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Sohail Ahsan

KING LEAR—THE UNRESOLVED TENSION

King Lear is a profound exploration of the problem of human existence in relation to the inscrutable forces conditioning the mode of man's being. Though at no level, is this 'mysterious energy' allowed to intervene directly, the *Lear* universe, nevertheless, offers a comment on its nature and on the vision of life which it embodies. The play shows man held in a tension of good and evil. The clash of positive and negative forces, of good and evil, of benevolent and malignant powers, defines the nature of this universe containing man. This is a universe ruled by mysterious forces functioning ambiguously, now benevolently, now maliciously, making it difficult for the spectator to arrive at a precise answer about their nature. The play, in fact, proceeds by way of theatrically important situations, through diametrically opposed comments and view-points of different characters and through scene-patternings that do not cancel out but hold together inspite of their intersecting each other. It is composed of thesis and antithesis, but synthesis in the logical sense is never allowed to emerge. It, no doubt, hints at some enigmatic forces operating as the governors of man's affairs, yet it does not present any well-defined answer to the problem of divine dispensation, for these forces, as projected by the play, are both hostile and indifferent, and benevolent and just.

The play depicts the spiritual progression of the protagonist from ignorance to self-knowledge, from hatred to love and from darkness to light—this is what the common critical

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opinion, generally, assumes. But this is true only up to a certain point. The Lear of Act I is an 'embodiment of perverse self-will'.[1] He is proud and stubborn. He betrays cognisance of evil and good but confuses appearance with reality. His proneness to flattery is quite evident. The conversation between Regan and Goneril (I. i. 287-305)[2] highlights his 'hideous rashness' and ignorance. He desires to 'crawl' 'unbunthen'd' 'towards death' (I.i. 40) but, at the same time, reveals himself to be worldly-minded and treats sublime values in concrete and materialistic terms. Cordelia refuses to submit to such a perverted scheme of things—to express her love in words for Lear for she knows that, in France's words, 'Love's not love/When it is mingled with regards that stand/Aloof from th'entire point' (I.i. 237-239). Anyhow, the consequences arising out of such a state are overwhelming. The aged father, the king, bursts frorth into atrocious rage at Cordelia's refusal, and she is disowned :

> Let it be so; thy truth then be thy dower;
> For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
> The mysteries of Hecate and the night,
> By all the operation of the orbs
> From whom we do exist and cease to be,
> Here I discalim all my paternal care,
> Propinquity and property of blood,
> And as a stranger to my heart and me
> Hold thee from this for ever.
>
> (I. i. 107-115)

Here is a passion that can swear by 'the mysteries of Hecate and the night' as also 'the sacred radiance of the sun'. The 'operation of the orbs' is involved and so are existence and death. And all go together to announce Lear's violent disclaimer. He disowns all, including 'paternal care', 'propinquity' and even 'property of blood'. Cordelia is thereafter to be a stranger to his heart. But is not Lear himself being 'unnatural', or to go so much against the order of 'nature'

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has not he to be very violent ? Has not he to swear by 'Hecate', 'the sun' and 'the orbs' ? In any case, it is Lear himself, who, desiring an ostentatious display of his position as king and father with a certain naivete, has proceeded to demean the filial affection. This is equivalent to a denial of the moral, ethical and natural scheme of things because of some inherent flaw in Lear's nature. But it shall amount to pressing a point too far if these initial mistakes of Lear are insisted upon over much. They just have to be kept in mind and not over-emphasized. Together they constitute the tragic flaw, the aberration that sets the pace for a larger tragedy. The heroes of Shakespeare's tragedies are human beings first and last, and as such must partake of their share of that vast inscrutable and mysterious phenomenon – evil that is forever there, an inseparable part of the human predicament itself. That there is good also can hardly be denied. May be there is more good than evil in them. But those that are made up of the common stuff of humanity have to have their share of both. However one thing that appears certain is that both good and evil coexist in a state of perpetual struggle within or without us. What is involved in this struggle when worked out through such a tragedy as *Lear,* appears to be ambivalent. It does not amount to a formal philosophical statement for here nothing is patently clear but in fact, indistinct, blurred and floating. In this context what would be our commitment to the word 'natural', or for that matter 'unnatural'. Is 'natural' the normal state of man or 'unnatural' his fundamental condition ?

Kent knows that Lear, in 'disclaim [ing] all...paternal care' and 'propinquity and property of blood' (I. i. 112-13), is neither in harmony with 'the gods', nor with his own nature as 'the divinities' for him are the embodiments of the principle of justice. His exclamation 'Thou swear'st the gods in vain' (I. i. 160) to Lear implies that the old man himself being unjust should not think that 'the just gods' would approve his

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judgment and actions. However, the very embodiments of goodness, Kent and Cordelia (whose 'crime' is neither a 'vicious blot, murther or foulness', nor an 'unchaste action, or dishonour'd step') are banished, disowned and humiliated. Kent, before his departure, says to Cordelia :

> The Gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,
> That justly think'st and hast most rightly said'.
> (I i. 181-82)

and Cordelia is, immediately, rewarded by 'the gods', as, she is saved from Burgundy for whom love is 'respect and fortunes' (I. i. 247), and France, for whom love is but a sublime value, accepts her hand. But he exhibits astonishment over Cordelia's fate : 'Gods, gods' tis strange that from their cold'st neglect/My love should kindle to inflam'd respect' (I. i. 253-54). Thus right from the beginning a moral pattern or value system begins to emerge through Kent, Cordelia and France. This is broadened later with the entry of Lear, Gloucester and Albany. But this pattern cannot be studied in isolation from what is opposed to it and at the same time coexists with it—amoral forces at work in the *Lear* world.

The passage 'For, by the sacred radiance. . .' (I. i. 108-15) anticipates Lear's later speeches and highlights mysterious and powerful forces as does Edmund's soliloquy 'Thou Nature art my goddess (I. ii. 1-22) also. Apparently, it would seem that Lear's 'Nature' is different from Edmund's, for they do not proceed upon the same premise and are not similarly motivated. But what of a later speech by Lear where the King, now aged father only, has good cause, this time against one of the evil daughters—Goneril. Lear passionately calls upon 'Nature', the dear goddess, to 'Suspend [her] purpose', and 'Into [Goneril's] womb convey sterility' and to 'create her child of spleen ' (I. iv. 273 ff). Here is 'Nature' again but it is Lear's this time and not Edmund's. But is it all for good or all for evil, or in other words, is it wholly benevolent or utterly malevolent ? These are difficult questions,

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difficult for philosophy itself to answer and more intricate for men 'doing and suffering'. What is important is that it presents the whole complex situation with rigour and force, leaving the reader or the spectator the liberty to take his own stand—not an easy thing to do.

That these 'deities' exist and are inscrutable and mysterious appears to be always accepted in a *King Lear* situation, irrespective of individual personalities or groups, irrespective that is of Lears, Cordelias, Regans, Gonerils, Edmunds, Cornwalls and Gloucesters. Are these forces then hostile and indifferent or benevolent ? Why must a Lear, in repeated bursts of rage, passionately call out to them ? Is it not because of his conviction that 'the divinities' stand by what is good, stand, that is, for all that can be categorized as good ? But there can be lack of order too, total confusion, sterility, death, children of spleen and old age. What of that ! No doubt Lear made the first mistake when he foolishly and with some arrogance desired an ostentatious display in open court of filial love, made less to the father and more to the king. But this foolishness and arrogance bring into prominence selfishness, disrespect, cruelty, contempt and even indifference that Goneril and Regan had already in them. Regan and Goneril thus lack 'nature' and are 'unnatural' in the extreme. In other words, if it is 'natural' for them to be 'unnatural', then is 'nature', some 'superior law', indifferent or malicious ? Is it not that 'the gods' 'stand up for bastards' (I. ii 22) only ? Are the 'creative and natural energies' corrupt as they have given birth to 'children of spleen'—Regan and Goneril. But Lear has also borne Cordelia, and there are Fools and Kents also in the *Lear* world if there are Edmunds and Cornwalls. What explanation would we offer for this ?

'Nature', for Gloucester, is not only a social, moral and ethical code but also a scale for measuring the human conduct. 'King falls from bias of nature', he says, because of the 'late eclipses in the sun and moon' that 'portend no good to us...'

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(I. ii. 100-101) and as a sequel, 'Love cools'... and the bond crack'd twixt son and father', and 'all ruinous disorders follow... (I. ii. 103 ff). This passage (I. ii. 100-11) indirectly presents a fatalistic view of life and at the same time associates 'the gods' with an indifferent attitude towards human beings as 'heavenly signs' are but symbols of disasters that are to follow. However, this is not the only manifestation of the ways of the divine operation as Edmund rejects outright the idea of divinity being accountable for the consequence or outcome of human action. He brushes aside Gloucester's belief in astrology (I. ii. 123 ff). It is absurd, an 'excellent foppery', for being 'sick in fortune, .. we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars; as if', continues Edmund, and he is to be closely watched, 'we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on'. Edmund goes on to add that all this is, 'An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star !' He is not responsible for the sin of his father, 'why then base'—'My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under '*Ursa major*'; so that it follows I am rough and lecherous'. Edmund dismisses the kind of thought with a contemptuous 'Fut'. I should have been that I am had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing'.

