ideas regarding the primacy of the images, Matthiessen interprets the term 'objective correlative' to mean a situation or image which represents the poet's emotion.

Although in his doctrine of the 'objective correlative' Eliot maintains that an object in poetry is a correlative of the emotions of the poet, he means more than the natural object con-

veyed by an image. As a matter of fact, Eliot throughout his critical writings interprets the word 'object' in two different senses. In the first place the word 'object' implies anything which arouses emotion in any one. As for example in his essay on *Hamlet* Eliot says:

> The intense feeling, ecstatic or terrible, without an object or exceeding its object, is something which every person of sensibility has known; it is doubtless a subject of study for pathologists.[11]

In the second place, the word 'object' represents anything which signifies the poet's emotion and evokes the same emotion in the mind of the reader. It is in this sense that Eliot uses the word 'object' in his theory of the 'objective correlative'.

Although for Eliot the word 'object' represents anything which either evokes an emotion or is a correlative of the emotions of the poet, he often uses the word 'emotion' interchangeably with the word 'object'. This is the sense of his comment on Donne:

> He is constantly finding an object which shall be adequate to his feelings; Andrewes is wholly absorbed in the object and therefore responds with the adequate emotion.[12]

Eliot's interest in an object is thus not an end in itself but a means to an end in so far as it is able to serve as a formula for the poetic emotion.

The 'objective correlative' may be either 'a set of objects', such as Eliot's description of the Lady at the beginning of *A Game of Chess*, where the Lady is identified by the room and the set of objects it contains, or 'an image' such as 'a bracelet of bright-hair about the bone', or 'a situation' or 'a chain of events' such as the events leading up to Macbeth's death. The emotions of the poet not only find expression through the 'objective correlatives' but each unit in the poem is analysable into its 'objective correlatives' so that a certain 'set of objects', a certain 'situation' and a certain 'chain of events' not only work together to produce symphonic effects but also contribute to its larger meaning.

This unity is achieved by the creative artist by the logic of imagination and the logic of concepts, which integrate isolated meanings conveyed by the artist through the 'objective correlatives' into 'one intense impression' so that the entire body of the poet's work is held together by the unity of sentiment[13] which creates the 'pattern below the level of plot and character'[14] into the complex pattern of the 'objective correlatives' through which the poet expresses his emotions and meanings. The translation of the emotion of the poet into its correlative is brought about by the poet's unified sensibility which fuses the discordant qualities into a new whole.[15] The theory of the 'objective correlative' is thus based on the assumption that every poem can not only be broken into its correlatives but the correlatives can be pieced together to form a larger whole.

Eliot's theory of the 'objective correlative' is in tune with his earlier statement that 'it is universally human to attach the strongest emotions to definite tokens.'[16] He himself explains his point of view by giving illustrations from Wordsworth and Donne:

> it is universally human to attach the strongest emotions to definite tokens. Only, while with the Russian the emotion dissolves in a mass of sensational detail, and while with Wordsworth the emotion is of the object and not of human life, with certain poets the emotion is definitely human, merely seizing the object in order to express itself.
>
> > When my grave is broken up again...
> > And he that digs it, spies
> > A bracelet of bright-hair about the bone.
>
> The feeling and the material symbol preserve exactly their proper proportions. A poet of morbidly keen sensibilities but weak will might become absorbed in the hair to the exclusion of the original association which made it significant; a poet of imaginative or reflective power more than emotional power would endow the hair with ghostly or moralistic meaning. Donne sees the thing as it is.
>
> When Wordsworth, however, fixes his attention upon:

The meanest flower that blows

> his attitude is utterly different. His daffodil emphasizes the importance of the flower for its own sake, not because of association with passions specifically human.[17]

On a close study of the above passage, it becomes apparent that for Eliot it is of primary significance for the poet to choose an object which shall be the exact material symbol for his feeling. As for example, in the above illustration it will be seen that Wordsworth seems to have valued the objects of his experience by the intensity of his emotion about them. He also stresses the importance of the flower for its own sake and consequently he fails to find the proper material symbol for his feelings. Eliot, therefore, criticizes Wordsworth's emotion for 'the meanest flower that blows' as 'trivial'. What Eliot seems to mean is that if Wordsworth's emotion is important the flower cannot possibly be the cause of it except accidentally, and that this accidental association cannot express the emotion because the association is personal. A better, and a more universal, method, as Eliot himself explains, is 'to attach the strongest emotions to definite tokens' as Donne has done with his 'bracelet of bright-hair about the bone'. That is to say, symbols which are not objects accidentally associated with a particular and private experience, but are commonly recognized as in some way equivalent to, or commensurate with, the emotion are the true 'objective correlatives' for the poet's emotions.