How is all this to be read ? Does it not envisage freedom of will ? Does 'divinity' at all control and regulate man's thought and actions ? 'The gods' therefore, play no role in human affairs. What emerges thereafter is the human agent's own responsibilty. But the passage projects another view also for the statement 'I should have been that I am' smacks of an lago-like disposition and therefore an acceptance of responsibility does not mean that Edmund shall cease to be what he is, that is, a villain. Besides, one aspect of this acceptance by Edmund of the idea of human answerability is

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that most of it is directed at his father Gloucester, and therefore, the rancour in his speech cannot be missed. Edmund has been made to carry through life the burden of a taint society has heaped on him and the conviction that he is incapable of any good. What emerges from all this is that the admission of accountability need not imply that the agent shall desist from evil. In fact, he may even cause quite a bit of harm. At the same time the soliloquy emphasizes the fact that man is the only and efficient cause of evil so much so that evil as an abstract entity imposed from without is not a valid assumption. There is much more in our world than mere accountability. What about the role that circumstances play in it ? Also what about the proportion of suffering and reward ? Regarding evil itself, it shall not be far wrong to say that tragic art implicates far more of it than philosophy. Life as lived from moment to moment partakes of the quality of the absurd in a greater measure than is allowed by any rationalization of experience.

Though the play projects evil in all its ramifications, there is also an element of cohesivenses that goes with it. Regan and Goneril join their hands together to act against Lear (I. i. 302; I.iii. 16). This show of unity, no doubt, ultimately gives way to discordancy but at the same time is an index of the magnitude of the hostile forces operating in the *Lear* world. Here Kents are 'stock'd', and Oswalds flourish; it is a tricky world where, as the Fool says :

> Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipp'd out when the Lady's Brach may stand by th' fire and stink. (I. iv. 109-10)

He thus establishes a connection between the evil forces which bring about the reversal of moral and natural order. He further says :

> The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,
> That it's had it head bit off by it young,
> So out went the candle, and we were left darkling.
>
> (I. iv. 213-15)

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The word 'darkling' does not only reveal the state of the *Lear* world but also the enormity of evil. But even a glimpse of some moral order, reflected in Kent's resolution to help Lear, relieves the 'darkling' world for a moment; and this very fact has bearing on the possibility of goodness amidst all the inimical and hostile forces. The 'darkling' also symbolizes the state of Lear's unknowingness. Confronting the reality of evil, as Goneril exposes herself, Lear confesses his ignorance and lack of self-knowledge (I. iv. 223-27). He 'would learn that' (I. iv. 229) in order to be aware of the reality and his first lesson is in terms of his recognition of the hostile and malevlent forces, operating within and without. 'Darkness and devil!' (I. iv. 249), he says to Goneril in response to her accusation of his Knights of epicureanism and lust. He now realises that it is, in fact, Goneril who is governed by passions. She is a 'marble-hearted fiend' (I. iv 257), and embodiment of 'filial ingratitude', a 'Degenerate bastard' (I. iv. 251), acting in opposition to what is 'natural'. Lear, thus, naturally thinks that he has been wronged, calls upon the forces of 'Nature—'dear goddess'—to punish Goneril by suspend[ing] thy purpose', by convey[ing] sterility', by 'creat[ing] her child of spleen'. Albany, at once, sharply reacts to this, though with a sense of amazement : 'Now, Gods, that we adore, whereof come this' (I. iv. 288). Albany is horrified at Lear's association of 'Nature' and 'order'. Nevertheless, 'the gods' may also act contrary to expectation. Lear's curse-cum-prayer is answered by 'the heavens' in the negative way through his own dramatic announcement : 'what! fifty of my followers at a clap; Within a fortnight!' (I. iv. 292-93). 'The gods' do not inflict any penalty upon Goneril; instead, the train of Lear's Knights is reduced to half. At this point, Albany again tries to intervene hinting at some inscrutable forces that govern man's condition and his environment : 'Striving to better, oft we mar what's well' (I. iv. 345) There

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is remote suggestion here of the righteousness of a 'supreme law' that ultimately would execute justice.

Lear has still a lot to learn. He, becoming aware of what Goneril stands for, now looks towards Regan hopefully. He sends his messenger (Kent) to inform her of 'the monstrous ingratitude' of Goneril, the continuous pressure of which leads him to a state of mental derangement. He struggles desperately to remain in his senses :

> O ! let me not be mad, not mad; sweet heaven;
> Keep me in temper; I would not be mad !
>
> (I v. 43-44)

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In any case, 'the heavens' turn down this prayer too, and this image of 'the gods' being indifferent is further clarified in the next three scenes of Act II where we see evil flourishing parasitically at the expense of good. Edmund successfully carries out his evil scheme, while Edgar, a symbol of innocence, has to 'take the most basest and most poorest shape. . .' (II. iii. 7). It is here that Kent, an incarnation of honesty and goodness, and not Oswald whom even 'the nature disclaims. . .' (II. ii. 52), is 'stock'd'. Again, the honesty and goodness of Kent in themselves are an affirmation of some moral order of which we are reminded when we are informed of Cordelia's help to Lear who would 'give/Losses their remedies' (II. ii. 165-66), and gradually a 'hope' regarding the emergence of that moral order is developed as we listen to what Kent says :

> Fortune, good night; smile once more; turn thy wheel !
>
> (II. ii. 169)

But what transpires next is the subversion of the moral and natural scheme of things. Lear is not only denied 'raiment, bed and food' but parent-child relationship is also reversed. The growing consciousness of such a perverted order of things forces Lear to curse Goneril in terms of 'Heaven's' vengeance (II. iv. 159-61). And a few lines later, at the sight of Goneril, he again passionately calls upon 'the gods;'

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however this time with reference to justice and a certain ethical and moral code :

> O Heavens
> If you do love old men, if your sweet sway
> Allow obedience, if you yourselves are old,
> Make it your cause; send down and take my part !
> (II. iv. 188-90)

And Lear receives the answer to his prayer when Goneril and Regan 'hit together' against their old and doting father.

Despite the gradual emergence of the pattern of divine indifference, the idea of Lear involved in the process of learning continues to be at the heart of the play. He is not only schooled in terms of 'needs' but also 'true need' and this makes him capable of differentiating animal from man and man from animal. This capability becomes a medium for the enlargement of Lear's consciousness and he begins to talk of 'patience'—the 'true need', a value system and prays :

> But, for true need,—
> You Heavens give me that patience, patience I need !—
> (II. iv. 268-69)

The very next moment, these 'divinities' are accounted for stirring 'these daughters' hearts' (II. iv. 272), and this anticipates Lear's later speech 'Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire. . .' (III. ii. 15-24). 'The supernatural forces' are directly accused of being malicious and actively engaged in doing mischief against man. Moreover, the later part of the speech (II. iv. 276-80), reflecting an intense desire in Lear for vengeance, evidences that patience has not been acquired by him. This along with 'O ! let me not be mad. . . sweet heaven' (I. v. 43-44), is an essential ingredient of the pattern of divine indifference as we see Lear turning into total madness, and this symbolizes the loss of whatever patience he had. However, 'the heavens' break their silence this time; 'storm' is heard at a distance and this is followed by Lear's exclamation 'O Fool ! I shall go mad' (II. iv. 284).

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'Storm' and 'madness' are not only natural calamities since Kent associates a degree of unnaturalness and mysteriousness with the 'storm' (III. ii. 45-48). They are symbols of moral commotion and turmoil. In fact, both 'madness' and 'storm' have a bearing both on the 'just gods' and 'divine indifference'. On one leavel, the 'storm' is suggestive of the providential wrath expressed over the present scheme of things which involves moral and spiritual disharmony. It is an expression of the anger of 'the gods' that is intended to punish the sinners. Lear, being no exception, is also penalized by the 'storm', and is brought to a new awareness of the order of things in the next Act where his imagination is stirred to highest intensity. The 'storm' can also be interpreted as 'tempest in my mind' (III. iv. 12), a reflection of microcosmic storm, in which all the elemental forces of nature have been let loose. This seems to highlight the mythical notion that reorganization and regeneration are necessarily preceded by disintegration and disorder. At this point, the 'storm' collaborates with 'madness' as madness is not only a physiological condition but also a physiological disorder—a reflection of Lear's intellectual inability to face the problem of evil.[3] It is thus through the insturumentality of 'madness' and 'storm' that a reorganization and reordering of the dislocated elements is brought about. 'The gods' are just; if they have punished Lear for his sins, they have also provided a medium— 'madness' and 'storm'—througn which Lear moves towards a state of regeneration. But if Lear's sufferings are the penalty imposed by the 'just gods' for his follies then what does the escape of real culprits and their being sheilded against the 'storm' suggest? Why have they not moved towards the state of regeneration like Lear? Does all this not bring into focus the feebleness and precariousness of divine justice? Are 'the deities' not partial in their dealings with human beings?

Act III opens with the description of Lear as 'Contending with the fretful elements. . .' (III. i. 4) bearing the horrible 'storm with thunder and lightning' carrying 'All the stor'd

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vengeances of Heaven' (II. iv. 159). This scene can be contrasted with the previous one where the real transgressors are not only at large but also prosper. Such a scheme envisages the absence of cosmic as well as divine order. In spite of such a state of things, Lear universe is not a 'waste land'. There is the Fool, who not only 'labours to out-jest/His heart-strook injuries' (III. i. 16), but who himself also suffers during this process. The Fool's comments bring into focus the duality inherent in the scheme of things. He reminds us of the precariousness of the moral order (I. iv. 97-99; 109-10; 178-81; II. iv. 69-72) by referring to the condition of adversity associated with 'goodness', yet at the same time he hints at the moral pattern as the governing principle of life (II. iv. 75-82). In the next scene of Act III, Lear is shown to be invoking the elemental forces of nature not only to destroy 'man' and the 'thick rotundity o' th" world" but also 'Nature's moulds' (III. ii. 7-8) and 'germens'—the main-spring of life. The creative energies have become corrupt, for the 'relationships' have lost their meaning; in fact, all the natural processes are reduced to mere indulgence in lust. Lear keeps on reflecting on this evil side of 'Nature' and 'the supernatural agencies' by identifying the 'ministers' as 'servile' and in league with 'two pernicious daughters' (III ii 18-24). Notwithstanding what he has said earlier, Lear, feeling helpless against the overwhelmingness of evil as a sequel of 'foul' union of 'servile ministers' with 'two pernicious daughters', resolves to be a 'pattern of all patience' (III. ii. 37). The mentioning of a value that is central to a fatih in divine justice amidst chaos and disarray hints at some inhererent moral order that despite the enormity of evil would finally assert itself by expelling the evil that is alien to it.

'Storm', as is already referred to earlier, is not only suggestive of moral convulsion but is an instrument of divine justice which operates against the wrongdoers. Lear's speech 'Let the great gods...' (III. ii. 49-59), which lies at the heart of the play, further concretizes this association of 'storm', the

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'dreadful pudder' (III. ii. 50) with 'the gods' but concurrently also projects an ambivalent view of 'the great gods'. Lear, moving from vengeance to a better sense of justice, assumes that 'this dreadful pudder' is an instrument of providential punishment, and 'the gods' being just would certainly punish the 'wicked'. However, the very phrase 'Unwhipp'd of justice' (III. ii. 53) suggests that 'the great gods' have yet to execute their punishment, despite what evil 'Has practis'd on man's life' (III. ii. 57), hinting at the inoperation of their justice. Lear concludes his speech with :

> I am a man
> More sinn'd against than sinning.
> (III. ii. 59)

Lear's confession, that he has sinned, justifies, in some way, the subsequent punishment he receives in the form of his sufferings. But what about the extent of his sufferings? Man cannot control its consequences once the tragic process is triggered off, but 'the gods' can, But do they do so? Moreover, why is it so that 'moral awakening' offers a promise to evil to operate? Gloucester in the next scene (scene iii) resolves to help Lear. This can also be one exemplification of the assertion of a value-system—an ethical and moral code. Yet what follows clearly negates it; the moral awakening in Gloucester gives an opportunity to Edmund to 'speedily' implement his evil designs.

In this play polarities are held together in a state of tension and yet make it an integrated whole. If we are reminded of the hostile forces threatening the good, at the same time we witness Lear's progression in terms of an awareness of self and environment. The physical, mental and spiritual sufferings and the divine punishment in this context are blessings in disguise for Lear as these not only bring him to a new 'insight' but also enlarge his capacity to feel, and he starts showing signs of compassion for man—a movement from concern for the self to a concern for humanity at large. He can now feel

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sympathy and commiseration (III. ii. 68-70). He has been tutored in the implications of 'true need' and is now aware what poverty is. He now prays and that too with a new consciousness (III. iv. 27). Awakened by 'the tyrrany of the open night' (III. iv. 2), he now identifies himself with the 'houseless heads', the 'poor naked wretches' (III. iv. 30; 28) and makes a confession that he has not fulfilled his duties as a responsible king and is answerable for the subsequent disordered state of things (III. iv. 32-33). This awareness creates in him a desire to rely upon divine justice and justify it in the face of the extremes of poverty :

> Take physic, Pomp;
> Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
> That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
> And show the Heavens more just.
>
> (III. iv. 33-36)

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Does not the last sentence of the speech cast a doubt about the righteousness of 'the gods'? Lear believes that his sufferings are caused not by divine injustice or indifference but on account of the chain of evil consequences initiated by his own actions (III. iv. 73-74). The Fool's words, however, at once cut into this assumption of Lear's : 'This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen, (III. iv. 77). 'cold night' is symbolic of the existential situation that is inimical to man and is bent upon subverting the moral and ethical order. 'Night' stands for the hostile forces operating in the *Lear* universe, and the word 'cold' is suggestive of these forces as inhuman and cruel. The extensive use of animal, sex and fiend imagery by Edgar and that too in his disguise as a 'mad beggar', 'whipp'd from tithing to tithing', 'stock-punished', and 'imprisoned' (III. iv. 131-32) demonstrates the destructive potential of these evil forces and their enormous capacity for continuous expansion that ultimately reduces man to a state of unaccommodatedness. But it is also through Lear's encounter with 'mad' and 'naked' Edgar and his exposure to

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the hostile forces that his imagination comes to achieve the quality of penetration into the state of moral chaos which he lacked earlier. He can now recognize the falsity of the accepted values of life and the hollowness of man's claim to centrality in the cosmos :

> Is man no more than this ? Consider him well. Thou ow'st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha ! here's three on's are sophisticated : thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. . .' [Tearing off his clothes] (*III*. iv. 100-106).

Rowe's stage direction at this point may be taken as symbolic of Lear's movement away from the corrupt, false and putrid human civilization towards 'nature' and may be construed as anticipating the 'clothing' of Lear in Act IV. Sc. vii. (21-22) when he is reconciled with Cordelia.

The placement of the scenes within the tragedy is not without significance. It is through the scene-patterning, (for example, 'the alternation of events on the Heath and within Gloucester's castle in the third act of the play'), that we are directed towards 'the heart of the matter'.[4] If one scene projects an emerging moral pattern, the other cuts through it. This trend is reflected even through the speeches and situations within the same scene. The 'mock-trial scene', generally, evokes the impression of the feebleness and inoperativeness of human as well as divine justice. Kent prays for Gloucester who has come to the rescue of Lear : 'The Gods reward your kindness !' (III. vi. 5). There is ambiguity in the meaning of the prayer that cuts both ways. 'The gods' seem to be cruelly indifferent as in the next scene Gloucester is deprived of his eyes—a prelude to his enormous physical, mental and spiritual sufferings. And the evil persons are not only 'unwhipp'd of justice' but are bent upon destroying the seed of goodness, thwarting order on all sides. There is 'corruption in the place :' (III. vi. 54); the 'justicer' is not only 'false' but 'hast. . . let her scape' (III. vi. 55). However, paradoxically, the loss of physical eyesight, the mental and

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spiritual sufferings have illumined the spiritual sense of Gloucester. He now invokes 'Kind gods' (III. vii. 35), speaks of the last day of judgment (III. vi. 38-39), and the tendency for withdrawl in the face of evil is replaced by moral courage as he resolves to 'stand the course' (III. vii. 53). His elevated spiritual sense can feel the existence of 'the gods' as he makes a prophetic declaration : '. . .but I shall see' the 'winged vengeance overtake', and the 'winged vegeance' does 'overtake such children' (III. vii. 63-64). Gloecester, suffering the intense physical pain because of the loss of one eye, desperately cries for help (III. vii. 67-68), and a servant, acting upon the true conception of loyalty, service and duty, calls upon Cornwall to 'Hold [his] hand. . .' (III. vii. 70ff). 'The wheel that comes full circle with the death of Edmund'[5] begins to turn reminding us of divine justice. Cornwall is 'slained' by a servant. 'The resistence of one simple "peasant" and "slave". . . breaks the vicious pattern of evil'[6] and is also 'a reminder of humanity'.[7] But can we really say so ? No doubt, the 'goodness' of the servant compensates the horror of blindness and thus neutralizes evil to some extent. Still, does not the 'killing of servant' in the struggle of good and evil make the divine role in human affairs look dubious ? Does it not involve a negation of the moral scheme of things ?

Thus through a series of situations and comments that hold together, yet are antithetical to each other, the action of the play is realized making it difficult for the spectator to commit himself to a particular point of view or pattern. Cornwall 'never come[s] to good' (III. vii. 97). Regan and Goneril do not 'live long' to be turned into 'monsters' (III. vii. 98-100), and 'the Heavens' help Gloucester by providing support through Edgar. And Edgar's philosophy 'the lamentable change is from the best;/the worst returns to laughter' (IV. i. 5-6) further deepens belief in the justness of 'the deities' but only to be reversed later. The 'spectacle' of blind Gloucester makes Edgar exclaim :

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> O Gods ! Who is't can say 'I am at the worst' ?
> I am worse than e'er I was.
>
> (IV. i. 25-26)

There is no end to getting 'worst', for it is a continuous process. And no other explanation of its being so is better than what Gloucester offers :

> As flies to wanton boys, are we to th'gods;
> They kill us tor their sport.
>
> (IV. i. 36-37)

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This image of 'the gods' being hostile to man is the focal point of the pattern of divine indifference. However, it is difficult to say that these lines 'express the final truth about the relation between man's fate and the forces that control it'.[8] For soon we see Gloucester again falling back upon 'the gods' revealing a tendency to rely upon 'the Heavens' as he talks in terms of 'retributive and distributive justice' :

> . . . Heavens, deal so still !
> Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,
> That slaves your ordinance, that will not see
> Because he does not feel, feel your power quickly;
> So distribution should undo excess,
> And each man have enough.
>
> (IV. i. 65-70)

This looks back to Lear's 'poor naked wretches' speech and hints at Gloucester's possible 'renewal'. His capacity to experience life has increased and that has created in him a desire to uphold 'the supernatural forces' as blameless and just. His 'wretched condition', he acknowledges, is the divine punishment inflicted upon him for being a slave of inordinate passions that have made him use the 'ordinance' of 'the gods' for the fulfilment of his baser self. In allowing himself to surrender to his bestial self, man forfeits his very capacity to 'feel' and 'experience' and thus is treated like Gloucester by the 'just gods'. Albany's speech 'O Goneril!/You are not worth the dust . . .' (IV. ii. 29-36) further adds to this theme

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of divine justice as it brings out the insubstantiality of the hostile forces. 'Evil' 'would come to naught' in view of its being opposed to the rule of 'nature'. The 'nature, which contemns it origin', 'perforce must wither/And come to deadly use', for 'evil' contains the seeds of its own destruction. However, what takes place next indicates evil as a reality, a concrete fact of experience. The disintegration and chaos is such that

> If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
> Send quickly down to tame these vilde offences,
> It will come,
> Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
> Like monsters of the deep.
>
> (IV. ii. 46-49)

Albany is not aware of the deaths of Cornwall and the servant and the blinding of Gloucester but the spectators know it and are compelled to think, 'Is not the ethical, moral and natural order already subverted'? What would be said about 'the gods' who have let the order disintegrate and are yet to 'send' the 'visible spirits'?