Although Eliot is of the opinion that the emotions of the poet should be embodied through an object, he deprecates both incomplete objectification as in *Hamlet* and the excessive dwelling on the objective, concrete material, to the extent of preventing the emotional element from finding its proper expression through the 'objective correlatives'. For example, Eliot criticizes modern American poetry in which there is a concentration 'upon trivial or accidental or commonplace objects'. The precision of the emotions will further depend on the precision of the objects; otherwise there will be what Eliot calls 'the mistiness of the feeling and the vagueness of its object.'[18] Eliot's theory of the 'objective correlative' is thus based on the presumption that not only should the poet embody his emotion

through a concrete object but also the object should be such as to be an exact correlative of his feelings.

Although the theory of the 'objective correlative' is one of the most important critical concepts of Eliot, the idea contained in it is by no means an original one. It not only reminds us at once of the pronouncements of Aristotle contained in the fourth section of the *Poetics* but it has also basic similarity with the critical utterances of a number of other critics. The doctrine of the 'objective correlative' no doubt owes much to Aristotle's *Poetics*. For, like Aristotle, Eliot is of the opinion that it is not the business of the poet to 'say' but to 'show', not to present but to represent. In other words, Eliot's concept of the 'objective correlative' is based on the notion that it is not the business of the poet to present his emotions directly but rather to represent them indirectly through the 'objective correlative' which becomes the formula for the poet's original emotions.

Like the French Symbolists, Eliot in his theory of the 'objective correlative' seems to explain that since poetry cannot express emotions directly, emotions can only be evoked. Eliot's ideas also differ markedly from those of the French Symbolists. Whereas the French Symbolists attach greater importance to the suggestiveness rather than the precision of the object, Eliot, on the contrary, lays greater emphasis on the precision of the object than on its suggestiveness.

The theory of the 'objective correlative' is also a continuation of the views of the Imagists. As Eliot himself explains in his Introduction to the *Selected Poems* by Marianne Moore, 'the aim of imagism . . . was to induce a peculiar concentration upon something visual, and to set in motion an expanding succession of concentric feelings.'[19] Thus the ideas of the Imagists are similar to those of Eliot contained in his theory of the 'objective correlative'; it is not the poet's aim to set in motion his original emotion but 'to induce a peculiar concentration upon something visual.'

The basic idea in Eliot's theory of the 'objective correlative', that the emotions in poetry are embodied in an object, owes much to the romantics.[20] For example, Coleridge points out 'that images, however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, . . . do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified

by predominant passion, or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion.'[21] Wordsworth also says much the same thing when he says 'that poetry proceeds from the soul of man, communicating its creative energies to the images of the external world.' In the Victorian Age, Ruskin elaborated the idea further when he pointed out that great poets represent the object as it is, at the same time conveying their emotion. In the twentieth century both Hulme[22] and Pound[23] expounded the theory that the poet should choose something external to represent his emotions, and they stressed the need for the accuracy and concreteness of the object that would be symbolic expression of the emotions of the poet.

It is generally agreed that the term 'objective correlative', was probably borrowed from Washington Allston's *Lectures on Art*.[24] It is also probable that in using the term 'objective correlative', Eliot had in mind the following passage of Whitman:

> The prudence of the greatest poet...matches every thought or act by its correlative.[25]

Mario Praz,[26] however, considers that Ezra Pound's idea of poetry as of 'a sort of inspired mathematics, which gives us equations...for the human emotions',[27] may be said to be the starting-point and the basis of the theory of the 'objective correlative'.

Although the idea contained in the doctrine of the 'objective correlative' is traceable to a number of critics, there is no doubt that Eliot gave to the phrase its unique currency and, to put it in his own words, its 'truly embarrassing success in the world'.[28] The phrase 'objective correlative' has become the recognized term to signify the way emotion is expressed through a work of art.

It would indeed be significant to consider the concept of the 'objective correlative' with reference to his famous poem *The Waste Land* which is, by consensus of critical opinion, his masterpiece and also a landmark in the annals of English literature.

On a close examination of the poem it becomes clear that the central theme or the dominant emotion of the poem which

is a feeling of disenchantment and disillusion generated by the First World War has not been given expression directly and spontaneously. Although the poem has so much power and intensity, the poet views the world not through his own eyes but through the eyes of the blind seer Tiresias, who is endowed with a new importance; for Tiresias can give a vision of life which is comprehensive because he had experienced life both as a man and as a woman. And within his comprehensive vision, he could present life with all its complexity and variety. This complexity of life is also seen in some of the isolated images used in the poem. In *The Waste Land*, the poet presents a fleeting glimpse of the world where grandeur is woven into squalor and romantic vision and idealism are mingled with the mundane and inane realities of life. For example, in the following lines of *The Waste Land:*

> Above the antique mantel was displayed
> As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
> The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
> So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
> Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
> And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
> 'Jug Jug' to dirty ears.[29]

We have, here, a romantic Keats-like vision of the nightingale with its inviolable voice, but we are at once reminded of how as Philomel she was violated and deprived of human speech. But although Philomel was changed into a nightingale her inviolable voice has continued to inspire men through the ages. Unfortunately her melodious voice no longer appeals to the 'dirty ears' of men living in the waste land but it sounds coarse and ugly as is implied by the words—'Jug Jug'.

And throughout the poem—*The Waste Land*—the poet expresses the dominant emotion of the poem, the feeling of disenchantment and despair at the loss of moral values, through the presentation of a kaleidoscopic picture of objects, situations and images which may be said to be the objective correlatives for the poet's emotions. In the concluding section of *The Waste Land*—'What the Thunder said'—Eliot describes the widespread desolation and despair by objectifying his feelings through clear

visual images. As for example, in the following lines:

> Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
> Waited for rain, while the black clouds
> Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
> The jungle crouched, humped in silence.[30]

The images of Ganga being dried up, the limp leaves waiting anxiously for rain, the black clouds hovering in the sky over Himavant, the jungle crouched for want of rain, have all been appropriately fused, and the feeling of rampant desolation and despair prevailing throughout the universe—from Ganga to distant Himavant and from Himavant to the far-off sky—has been appropriately conveyed through the 'objective correlatives'. Thus Eliot's theory of the 'objective correlative' finds complete expression through his poem—*The Waste Land*. And what is true of *The Waste Land* is equally true of his other poems.

Although the theory of the 'objective correlative' can be justified with reference to the poems of Eliot, it cannot claim to have universal validity. As a matter of fact, the theory of the 'objective correlative' is open to criticism and can only be accepted with some qualifications. Eliseo Vivas,[31] for example, while subjecting Eliot's theory of the 'objective correlative' to a scathing criticism, says that although the theory was devised to explain how the poet expresses his emotions through his creations and how the poet organizes his sensibility through the act of creation, Eliot does not explain why or how expression organizes sensibility. Eliseo Vivas goes on to analyse the theory of the 'objective correlative' which, according to him, is based on two important propositions. In the first place, it assumes that poetry expresses emotion. In the second place, it postulates that a poem arouses a kindred emotion in the reader. Vivas accepts the first proposition of Eliot's theory of the 'objective correlative' with some qualifications. But he objects to the second which cannot be taken seriously, because this would mean that a poem, according to Eliot, is what Krieger aptly calls 'the emotionless bridge, between the similar emotions of the poet and his audience.'[32] For the poet, as Krieger explains, 'gets rid of his emotions, by sublimating them in his poem's objectivity and, by means of this device, he shifts

his emotional burden from his own shoulders to those of his audience.'[33]

W. Righter, in his book *Logic and Criticism*, chooses another line of criticism by pointing out that the idea of 'exact equivalence' in Eliot's theory of the 'objective correlative' cannot be taken literally. For Eliot is obviously using the notion of 'exactness' rather inexactly, almost figuratively, and makes no serious effort to work out its consequences.