Though often intercepted by the image of 'the gods' being malevolent and by the negation of the moral order, from now onwards till the final catastrophe, it is the pattern of divine righteousness that dominates. 'The heavens' have finally sent Albany to save humanity and Cordelia is another 'visible' spirit. They are symbols of life amidst chaos and disintegration (IV. iii) and stand in contrast to Regan and Goneril who are bent upon destroying humanity. And thus, it is with reference to Cordelia, and Regan and Goneril that the question 'What is the cause of thunder ?' (III. iv. 125) has been put in a new form :

> It is the stars,
> The stars above us, govern our conditions;
> Else one self mate and make could not beget
> Such different issues.
>
> (IV. iii. 32-35)

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'The Stars'—the symbols of the working of 'the great gods'—are, as Kent says, answerable for both evil and good. Kent, who always displays a strong inherent religious force, never questions the manner of divine dispensation. But the above statement seen in the total perspective of the play seems to evoke the question : if 'the heavens' are to be accounted for the creation of evil that coexists with good, are we not justified in considering them malicious and malevolent ? What is the justification of evil in this universe, for human existence could have certainly done without these hostile foces ? And these questions make the spectator suspect the divine governing bodies. But if 'the deities' have created Gonerils and Regans they are also the source of Cordelias, that is, goodness. And, in fact, the entire next scene (IV. iv) has a bearing upon Cordelia's goodness that brings into focus a certain code of conduct and a moral order which is a pointer towards the justness of the 'divine order'.

The tension between patience and despair is retained unto the last moment. Gloucester, in Act IV, scene vi, despairs and wants to put an end to his life. Before jumping off the 'cliff', he addresses 'the gods' :

> O you mighty Gods !
> This world I do renounce, and in your sights
> Shake patiently my great affliction off;
> If I could bear it longer, and not fall
> To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
> My snuff and loathed part of nature should
> Burn itself out.
>
> (IV. vi. 34-40)

Gloucester fears that if he lived 'longer', he would 'quarrel' with 'the gods', 'great opposeless wills', since it is beyond his capacity to sustain the weight of 'this great affliction'—the enormous physical, mental and spiritual sufferings. These lines insinuate the total lack of concern for human beings on the part of 'the gods'. Nevertheless, the last line inverts this idea. By attempting to commit suicide, Gloucester, in fact,

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desires to 'burn' the 'snuff and loathed part of nature', that is equivalent to 'lust-dieted man,/That slaves (the gods') ordinance' (IV. i. 66-67)—a confession by him of his own sins. 'The gods' being righteous, do not allow the sinners to escape the punishment imposed on them and make the virtuous and the innocent to prosper. Gloucester prays for Edgar's prosperity (III. vii. 90; IV. vi. 40), and certainly Edgar flourishes as we see later. Even Gloucester himself is saved from despair by these 'superlunary powers'. His 'life's a miracle' (IV. vi. 55) as, in the words of Edgar, '. . . the clearest gods, who make them honours/Of men's impossibilities, have preserved. . .' him (IV. vi 73-74). 'The gods' are capable of performing miracles but they act through man himself. Edgar saves Gloucester from the sin of suicide and despair, and prepares him mentally to 'Bear free and patient thoughts' (Iv. vi. 80). Gloucester, like Lear, would now be a 'pattern of all patience'. But with the entry of 'mad' Lear, who is 'fantastically dressed with wild flowers' (IV. vi), Edgar himself forgets to 'Bear free and patient thoughts' and excalims, 'O thou side-piercing sight !' (IV. vi. 85). The 'spectacle' of 'This great world. . . wear [ing] out to naught' (IV. vi 133-34) collides with the emerging moral pattern and with 'the gods'' image of love and justice. And what Lear says in this scene intensifies this dissonance further. He speaks of the enormity of evil in terms of the wide-ranging grip of passion on man :

> What was thy cause ?
> Adultery ?
> Thou shall not die : die for adultery ! No :
> The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly
> Does lecher in my sight.
> Let copulation thrive. . . .
>
> (IV. vi. 109ff)

The *Lear* world is reduced to pure evil and all ethical norms seem to have been thwarted. This state of affairs is caused by the preponderance of animal passion which brings man down to the level of beasts. This is mediated through a generalization upon the entire mankind :

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> Down from the waist they are centaurs,
> Though women all above :
> But to the girdle do the Gods inherit,
> Beneath is all the fiend's. . . .
>
> (IV. vi. 122-25)

The dominance of 'Centaur' is the sequel of the divorce of 'the godly' from human personality. As a consequence, the 'degree is suffocate'; the evil forces prevail at every level of human existence. This has been brought out through the amalgam of the motif of sex, justice, corruption, authority, power and religion (IV. vi. 156-66); and such a scheme of things envisages the 'world' as a 'great stage of fools' and man as a 'natural fool of Fortune' (IV. vi. 181-89). Man is thus reduced to being a mere plaything in the hands of the malevolent forces, like 'flies to wanton boys'.

Nevertheless, man does not suffer for nothing, for his capacity to feel is increased. His awareness of the order of things makes him realize the difference between appearnace and reality, truth and flattery, humility and pride, love and hatred. It is through pain and suffering that Lear has come to know that he is not 'ague-proof' (IV. vi. 105). Moreover, 'the kind gods' are also not apathetical to human affairs since they have sent '...one daughter,/Who redeems nature from the general curse/Which twain have brought her to' (IV. vi. 202–204). Man has to wait for 'the gods'' justice with patience. Gloucester is thus made to exclaim :

> You ever-gentle Gods, take my breath from me :
> Let not my worser spirit tempt me again
> To die before you please !
>
> (IV. vi. 214-15)

The 'gentle gods', who also control the 'worser spirit' as the prayer implies, have given patience to the blind Gloucester. But cannot we call 'the gods' themselves as 'worser spirits' since Gloucester soon sheds the posture of patience and again falls into despair ? Yet can we do so in the face of what is

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exhibited in the next scene (Act IV, scene vii) which shows that the world is not altogether devoid of good and order over and above chaos ? The light of divine benevolence, often, penetrates the very heart of 'cold night'. Cordelia calls upon these 'superlunary powers'—the 'kind gods' (IV. vii. 14) to 'Cure this great breach' (IV. vii. 15) caused by evil which has 'wrenched' Lear's 'frame of nature' for evil is contrary to nature; and Lear is not only cured of the 'great breach' but also achieves humility and self-knowledge. He also ascends in 'the great chain of being', since it is through 'music' and 'sleep' that he regains that sanity which symbolizes the harmonization of 'self' with 'the gods'; and his reconciliation with Cordelia, a soul in bliss' (IV. vii. 45ff), is ultimately suggestive of his experiences as being purgatorial in nature. His movement from 'Darkness and devils' (I. iv. 249), 'Vengeance ! plague ! death ! confusion !' (II. iv. 92) through suffering to 'Fair daylight' (IV. vii. 52) evidences providential benevolence in the face of disorder and disintegration wrought by the hostile forces. All this evokes an impression that there is a certain moral order, a value-system that would ultimately prevail. No doubt, the battle is lost by Lear and Cordelia but that was expected by the Elizabethan spectator on account of Lear's political alignments. Even Gloucester's 'a man may rot even here' (V. ii. 8) is compensated by Edgar's philosophy of 'Ripeness is all' (V. ii. 11). But whether Gloucester dies in a state of 'Ripeness' or not is a different matter. Such statements as 'Gloucester is matured by suffering, and his death, when it comes, is sweet'[9] take much out of the tragedy since they circumscribe the tragic vision as projected by the play. Edgar reports the incident of Gloucester's death to Albany thus :

> . . . his flaw'd heart,
> Alack, too weak the conflict to support !
> 'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
> Burst similingly.
>
> (V, iii. 194 ff)

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Do not these lines move on two planes ? Gloucester dies in a state of ecstasy; also Gloucester's capacity to feel, endure and experience life could not sustain what is needed for 'Ripeness'. Anyhow Lear and Cordelia are captured; Cordelia tries to pacify Lear in terms of the righteousness of 'the gods'. Victory or defeat is immaterial; the very struggle against evil is in itself a triumph. The process of struggle between good and evil is an ever-continuous one and 'the divinities' keep on sending the 'visible spirits' to wage war against the hostile forces. Cordelia herself says to Lear :

> We are not the first
> Who, with best meaning, have incurr'd the worst
> (V. iii. 4)

Inspite of their sufferings they have arrived at a stage where evil has become almost non-existent for them. They have at long last achieved a saintliness—a vision ef love—the underlying principle of the universe (V. iii. 8-18). Their ascent to the level of 'the Gods' spies' has enabled them to renounce the world of mundane reality. They can now see into the future as 'the gods' have conferred on them a new 'insight'. Lear excalims to Cordelia :

> Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
> The Gods themselves throw incense. . . .
> He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,
> And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes;
> The good years shall devour them, flesh and fell,
> Ere they shall make us weep : we'll see'em starv'd first.
> (V. iii. 20-25)

This prophetic tone recurs towards the end again. In an encounter that symbolizes the struggle of good and evil, Edgar knocks Edmund down after accusing him of being 'False to [his] god's (V. iii. 133). In fact, none of the worngdoers and sinners is spared, for

> The Gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
> Make instruments to plague us;

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> The dark and vicious place where thee he got
> Cost him his eyes.
> (V. iii. 169-71)

This Edgar pronounces with reference to Gloucester and Edmund, and the latter supports it :

> Th' hast spoken right, 'tis ttue.
> The wheel is come full circle . . .
> (V. iii. 172-73)

A few lines later, he says on hearing the news of the deaths of Regan and Goneril :

> I was contracted to them both : all three.
> Now marry in an instant.
> (V. iii. 226-27)

This again reminds us of the 'winged vengeance' (III, vii. 64) and of 'you justicers that our nether crimes/So speedily can venge!' (IV. ii. 79-80). Albany's confirmation of it supplies additional force to the forthcoming pattern of providential justness :

> This judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble,
> Touches us not with pity.
> (V. iii. 230)

The expectations of the spectators are aroused with the total elimination of evil; all is set for a happy ending affirming the righteousness of 'the supernatural powers' in the face of hostile and antagonistic forces. Edmund, who was 'false to... gods', desires to do 'some good' 'Despite [his] own nature' (V. iii. 242-43), revealing a glimpse of goodness. He informs Albany of the design upon the lives of Lear and Cordelia, and Albany immediately exclaims : 'The Gods defend her!' (V. iii. 254). The pattern of divine righteousness however collides with the final catastrophe with the entry of Lear on the stage with 'Cordelia dead in his arms' (V. iii). Lear now knows what Cordelia stands for, namely, that she is an embodiment of a value-system, a 'visible' spirit of 'the Heavens'; and the extent of Lear's sense of loss is reflected in

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his realization that 'She's gone for ever' (V. iii. 258) and nothing can undo what has taken place : 'Thou'lt come no more,/Neveer, never, never, never, never!' (V. iii. 306-7). The characters, Kent, Edgar and Albany, who have always betrayed a strong religious force operating within themselves and a faith in the justness of 'the gods', shocked as they are, now seem to doubt their justice (V. iii. 263; 264; 265). At this point neither can we conclude like Bradley that 'the gods', it seems, do not show their approval by 'defending' their own from adversity or death '[10] nor can the play be seen, as Irving Ribner sees it, as an affirmation of divine justice;[11] it is equally difficult to agree with what Barish and Waingrow say : 'With the ascent of Kingship of true servant .. the kingdom enters on its new life'.[12] The two patterns do not merge into a single one; they clash with each other and create a tension that holds these patterns in a state of delicate equilibrium that finally leads to Lear's last question :

> Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
> And thou no breath at all ? Thou' lt come no more,
> Never, never, never, never, never!
> (V. iii 305-307)

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This answer-evading question, for neither 'the gods' nor men have any answer to this question, sends back reverberations throughout the entire length of the play. On account of this irresolvableness, the play cannot be reduced to the level of direct statement. Heilman, for example, says, '. the saving perspective, which brings evil into focus, is possible to man . . . is the play's ultimate assertion'.[13] Siegal, likewise, asserts that '. . . although divine justice moves in its own mysterious fashion and with agonizing slowness, at the end it reveals itself and prevails'.[14] He further points out that 'the wicked, deluded by their seeming security, grow in wickedness and eventually destroy themselves. The good are tested by affliction or else, in undergoing a purgatory of suffering, have their sins redeemed'.[15] Our conception of tragedy seems to

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evaporate when it is subjected to such simple moralizings. Moreover, seen in the light of Lear's last question (V. iii. 305 ff), and his subsequent death, most of such considerations dissolve into nothing. This is not to say, with D. J. James, that 'its final note is anticipated death and not renewed and continuing life',[16] or in the words of B.K. Stuart that the play 'does not end with an atfirmation'.[17] In fact the play does not offer any definite answer to the mystery of life. The end is but a reconciliation of darkness and light, life and death, and we have a faint and fleeting glimpse of something being affirmed that we cannot clearly formulate and that finally leads us to a perception of the unresolved tensions at the heart of the play.

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Iffat Ara

EDMUND THE BASTARD IN *KING LEAR*

Nature is a truth that is not explained in human terms but acknowledged as the ultimate value in life. Hence human experience can be made valid by accepting this truth and abiding by it. In *King Lear*[1] the dramatic conflict arises because the characters unconsciously show 'an awareness of reality' though consciously they deny it. It is their 'obstinate demands on one another' that make them blind. For instance, Lear and Cordelia, Gloucester and Edmund do not realize the significance of the 'bond' that unites them to one another. They consider it merely as a restraint on natural feeling and do not 'love freely' as others do. Nature is conceived by them in the light of their own view-point and they establish relations with her accordingly. Edmund therefore 'meets his world' and reacts to it in his own way. He judges his conduct in the light of reason and is guided by self-regard. But later he learns to probe deeper and is assisted by the reason that has been neutralized by 'compassion'. Hence all kinds of experiences are analysed and reality comes to be fully known only towards the very end. What is significant about the characters according to Goldberg, is 'the difference between their earlier and later conceptions of themselves'.[2] Lear eventually recognizes Cordelia as a true and loving daughter. Gloucester discovers truth in Edgar's love and Edmund comes to know the worth of goodness in his brother and old father. Relationship between the various members is established, and the ability to know truth is achieved when all have become same, experienced and clear-sighted. Truth in an inchoate form

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was there all along but characters learn only later to perceive or rather accept it.

Consequently the orthodox view-point seems to be operative in man's phase of blindness. It is replaced by modern notions which imply self-consciousness and a desire to clarify what had been vague and indistinguishable earlier. But Shakespeare goes ahead of his times and discovers something which is more adequate and worthwhile. He makes possible the recovery of 'sight' by bringing about reconciliation of the old and the new values of life. Shakespeare chooses the best he finds in both and offers a new synthesis.

Shakespeare had known an aesthetic or a moral attitude towards nature but his age could see beyond that. The engineers explored the unkown regions of the earth and discovered brass, glass and salt that brought material profit. The physician dissected the human body in order to find out the causes of various diseases. The capitalist taught methods for the amassing of wealth. They all tried to 'extend the domain of nature' and this extension could be used for manifold purposes.

Despite scientific inquiry and industrial development the condition of England remained uncertain. Society was 'split' because the King did not act in the normal way. Lear represents the age-old values and Edmund advocates new modes of achieving success. Like Shakespeare who had known the conflict between 'the old and the new business methods' and acted as a 'transit' between the two. Edmund makes his impact felt. Also, like the Bastard in *King John*, Edmund is opportunistic and self-raliant and seeks no external support. He is the new man and an imposing figure. But in spite of his amazing vitality Shakespeare does not allow Edmund absolute freedom because he thinks that man has no right to break the bonds of nature and remain absorbed in his 'self-conscious ego'. And yet Shakespeare also expresses doubt about the 'rational optimism' implicit in traditional

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thought. This is evident from the fact that both Edmund and poor Tom are ill-treated by society. Edmund therefore ridicules the philosophy according to which fortune, instead of man, is blamed for being the cause of all mischances and catastrophes in life. Reflecting the pragmatic ethics of Hobbes and moved by a 'perpetual and restless desire after power',[8] Edmund rejects 'absolute obedience', the 'ideal order' and the 'compact of Reason and Nature' because he despises and rejects society's mode of arrangements. His is a permanently nagative attitude towards life and he refuses to recognize any limits which may be imposed upon his way of life. Hence two societies and two Natures emerge : the one straying into error and the other carving the future though not yet on the verge of attaining maturity. Shakespeare, as mentioned above, has an alternative available in the form of a new emerging order in which there is a better assessment of Nature and Reason which are the determinants of human life.

Kingship ceases to retain its sanctity and therefore the King has to compete with the Bastard and prove himself virtuous. Lear's mind, thrown into perturbation by passion, sows seeds of division in himself, his family and the whole state whose unity depended upon him. A storm blows that divides the elements and this corresponds to the conflict in Lear's mind. He violates the law of God and the harmonious order is dislocated by his imperfections. In *King Lear* the pattern is disturbed because nature collides with the vagaries of both the parents and the children. Cordelia, to some extent, tries to follow 'objective nature' and 'subjective impulse' while the others remain wholly self-absorbed.

Lear and Gloucester alike, moved by passion, become its victims. Gloucester's sin leads to the vile birth of Edmund and therefore he gets the recompense in the form of Edmund's rebellion. Gloucester fails to understand both his children and holds the flaw in human nature responsible for man's corruption : 'Our flesh and blood, my lord, is grown so vile,

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That it doth hate what gets it' (III. iv. 149-50). He regrets the unnatural behaviour of Edgar 'now outlaw'd from my blood' and Edmund in his hatred confirms his disobedience. Later, Gloucester learns the significance of the 'natural concept of duty'. The question that puzzles Lear and Gloucester relates to the evil ingrained in human nature :

> Then let them anatomize Regan, see what breeds about her heart ? Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts ? (III, vi, 77-79).

Gloucester's physical suffering at the hands of Regan, Cornwall and Edmund (caused by his natural sympathy for Lear whom he shelters) exhibits outraged human nature. In the sixteenth century authority and appetite were considered the two main constituents of human life. The former was needed in order to control appetite and prevent it from growing excessive. In Edmund and the two sisters authority and appetite coexist and operate simultaneously. Though Gloucester loses his eye-sight and is tortured in all sorts of ways yet all this eventuates into the birth of his spiritual understanding. He realizes that his sad plight is caused by his own ignorance :

> 'O my follies ! Then Edgar was abus'd.
> Kind Gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!'