Eliot himself seems to have been fully conscious of some of the criticism levelled against his concept of the 'objective correlative', for he says:

> About *Hamlet*, I remain of my opinion of many years ago, that the theory of 'intractable material associated with the names of Robertson and Stoll is still necessary, though I have come to doubt some of my own additions to that theory.'[34]

In the Preface to *Elizabethan Dramatists* (1962), he thus modifies his earlier ideas regarding Shakespeare and his theory of the 'objective correlative':

> All three of these essays on re-examination embarrassed me by their callowness, and by a facility of unqualified assertion which verges, here and there, on impudence. *The Hamlet*, of course, had been kept afloat all these years by the success of the phrase 'objective correlative'—a phrase which, I am now told, is not even my own but was first used by Washington Alston. These three essays were the first to be reread; and when I had read them I turned with trepidation to reread my essays on Shakespeare's contemporaries. I was astonished to find that these essays struck me as very good indeed.
>
> What is the reason for my forming such different judgements on different essays? . . .But, for the understanding of Shakespeare, a lifetime is not too long; and of Shakespeare, the development of one's opinions may be the measure of one's development in wisdom.[35]

But in spite of all the criticisms that are commonly levelled

against Eliot's theory of the 'objective correlative', it is true in substance and the phrase is a convenient description of, what Rene Wellek calls, 'the symbolic structure of a work of art.'[36]

In *To Criticize the Critic*,[37] Eliot expresses mild surprise that a large number of critics have questioned the meaning and significance of the theory of the 'objective correlative', for its meaning seems to be self-evident. He further clarifies his concept by saying that the terms 'objective correlative' and 'dissociation of sensibility' represent what he calls 'stimuli to the critical thinking'[38]—conceptual symbols for an emotional bias. The 'objective correlative' is connected with his bias for the later Shakespeare—for *Timon* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. In other words, what Eliot means by his doctrine of the 'objective correlative' is that a great work of art is nothing but a set of conceptual symbols or correlatives which endeavour to express the emotions of the poet, and these symbols constitute the total vision of the creative artist. That is to say, every work of art, such as a great poem, is a complex web of correlatives—'a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events'—which not only express the emotions of the poet but also the psychic structure of which, as Wright says, 'the poem is the symbolic realization.'[39]

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POSSESSIVE LOVE IN *STRANGERS AND BROTHERS*

A Study of C. P. Snow's Use of the Principle of Resonance in Developing the Theme

By C. Ramakrishnaiah

I

C. P. Snow describes possessive love as one of the 'important emotional themes'[1] in his novel-sequence *Strangers and Brothers*. It is, clearly, the dominant theme in *The Conscience of the Rich*, and is one of the several themes in *Time of Hope*, *The New Men*, and *Homecomings*. There are also echoes of it in *The Sleep of Reason*. It is, of course, possible that Snow might decide to introduce it again in the remaining novel of the sequence that is yet to be published. Nonetheless, an examination of Snow's treatment of the theme in the published novels of the series promises to prove a useful undertaking. This is a fruitful area for one who seeks to discover why he has chosen to give an extended treatment to the same theme, and what purposes were intended to be achieved by the introduction of the 'resonances' to which the author appears to attach such patent significance.

The writer proposes to study Snow's ideas on the subject of possessive love, as revealed in his novels, and to show that in developing this theme, Snow employs, as a structural device, a principle analogous to the physical phenomenon known as resonance.

II

Possessive love is the term that Snow uses exclusively to describe the 'one-sided devotion'[2] often bestowed by a parent, or a parental figure. The object of this devotion is in several instances a son, but in one, a younger brother. Snow seems to suggest that this kind of love is generally shown by certain

clearly identifiable types of people and that it is foredoomed to meet with rejection. It is experienced with a fair amount of intensity so as to call for the description of a 'passion'.[3] 'It is not dramatic, (is) often invisible. . . it could be weighted with danger both for those who give and for the object of love.'[4] 'It is a devotion at the same time absolutely possessive, and absolutely self-abnegating.'[5]

The characters who find themselves trapped in the web of this passion show certain similarities of attitude and temperament. They comprise the two broad categories of the givers and the recipients. The givers tend to identify themselves with those beloved. They cannot restrain this urge which gradually leads them to expend their spirit in a self-defeating and unavailing love. They are men who consider themselves failures in a worldly sense. Baulked in their ambitions they seek fulfilment through those whom they love. That it is their way is clear, for instance, in Lena Eliot's words when she talks of 'her need that I [Lewis] should rectify all that had gone wrong in her life.'[6] In *The Conscience of the Rich*,[7] Lewis Eliot notes 'how much of himself he [Mr. March] was recreating in his son.' In *The New Men* again Eliot is aware, within himself, of an intense feeling of disappointment at Martin's failure to achieve the success he wants for him in the Barford establishment. 'I have wanted a good deal for you',[8] he protests to Martin. Eliot had invested much hope in Martin, including hopes of his own that had been frustrated. In *The Sleep of Reason* it is Martin who expresses a similar idea. His own life 'having gone wrong, [he] seeks to compensate [for his failure] in the success of his son.'[9]