In *King John* Shakespeare initiates the idea that man is neither pure evil nor pure good but an admixture ot the two. Hence man's purpose and his conscience are always at odds with each other because the exclusive concern for the attainment of purpose may often lead him astray while conscience pulls evey now and then. Man is sometimes misguided by his 'perverted will' and hence needs to be made conscious of the worth of obedience in conformity to one's free nature. In *Othello* nature errs and leads to unnatural consequences. If nature is made to deflect from its right path the consequences are likely to be disastrous. In Edmund and the two sisters both passion and reason are at strife with each other and

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ultimately passion reigns supreme. As animality is inherent in man one need not be amazed by the various forms in which it manifests itself. Shakespeare and Hobbes often refer to the evil which cleaves to human nature. In the art of the Reanissance the ape modelled in clay or portrayed in paintings brings out the 'sub-human' state—something which excludes reason and highlights passion which 'enslaves' man : hence the cogency of this reflection in *King Lear* : 'Allow not nature more than nature needs,/Man's life is cheap as beasts's' (II. iv. 268-69). As the conflict between good and evil is implicit in human nature man ought to try to overcome it. Edgar and Cordelia do not allow their baser instincts to subdue them and the latter succeeds in controlling her nature and remains normal : 'a queen/over her passion' (IV. iii. 14–15). Both of them represent grace or art and transcend Edmund and the sisters. Edmund, on the contrary, is visualized as a 'ruined piece of nature'. He invokes the goddess of nature but nature is his case remains uncivilized. Like Blakean figures there is a coexistence of nature, reason and evil in Edmund. He uses reason to defend the wild energies of his nature. Blake equates nature to devil's creation and reason is used to discover the world of gross materiality. Edmund is like Caliban who is a slave to passion and the latter implies some kind of primitivism. Both resemble Blake's biblical figure Nebuchadnezzar who appears in Daniel and who in turn resembles the rough beast in Yeats' *Second Coming* who is a representative of the last phase of insanity resulting from extreme materiality. All of them are bestial and sub-human.

Bacon in his 'Of Deformity' is of the view that those who are deformed seek vengeance on nature. Since they suffer from a sense of deprivation at the hands of Nature they refuse to follow its dictates and are therefore 'void of natural affection'. The machinations of Edmund and the two sisters initiate the process of corruption in nature. Being a Bastard, Edmund does not consider himself part of God's benevolent

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and harmonious order. He also refuses to acknowledge the sanctity of all those bonds that connect man with God, for love of man leads to love of God.

Edmund and Richard III develop and nurse a grievance against both society and religion because their unnatural birth makes them the butt of ridicule. If Edgar and Cordelia are the near-perfect specimens of human nature, Edmund and Richard III stand for all that is repulsive and rotten in it. Edmund's portrayal in the play reflects upon the emergence of the new man and the degradation of human nature. He masquerades his identity, exerts his will power and thus almost succeeds in attaining his objectives. According to him one may aim at achieving only what is materially beneficial and is practicable rather than continue one's adherence to the sterile ethical values. He therefore feels an abhorrence for virtues like mercy, pity, love and humaneness which are generally practised by the common man. The new man who is represented by Edmund possesses superior intelligence, exerts his influence on others and skilfully gets things done. In him truth and deception are hardly distinguishable. But the moment he is judged in the light of high moral standards his vanity and pretensions are exposed. He is constrained to accept the relentless logic of circumstances and the validity of moral ideals only in a state of desperation and towards the very end.

Before redeeming the Bastard Shakespeare reveals the cause of his 'unnatural conduct'. It is his ungodliness and lack of obedience that make him a rebel. When he ignores his relationship to the world he falls into error. One may compare the Bastard to those plants that the gardner leaves to themselves and considers 'unprofitable'. Thus they grow in their own way. Hence the case of the fault of nurture and not of nature. Man's intrinsic and cultivated virtue and 'pure conscience' make him resemble the laurel tree that is not harmed by the blast of lightning and continues to flourish.

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But the Bastard who grows into a wicked person is afflicted by his vices, for man is troubled by the evil to which he succumbs and which he assimilates into himself. Man is capable of allowing 'the light of natural reason' shine upon him and this may bring him insight into truth. When he wilfully ignores the good it looks as if he is preying on himself.

Shakespeare makes the Bastard look attractive and legitimate. His handsome appearance makes Edmund represent the bright aspect of London life. The playwright wishes him to cultivate in himself the best features of a hero because the safety of England depends upon the exercise of intelligence and mature commonsense of the New Man who is chosen for the purpose. The Bastard in *King John* believes : 'Be stirring as the time, be fire with fire,/Threaten the threat'ner'. (*King John* V, i. 48-49). The conflict between the old and the new values reveals the spiritual and the social aspects of human nature which Shakespeare aims at getting reconciled in Edmund. He urges man to practise 'fortitude', 'awareness of what the times require' and also 'patriotism'. Shakespeare exploits the Bastard as a medium for initiating new ideals by making him perceive more than others do and present things in a new way. But still he is far from being perfect and often tends to be superficial. Consequently the traditional way of life has to be retained and the modern notions clarified and assessed for purpose of accommodation with older ones.

The play opens with Kent's inquiry about Edmund's relationship to Gloucester. The latter replies with an air of brazen self-complacency that though he once felt ashamed to acknowledge Edmund's illegal birth yet now he has become immured to it : 'I have so often blush'd to acknowledge him, that now I am braz'd to't' (I, i, 10-11) The commentary on his life does nothing but provoke our sense of indignation. Soon we hear Edmund reflecting upon his father's thoughts : 'our father's love is to the Bastard Edmund/As to th' legitimate' (I, ii, 17-18). The modern view-point insists on the

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equality of the legitimate and the illegitimate children. But the traditional thinkers considered this parity as a negation of the laws operative and acceptable in society. Gloucester, under Edmund's influence, causes the bond of nature to be broken and thus behaves like King Lear. When Gloucester is deceived by Edmund the latter plans to have Edgar removed out of his way. It further leads to Gloucester's total discomfiture at the hands of Edmund. Hence one 'illogic' leads to another because the order of nature is disturbed by giving priority to the illegitimate son.

An objective judgment of Edmund's character may reveal his strength as against his father's weakness. And yet in the words of Goldberg : 'they are related in point of need and vulnerability'.[4] The circumstances in which Edmund is placed are similar to those in which Richard III has been brought up : 'I am myself alone'. These words spoken by Richard III to emphasize his 'aloneness' may, by stretching their significance, be applied to Edmund to underline his resourcefulness and initiative. For him technique is of special significance in handling the affairs of life. He wishes to become powerful in order to be more fit for service because England is in need of a suitable caretaker like him.

Edmund is guided by a kind of 'realistic independence' and hence his pact with the goddess. Nature is the product of his mythical imagination. Edmund's goddess is disapproved by both Bacon and Hooker. Following in the footsteps of the rationalists, Edmund believes in the primacy of human instincts and is wolly self-centred. He emerges as a 'disorder figure' and he opposes the orthodox creed. Throughout the the play Shakespeare lays emphasis on the relationship between the parents and the children and the King and his subjects Those who believe in the basic allegiances move along the right track. Edmund's loyalty remains suspect and his objective and ambitions are not above board. Edmund chooses evil and this unfortunate choice ultimately brings

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him vexation and ruin.

Both Lear and Edmund meditate upon 'distributive justice'. Lear thinks in terms of love bestowed upon him by his children and intends rewarding them proportionately to their specific merit. Edmund's mind is disturbed by the conflict between legitimacy and its opposite. He demands a just distribution of wealth : 'To each, according to his ability to get'. He will not let any one deprive him of his natural share in his father's estate merely because he is younger than Edgar. Moreover, he vehemently protests against the unfair treatment he receives at the hands of those who condemn him for his ignoble birth. He is conscious of his 'superior enlightenment'. Not unlike Richard III he does not challenge the powers above but merely seeks freedom from intellectual and moral fetters.

When Edmund first learns of the attitude of his father who repudiates him for being a bastard he is deeply shocked. Hamlet undergoes a similar experience of horror and disgust, for he becomes aware of his mother's sin and feels that the whole universe, including himself, is infected by her foul deeds. But whereas Hamlet is plunged into speculation over the possible consequences of his decision, Edmund is prompt and active all along. He resolves that he will see to it that the label of the Bastard affixed on to him is removed and torn off. He thinks that he possesses all those essential virtues that a nobly born can boast of, and yet he is roundly condemned by all and considered inferior to Edgar. Through the Bastard Shakespeare makes us undertake to probe the commonly accepted values of life.

Edmund's shocking statement about himself and those who ill-treat him appeals to the modern mind. He declares that as he outshines others in his handsome appearance, sharp intelligence and high spirits he should have his legitimate rights and his fair share in his father's affection. He mocks at the word 'legitimate'. In his birth the legitimate

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bond was broken, in practical life also he would like to negate it. He therefore owes allegiance to a goddess who stimulates his hidden powers and approves his talents. Shakespeare makes a special reference to Edmund's talents because he thinks that he is capable of turning into a 'perfect gentleman' provided he finds the proper outlet for their exercise. Moreover, each individual has a right to actualize his potentialities. And yet Edmund, not unlike Goneril and Regan, is one who is the spokesman for a society which is rotten to its very core. Though Edmund yearns for power and prestige yet he tends towards 'self-concealment'. He does not betray his real self and continues to be false to others. Shakespeare does not allow him to prevail, for he is dangerous.