The characters of the first category display an obvious concern that those beloved must be spared the failure that had been their own lot. Mr. March is desperately anxious that Charles should turn out to be a distinguished lawyer. His own decision to retire from his banking business while he was still only thirty-three was disastrous for one so vital and full of energy as he. It had paved the way to a gradual stultification of all that was creative in him. As a result he goes through periods of intense self-disapproval. In his own eyes, he had 'lost self-respect',[10] and would now like to ensure at least for his son success on his own terms because 'everything that one aspired to and had to dismiss as one discovered one's weakness

could be built up again in one's son.'[11] The identification of self with the person beloved is very nearly total. This is apparent in the situation where Charles, seeking to wrench himself free of his father's will, evokes in Mr. March the feeling that 'a part of his own being was torn away.'[12]

A further point of similarity that holds the characters of this group together is their vein of reserve. They are all, at various points, referred to as secretive and 'stoical'.[13] It seems to Lewis Eliot that the people most liable to be swept off their feet by this possessive passion are this secretive group of men.

III

On the other hand the recipients for their part share the urge to liberate themselves from the possessive bonds with which the givers seek to bind them. These parental figures seem to them to 'invade'[14] their hearts, and they struggle to protect the sovereignty of their self. Young Lewis, for example, is uncomfortable in his relations with his mother, but is quite at ease with his father for he did not 'invade' his feelings as his mother 'did'.[15] He responds in much the same way to Marion, and as her interest in him grows more and more possessive, he 'shies'[16] away from her. Their urge for freedom is irrepressible, and until they succeed in emancipating themselves, they continue to find their situation oppressive and 'claustrophobic'.[17]

IV

In every novel built around this theme the mutual antipathy between the givers and the recipients grows gradually, but is kept well beneath the surface for long, until it erupts, at certain moments of crisis into an open clash.

To a certain extent the conflict is explicable in terms of differences in ideals and aspirations. Mr. March, for example, finds Charles's wish to become a doctor, perverse and provocative. 'He could not credit that a balanced man should want to go to extravagant lengths to feel that his life was useful.... He could not believe that his son's temperament was at this

point radically different from his own.'[18] The medical man is for Mr. March no more than a 'twopenny halfpenny practitioner'.[19] This happens to be his blind spot. Lewis Eliot and Martin Eliot can both be observed to have other blind spots of their own. Lewis Eliot's is his blindness to the core of self-regard in Martin. It seems to him that Martin had no loyalty. This is his reaction when Martin proceeds to make tactical use of the Sawbridge affair for personal advancement. He believes that Martin is the sort 'who looks on human existence as a problem in logistics!'[20] Martin, on the other hand, regards Lewis's ideal of brotherhood as sanctimonious and hypocritical at least during the confrontation that follows Martin's manoeuvres in the Sawbridge episode. However, such mutual incomprehension in regard to beliefs and attitudes cannot serve as the only, or even as a satisfactory explanation of these conflicts. Snow seems to suggest that forces inherent in their nature work to produce these conflicts. The men involved are impelled to search within themselves for the root causes.

Sometimes they have glimmerings of understanding, when it seems to them that given their nature, the suffering that they go through is inevitable, and inescapable.

During these moments of crisis the givers of possessive love find themselves deprived of all capacity to act. Mr. March is 'like a man baffled, . . . groping, mystified.'[21] From this state of perplexity they move to one of indignation, impotent in its utter helplessness. Finally they reach the stage of a resigned and sullen surrender. This last is the period of the most acute suffering. Snow variously describes it as 'a storm of savage distress',[22] 'a deep organic suffering'[23] and 'a darkness of the heart'.[24]

V

These emotional crises have a further significance. They are moments of unusual insight for those affected. Their sufferings seem to have the power to open up for them dark recesses in their hearts. They become aware of unsuspected aspects of their nature. It is in these moments that they are most 'naked to themselves'[25] their progress in self-discovery is slow, but every emotional crisis that they experience marks the culmination of

a further stage in their progress towards self-comprehension. Thus, young Lewis cannot understand why he is uneasy in his relations with his mother. The streak of possessiveness in her love is understood by him in retrospect only when he sees a similar weakness in Marion Gladwell and Mr. March.