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Edmund does not abide by custom, and being a bastard, he wishes to supplant Edgar and have everything to himself. His natural bastardizing will be instrumental in breaking the 'more natural relationship' between the father and the son. Like Goneril and Regan, Edmund is goaded by a competitive spirit evoked by fear of the rival's supremacy. His hatred and indignation inversely betrays his latent desire to be loved : 'our father's love is to the bastard Edmund/As to th' legitimate' (I, ii, 17-18) He is haunted by the fear that he may not be acknowledged as a respectable person like Edgar who enjoys self-assurance and a sense of security in all respects. He invokes his own goddess to inspire him :

> Thou Nature, art my goddes; to thy law
> My services are bound. Wherefore should I
> Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
> The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
> For that I am twelve or fourteen moonshines
> Lag of a brother ? Why bastard ? Wherefore base ?
> When my dimensions are as well compact,
> My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
> As honest madam's issue ? Why brand they us
> With base, with baseness ? bastardy ? base, base,. . .

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Now, gods, stand up for bastards !
(I, ii, 1-22)

Edmund does not believe in any values and therefore lives in a moral vacuum. The bastard's calculated plan is to sow seeds of hatred in Gloucester's mind so that he is alienated from Edgar and he himself is put in his affections. While Gloucester laments over certain unnatural occurances in Britain, including the banishment of Kent and Lear's unfair treatment of his child, Cordelia, Edmund, in hot haste, conceals a letter that he holds in his hand. Gloucester insists on reading its contents and Edmund, apparently unwilling allows him to do so. Gloucester peruses the letter with deep concern, for it reveals a conspiracy hatched against him. Moreover, Edgar in his letter, seems to demand of Edmund to endorse the plan to kill their old father in order to enable himself to own all his property. Edmund further adds that Edgar has often expressed the view that when fathers grow old they should make a just distribution of their wealth and withdraw themselves from the scene of action.

Edmund's 'gulling' of Gloucester is in a way linked to the dislocation caused by Lear's rash judgment in dividing his kingdom and thus proving himself guilty of nepotism in the matter of discharging his regal obligations. This also goes clean contrary to expediency which one should observe in view of the hazards to which old age is vulnerable. Similarly, filial ingratitude is a heinous crime and is equivalent to committing suicide in the spirit. When Gloucester is mistakenly made to believe in Edgar's perfidy and comes to view him in the light of Edmund's gross misrepresentations of him he betrays his own pathological state of mind. He cannot stand the strain of his break with Edgar whose apparent rebellion is linked to other disorders in the play. In his despair Gloucester thinks of the spherical changes which he believes have an impact upon human destiny. Natural philosophy puts its own consturction upon this matter but Glouces-

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ter chooses to stick to the traditional view-point. He is sensitive to the misery of human-kind, and will ultimately be moved by compassion.

Although Edmund's plan is still in its initial stages yet Gloucester surveys the unhappy lot of man and comments on the chaos he perceives in the surrounding universe :

> These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us : though the Wisdom of Nature can reason it thus and thus, yet Nature finds itself scourg'd by the sequent effects. . . . the bond crack'd 'twixt son and father . . . The King falls from the bias of nature.
>
> (I, ii, 107-16)

Gloucester, who often reflects upon the 'omens' relating to 'spherical predominance' is apprehensive as to what life holds in store for man. The eclipses of the sun and the moon are sources of pestilence that infects the whole domain of Nature.

Edmund rejects Gloucester's stale and untenable philosophy of holding spherical disturbances responsible for the sins of man. It leads one to think that evil is imposed on man by nature and he is in no way responsible for his own acts of wickedness and perjury. Edmund does not consider Nature a dead mechanism but it has no repercussions on human life. According to him, all occurences have proximate and determining cause and man is an impostor in evading his responsibility: 'An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star ;' (I, ii, 123-24). In his own case, if he were to blame the stars for his lust and rudeness, it is a proof of his sheer ignorance and duplicity. He must have been the same person as he is even if he were born under the 'maidenliest star'. Edmund reflects on man's self-sufficiency by mocking at the stars :

> This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own behaviour, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance . . . . I should have been that I am had the

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maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing.
(I, ii, 115-30)

Since Edmund is an outcast he thinks of humanity in terms of the vices that are the originating cause of his birth. He refuses to accept any relationship between the 'mind of man' and the 'phenomena of nature'. Science is an 'endless pursuit' and man's task is to use his wit or intelligence for competing with others and exploit fully what is available to him. It is the body which urges man to satisfy its needs and the mind manipulates ways and means for achieving those ends.

Edmund's speech, referred to earlier, reveals not only his ingenuity but also his contempt for 'human weaknesses'. He is bent upon upholding these views specially with the purpose of discrediting his father and causing him chagrin and embarrassment. The law that he considers 'natural' is one that serves his needs and helps him attain his objectives.

Shakespeare, perhaps, like Edmund, did not believe in 'judicial astrology' but makes us prefer Gloucester's superstition to Edmund's self-sufficiency because if one were to continue to climb up the ever-turning wheel of fortune one would often put one's life at stake. Such a person is helped by none because he refuses to acknowledge any human relationship.

Edmund is perturbed by Edgar's appearance on the scene and his malicious motives begin to take shape. He probes Edgar regarding his relationship to Gloucester. Edgar's confidence in their mutual understanding urges Edmund to warn his brother not to see their father till he was favourably disposed: 'I pray you have a continent forbearance till the speed of his rage goes slower'. (I, ii, 162-63). On Edgar's departure Edmund gloats over having a 'credulous father' and a 'brother noble', for the natural gullibity of both will help him prosper every way: 'Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit.' (I, ii, 190)

When Edmund comes to know about the iminent arrival of Cornwall and his Duchess at Gloucester's castle he fully

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exploits this opportunity for his own purposes. He is also aware of the strained relations between the two Dukes. He plans to make Cornwall suspect Edgar. On Edgar's entrance he warns him of Gloucester's plan to keep him under restraint and thus prevent him from escaping. When Gloucester is convinced of the falsity of Edgar he at once announces: 'and of my land,/Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means/To make thee capable'. (II, i, 83-85). Gloucester implies that, inspite of Edmund being a bastard, he has a greater measure of affection for him than for Edgar. The latter appeared to Gloucester to be most unnatural in his behaviour even though he was his legitimate son. 'Natural' is a *double entendre*, implying at the same time both legitimate and illegitimate and Edmund is looked upon as the rightful heir. Bastards are deprived of the right of inheritance merely on the basis of man-made laws. Gloucester, however, ignores the validity of such laws. Nature gives way to loyalty and Edgar will soon regain his chosen place.

In his state of spiritual blindness Gloucester could not distinguish between his two sons : the true one and the false one. Had Gloucester been really perceptive he would not have suffered and had Edmund possessed natural human feelings for his father, Gloucester's lack of judgment would not have ushered in a pathetic end. Like Lear, he seems to be impatient to pass judgment on Edgar and punish home his apparent guilt.

Gloucester reflects upon the 'unnatural dealings' between Cornwall and King Lear, King Lear is deprived of all his powers and is forced to wander about. When Glaucester lends support to the King the former is threatened with confiscation of all his property and rights:' I like not this unnatural dealing' (III, iii, 1-2). Edmund pretends to condemn this injustice done to Lear who had once been their patron. Gloucester's attitude underscores the fact that man is capable of doing some good despite all his inherent evil. Thus he

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comes to share the 'harmony of nature' which implies love of God and his creation. He instructs Edmund to inform the Duke of Cornwall not to wait upon his pleasure. He also does not care to meet the Duke and the Duchess. Again he makes up his mind to help King Lear against all odds : 'If I die for it, as no less is threatened me, the King, my old master, must be .reliev'd (III, iii, 18-20). Hence Gloucester, for the first time, exhibits some amount of moral courage and remains steadfast in his loyalties.

Edmund plans to expose and betray Gloucester to Cornwall in the hope of being rewarded for his deed. He is callously indifferent to his father's future sufferings because he does not believe in the sanctity of the child-parent relationship : 'The younger rises when the old doth fall' (III, iii, 27). To Edmund physical and material power is the greatest good : 'This seems a fair deserving' (III, iii, 25). Even Cornwall, iroically enough, holds a favaourable opinion about him : 'Natures of such deep trust we shall much need' (II, I, 115). When Cornwall learns about Gloucester's treason he goes wild with rage and resolves to wreak vengeance on him. Edmund pretends that his natural feelings as a son compel him to protect his father despite the fact that Gloucester has always regarded him as a 'bastard'. Edmund, being an outsider, has no contact with nature except his belief in the universal law of causality. He is possessed of uncommon tact and resourcefulness and, therefore, in the teeth of opposition from all quarters, he is able to manipulate things in a skilfully audacious way. He severs his connection with all those who are not serviceable to him. Cornwall confers upon him the title of the Earl of Gloucester and asks him to seek his father who is to be put into prison.

Edmund, who turns hostile and indifferent to his father and brother, seeks to satisfy his lust through Goneril. Lear's daughters also violate the natural law by deceiving their reverend father and proving disloyal to their husbands. If

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Cordelia's apparent coldness conceals the 'reality of love', the declared pretensions to love of Goneril and Regan cover 'the reality of cruelty'. Albany condemns them with all the virulence at his command.

> Tigers, not daughters, what have you perform'd ?
> A father, and a gracious aged man,
> Whose reverence even the head-lugg'd bear would lick,
> Most barbarous, most degenerate I have you madded
> (IV, ii, 40-43)

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They are worse than beasts who in any case would have pitied the aged King. Lear's query about the savageness of his daughters is answered to the effect that it is the fallenness of man which is reflected in this kind of savagery. Ingratitude, which seems to cleave to the roots of human nature. also derives from the same source. Albany, however, undergoes a strange and unanticipated inner transformation.