His understanding of the passion and the suffering that it can cause is still not deep enough. It continues to be vague and unsure until the Barford crisis when he first becomes conscious that he himself had always had something of the possessive element in his love for Martin. His understanding of himself improves in the shattering emotional trauma that follows his son's illness. During this crisis, it is Margaret who helps him to recognise the flaw in his nature, the desire to keep his inmost self inviolate. He grasps also that it is his unwillingness to yield himself in a healthy relationship with her that had prompted him to lose himself in a 'one-sided devotion' for his son.

The road to self-knowledge is long and it takes years for Eliot to traverse it. His progress is slow and halting. There are painful moments of regression. But he reaches a stage when he feels that he understands the forces that produce these possessive feelings. He then speaks with self-assurance. Eliot's words have the comforting weight of years of experience behind them; when commenting on Martin, he says that feelings such as Martin has for his son could be weighted with danger both for those who give and for the object of their love. He then finds the phrase 'a darkness of the heart' too florid for his taste,[26] yet affirms that it might still have had meaning, for one who had known what he (Martin) now felt'.[27] Eliot appears to feel that life had provided enough evidence to justify his beliefs on at least one problem in it: that created by the urge that people of a certain nature feel to lose themselves—in a self-identificatory passion—in the objects of their love.

VI

It was in 1958 that Snow made the first explicit statement on the design of *Strangers and Brothers*. He then pointed out that it consisted of a 'resonance between what Lewis Eliot sees and what he feels.'[28] Since then he has adhered to his plan with

unwavering consistency, and has, in a recent letter, again reiterated his intention that 'the treatment of possessive love should gain in depth by being seen first objectively in Mr. March, and then subjectively in Eliot himself.'[29] Snow's decision to give his themes an *iterative* treatment employing resonating devices can be seen to have justification when it is viewed in the light of the results achieved. It has enabled the author to examine similar situations from different angles. While in *The Conscience of the Rich,* Eliot has the role of a spectator watching another experience this feeling, in *The New Men, Homecomings* he becomes involved in it as a participant. Thus, experiences that he had watched in Lena Eliot, Mr. March and others eventually enter his own life and give him a fuller knowledge of himself. On another level, Lewis Eliot and Martin are both shown as the reluctant recipients of this kind of love, and in the later novels of the sequence they are made to fill the roles of the givers of this love. The experience is instructive as much for the characters as for the reader.

It would therefore appear that by 'resonances' Snow is referring to certain periods of crisis in the narratives, when a mood of reminiscence is powerfully induced in some of the principal characters of the sequence, when, in a momentary flash of insight, they acquire the ability to grasp the significance of what had happened to them at some period in their past. This capacity to comprehend is aroused by their observing a similar experience in others.

In the clearest exposition that has been offered so far of the principle of resonance in *Strangers and Brothers* William Cooper has pointed out that the extension of the principle in a 'cyclical' fashion has enabled Snow to achieve an effect that is 'cumulative'.[30] At least two cycles of observation and experience are shown to be gone through by Lewis Eliot. Apart from building into the series such repetitive cycles of experiences, it appears also to be part of Snow's plan to heighten his effects by introducing specific situations where the resonances can be perceived. It is often possible to pinpoint the situations in the narratives where a focalisation of the meaning of repetitive experience is attempted. The author would have had to deny himself the emphasis provided by such focalisations of signi-

ficance if he had confined his attempt to a mere duplication of events in one novel after another.

VII

In order to achieve these effects of focalisation Snow relies on such devices as verbal echoes and flash-backs. Examples of verbal echoes are the repeated use of expressions like 'invasion' of feeling: 'investment' of hopes, a 'claustrophobic' desire and others, which tend to recur in basically similar situations, although the novels in which they occur are separated by decades in respect of their time of composition. These echoes evoke a mood of recall, and act as a kind of trigger on the reader's memory. A flash-back like the one in the following passage is a common device employed by Snow in preparing for his resonating effects:

> Instead of the stretch of Piccadilly, empty except for the last taxis, the traffic lights blinking as we shouted, I might have been plunged back into the pain of some forgotten disaster, in the dark little front room of our childhood, with the dying laburnum outside in the windows.[31]

This seems to be intended to help move the reader, in his imagination, across decades, from the actuality of war-time London to a dimly recalled moment in the past in the provincial town of Eliot's early years.

VIII

Snow's critics have frequently drawn attention to his extra-ordinary choice of the principle of resonance as a literary device. The parallel between the phenomenon of resonance as physicists describe it, and the 'resonance' in Snow's fiction suggests that the latter has been evolved as an analogical principle to serve as a structuring device. Several kinds of resonances are known to the physicists. Of these the resonance that operates in the field of acoustics offers us as good a parallel as any other. . . . In

acoustics, as is well known, resonance is the term used to denote the prolongation or increase of sound because of the sympathetic vibration of some body capable of moving in the proper period. For example, an oscillation is induced in a violin or piano string of a given pitch when a musical note of the same pitch is sung or played nearby. The effect that Snow seeks to achieve through the fictional artifice of resonance is rather similar to that of this phenomenon.

Every physical system is said to have its own natural frequency of vibration. It can however be induced to vibrate by an external force operating with the same frequency. The fictional parallel can be perceived in certain moments when a character finds in himself the capacity to grasp the significance of a past experience, for he is then watching another going through a similar experience.

The suggestion that a literary artist has been inspired by a scientific phenomenon to create a novel fictional method might seem eccentric. However, the evidence available in Snow's long and distinguished record as a scientist, his explicit statements on his objectives as a writer,[32] and the unusually large number of scientific collocations[33] in *Strangers and Brothers*, lends support to the view that the quality of Snow's literary vision has been profoundly influenced by his scientific training and temper. In examining his technique as a literary artist, therefore, the Snow critic has to consider his scientific background. When viewed against it, his principle of resonance appears to be an adaptation of the physical phenomenon for his own special purposes.

Snow is a writer with an unusual background having known intimately both the worlds of science and literature. He can perhaps feel justified in having created a literary device without precedent or parallel, for he has to communicate a unique vision.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

(All textual citations are from the British editions of the novels published by Macmillan Ltd., London. The date of reprinting of all the novels referred to here, except *The Sleep of Reason*, is 1960. In the case of *The Sleep of Reason*, the references are to the first edition of the novel published in 1968.)

1. Author's note appended to *The Conscience of the Rich*, p. vii.
2. *Homecomings*, p. 361.
3. *The Conscience of the Rich*, p. 112.
4. *The Sleep of Reason*, p. 75.
5. Ibid.
6. *Time of Hope*, p. 40.
7. *The Conscience of the Rich*, p. 82.
8. *The New Men*, p. 273.
9. *The Sleep of Reason*.
10. *The Conscience of the Rich*, p. 86.
11. Ibid.
12. *The Conscience of the Rich*, p. 163.
13. *The Sleep of Reason*, p. 75.
14. *Homecomings*, p. 391.
15. *Time of Hope*, p. 45.
16. Ibid. p. 180.
17. *The Conscience of the Rich*, p. 131.
18. Ibid. p. 114.
19. Ibid. p. 113.
20. *The New Men*, p. 272.
21. *The Conscience of the Rich*, p. 314.
22. Ibid. p. 111.
23. Ibid. p. 163.
24. Ibid. p. 315.
25. *The New Men*, p. 271.
26. *The Sleep of Reason*, p. 75.
27. Ibid.
28. Author's note appended to *The Conscience of the Rich*, p. vii.
29. Letter to the author, 11 September 1964.
30. William Cooper, *C. P. Snow* (London, 1959), p. 34.
31. *The New Men*, p. 272.
32. William Cooper has drawn attention to what he describes as 'the investigatory element in Snow's fiction and has pointed that his techniques are like those of the scientist' [See his *C. P. Snow* (London, 1969), p. 30]. Snow himself seems to believe that his scientific training had aided him in his work as a writer. It had given him 'a simpler view of the truth' he aims at. The following statement he made in the course of a symposium broadcast over the B.B.C. lends support to this view: 'I believe there are certain things you can say about people in their society which are objectively true. That is, people are like that, in those places, at that time. In accurately stating the reaction between such people and their environment, the realistic novel is doing something that is *not grossly dissimilar from the scientific process*.' See the *Listener*, LXVII, 1744, pp. 311-12.
33. The following might be considered as fairly representative examples of the collocations referred to:
    (i) 'Those eight were split symmetrically, four for Howard, and four against. The sight of Dawson-Hill and me seemed to *catalyse* the clash of tempers.' (*The Affairs*, p. 234).

(ii) A butterfly traced a *re-entrant* angle in front of us. (Ibid. p. 254).

(iii) ...anyone whom one has known from youth one never sees quite straight...the picture has been *doubly exposed*. (Ibid. p. 298).

(iv) 'Take away a certain number,' said Lufkin, and in a highly articulated industry you came to a critical point...efficiency dropped away in an exponential curve. (*Homecomings*, p. 114).

BOOK REVIEW

Inter-War English Poetry by M. K. Sen, The University of Burdwan, 1967.

NEARLY three decades ago F. R. Leavis remarked that 'poetry did not matter to the modern world.' Since then another World War has occurred and the literature *entre deux guerres* has come in for evaluation by numerous writers and critics. The main concern of these writers is to focus our attention upon the human condition in an 'age of anxiety', or 'age of crisis' or 'age of alienation' in order to reveal how this concern required a modification of technique or how literature or, for that matter, how the poet has been most consciously aware of the predicament of modern man. In any age when values of life are in a flux or when 'things fall apart', the poet's sensitive awareness of the shape of things or the Sartrean 'situations', gives poetry a peculiar relevance—a relevance that has to be manifested in adequate expression to achieve which a preoccupation with technical experiments becomes inevitable. It is a problem of communication in a civilization threatened by mechanization, dehumanization and tame conformity, and in every age with an alteration of sensibility, such problems do crop up. In English poetry between the two World Wars, extreme situations have led to difficulties in communication and consequential changes in the texture and structure of poetry, in the poetic idiom itself, resulting in what has been loosely termed as modern poetry.

Dr M. K. Sen's study of *Inter-War English Poetry* seeks to throw light on the nature of English poetry by examining the subject from a theoretical angle. Taking Eliot as his major subject, Dr Sen has studied his poetry both extensively and intensively showing how his poetry has been motivated by forces, both aesthetic and literary, that were generated in Europe, e.g. Imagism, Dadaism, Symbolism, Surrealism, etc. In studying these forces, and their impact upon Eliot and his successors Dr Sen has made an examination of certain philosophical or metaphysical ideas, a difficult task which he has accomplished creditably. In this context, acute observations

have been made in regard to Eliot's theory of 'objective correlative', which can be regarded as an 'image-turned-symbol', a point of view that has been well established, for example, among others by W. Y. Tindall. The second chapter of the book contains some crucial statements and explanations in the light of which Dr Sen re-examines a large segment of Eliot's poetry. His interpretation of *The Waste Land* from the point of view of the psychology of sex is, however, rather tenuous and may be compared with Elizabeth Drew's treatment of this aspect of Eliot's poetry. A purely psychological explanation is not always valuable for critical judgement although it may be of help in 'understanding' the poem. Dr Sen's strongest point in the book, however, is the tracing of the continuity of the 'objective correlative' theory in the poetry of Eliot's successors like Auden, Spender and Day Lewis and McNeice. The analysis of Auden's 'Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all', noted for its obscurity, is a good and convincing illustration of the poet's intention to write for a cultured minority, to expose 'private faces in public places'.

In the last chapter of the book, which seems to me to be the weakest, Dr Sen arrives at some conclusions which are not integrally related either to the book or the chapters themselves. It is not that the conclusions are irrelevant in any manner. They are, for example, related to the social background, or they reveal the relationship between complexity in poetry and the complexity of the age, or the preoccupation of modern writers with the enigmatic time theme. The question that one is tempted to ask here is whether these conclusions are not preambles to Dr Sen's thesis that poetry in recording the 'angst' of a fragmented and incoherent civilization has perforce to concentrate upon a meaningful technical device like the 'objective correlative'. The 'conclusions' are really the difficulties encountered by the modern poet and hence their inclusion in a preliminary chapter might have paved the way in the second chapter for an examination of the adequacy or inadequacy of the critical theories available to the modern poet for solving his personal problems of expression.

It is, however, when we observe Dr Sen's capacity to handle a difficult theme and interpret poems as illustrative of it, that we realize that although poetry in the modern world is as elusive

as the sphinx, a philosophical or metaphysical explanation of a difficult technical device like the 'objective correlative' can offer valuable insights and clear up points that have baffled many readers.

(Mrs) P. N. Das

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