Goneril renounces her husband because of her firm though mistaken belief that he is a coward. To her he lacks moral courage to counter opposition. Her chief concern is to have sexual intercourse with Edmund and thus by the 'daring of their spirits' to prove their superiority over Albany : 'our wishes on the way/May prove effects'. Subsequently Regan indulges in 'amorous dealings' and makes Edmund infatuated of her :

> You know the goodness I intend upon you :
> Tell me, but truly, but then speak the truth,
> Do you not love my sister ? (V, i, 7-8)

She wishes to confirm if Edmund loves her exclusively. Since the two sisters are alike, the motives specific to each for the possession of Edmund come into collision. As Danby puts it, Edmund uses them to 'further his own designs'.[5]

After the war is over, Edmund gains the upper hand and therefore Lear and Cordelia are to be imprisioned by his orders and to be executed later. Being aligned with the two callous

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sisters he puts his own construction upon the notions of pity and compassion. He secretly appoints his captain to have the King and his daughter executed because he firmly believes that 'to be tender-minded does not become a sword' (V, iii, 33). Though Albany was ready to grant pardon to Lear and Cordelia once they were at his mercy yet Edmund prevented him from doing so. Albany, knowledgeable about the secret alliance between his cunning wife and Edmund, exposes both of them at the same time. Disgusted as he is with both Goneril and Edmund he reminds one of his earlier distinction between 'nature as barbarous' and 'nature as normative': his wife and Edmund are included in the former category. This is followed by Regan's sickness and the satisfation that Goneril draws from it. The sickness is caused by the effects of poison injected into her body by Goneril who had planned Regan's death by this device.

Edgar appears on the scene and faces his adversary in disguise. He proclaims Edmund's treasen against religion, his family and the state :

> And, from th' extremest upward of thy head
> To the descent and dust below thy foot,
> A most toad-spotted traitor. (V, iii, 136-38)

Edgar and Edmund are engaged in a 'judicial combat' because the former is a symbol of 'divine justice' and the latter represents the powers of darkness. His triumph vindicates the emergence of truth as Shakespeare insinuates in *The Rape of Lucrece* : 'To unmask falsehood and bring truth to light' (I, 940). Hence the natural order of God is restored to its original status and the 'highest consciousness' of Edmund dissolves into nothingness. Albany produces Goneril's letter written to Edmund which reveals the conspiracy which had been hatched against Albany.

Edmund ultimately confesses his guilt though earlier he had regarded such a confession a sort of weakness. He also

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accepts the irrevocableness of the 'existence and power of the wheel' that brings his ignoble career to a disastrous end : 'The wheel is come full circle'. (V, iii, 174). Thus fortune, known to be inconstant, proves otherwise. Like fortune itself, Edmund acts upon no principles, but his volition is very strong indeed. His 'absolute confusion' arises, however, from his breaking ties with the greater world and his ignoble exploitation of other men's weaknesses. His self-destruction initiates the process of rebirth and therefore he earns something after undergoing the great loss. It is the humble and self-effacing Edger who rises on Edmund's fall but the two forgive each other : 'Let's exchange charity' (V, iii, 166).

Through the alchemy of Edgar's love Gloucester is regenerated. It is precisely at this moment that Edmund realizes 'what he is', and that he needs love for his sustenance and even bare existence. And it is now that he is capable of seeing the natural bond of kinship in its reality and realizes its significance.

There is growth in human nature, for it is an amalgam of both virtuous and vicious traits. In some characters there is an overbalance of virtue, in others that of vice. Those who are capable of development grow into better human beings when they are exposed to the process of education. Towards the end of the play no transformation takes place in the attitude of Enmund but he has consciousness of his sin and feels a little repentant for having misunderstood his brother and father. He seems, therefore, to be visibly moved on hearing the story of his father's sufferings and death : Hence, inspite of his own nature, he wishes to perform a last act of goodness. He also confesses that he was engaged to both the sisters and all three confront the same Nemesis: 'I was contracted to them both : all three/Now marry in an instant' (V, iii, 228). Inspite of the price they paid they could not achieve the intended amount of success in life. They mistakenly conceived that 'man is the measure of all things'.

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As the bodies of Goneril and Regan are carried away Edmund feels the macabre satisfaction that he was after all the object of their love. This reflects his morbid self-preoccupation and also reveals the cause of his villainy :

> Yet Edmund was belov'd :
> The one the other poison'd for my sake,
> And after slew herself. (V, iii, 239-41)

Before his death Edmund asks Albany to send a special messenger for repeal of the order for the execution of Lear and Cordelia which he had himself passed. Thus Edmund's dreadful and stormy career is brought to a close. He is the man who had ruined happiness whereever he found it but then he could not taste the cup of his pleasure he had so earnestly sought. Miss Welsford rigntly points out that 'at the beginning of the play the good characters are disorganized and separate from one another and the evil ones are closely joined in a compact group; at the end of the play the evil characters are dispersed and the good characters have come together[6]. And indeed Edmund dies alone and helpless.

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G. E. Bentley

BLAKE AS A BOOK-ILLUSTRATOR

The Master of the Book-Arts Versus the Trade*

The Renaissance of the visual arts came late to England. Absorbed in their civil wars, cut off from the Continent by their religious insularity, standing aloof in giant ignorance from the culture of their neighbours, the English only tardily began to cultivate the arts which had long before changed the shapes and indeed the concepts of palaces and cathedrals from Venice and Vienna to Paris and Seville. The English genius seemed to be verbal and musical, with Spenser and

*This essay was first delivered orally on 5 February 1983 at a Symposium dedicated to Northrop Frye on The Visual Languages of William Blake in association with the great Blake exhibition at The Art Gallery of Ontario-see David Bindman, *William Blake His Art and Times* : [Catalogue of an exhibition at] The Yale Center for British Art [15 Sept.-14 Nov. 1982 and at] The Art Gallery of Ontario [3 Dec. 1982-6 Feb. 1983] (New Haven, London & Toronto, 1982). (The other papers were by Northrop Frye, 'Blake's Biblical Illustrations': Robert N. Essick, 'The Materials of Graphic Meaning, with Particular Reference to William Blake's Illuminated Books', David Bindman, 'Blake and Popular Art'; Morton Paley, 'The Apocalyptic Sublime'; Bo Lindberg, 'The Chariot of Genius: Blake's Binders and Pigments'; and W.J.T. Mitchell 'Visible Language : Blake's Wondrous Art of Writing.') The papers were submitted together to the University of Toronto Press but were withdrawn twenty-four months later when the Press had still not reached any decision about them.

I should like to dedicate this essay once more to Northrop Frye, as colleague, critic, and friend.

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Shakespeare and Purcell, and through the 16th, 17th, and early 18th Centuries the visual arts in England remained surprisingly mediaeval—anonymous, insular, unambitious of change, petty in scale and in accomplishment. When English monarchs needed great painters, they imported them from the Continent, as they did Holbein and Van Dyck, and they did not keep them long. There was no native Michaelangelo in England in the 16th Century, nor a Rubens in the 17th, courted by kings and popes, covering walls and ceilings with visions of imperial power or of celestial glory. The English contribution to painting of these centuries is humble in size and ambition, secular in theme, and often anonymous even in its best productions—for miniature portrait painting is an English invention.

This cultural anachronism in England was also visible in the arts of the book, whose craftsmen drowsed contentedly in their technical backwater. Black-letter type flourished in England long after it had been abandoned as Gothic on most of the Continent and, the first edition of the King James Translation of the Bible in 1611 was still in black-letter, though the second was not. English printers wers content to buy their types from the Continent and to use them till they were so battered and bent that their Dutch and French inventors would have blushed to acknowledge them. Even when type-designers of genius such as Baskerville did appear in England in the 18th Century, they were long ignored. There was no royal printing house in England, as there was in Holland and France and Spain. On the Continent, the king controlled the press; in England, the press sometimes controlled the king, and it did so in a rough-handed, plebian way. Few English monarchs tried to patronise the arts very extensively: the most important who did so lost his head in 1649, and, when his son fled to France with the royal miniatures in 1688, their successors turned, belatedly, to the arts of government. There were great English buildings and builders of the 17th

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and 18th Centuries, but few great book-collectors and even fewer noteworthy bookbinders. The best paper was imported from France and Holland and Italy until the 18th Century, and so were the best book-illustrators. When those characteristic triumphs of English literary genius, *Paradise Lost* and *Pilgrim's Progress*, were first published in 1667 and 1678, they had no illustrations; later, when designs for them were needed, the London publishers turned to Continental artists to supply them.

Mediaeval painters and sculptors had been like goldsmiths and jewellers, craftsmen in a trade of beauty, submerging their personalities and their names under that of the shop or the Master. The distinction between artist and artisan became wider in the Renaissance, with painters actually signing thier works, while makers of tapestries and stained-glass windows scarcely conceived of such presumption. As painters became the cronies of cardinals and the ambassadors of kings, their social status rose, until an artist became an apprentice gentleman. Art became a matter of genius, of inspiration, of taste, and the mechanic part, the execution, was comparatively slighted. On the Continent, Academies of Painting were founded to teach the principles of art;[1] young men began by drawing from still life, and, if they were sucucssful, they moved on to painting the figure from life, whereas in previous times apprentice boys had begun to learn their craft by washing the master's brushes and grinding his colours and preparing his canvas or plaster. The successful apprentice painter became master of all the facets of his craft, from making his colours to varnishing the finished work, while the Academician might buy his colours from the colourman and guess in ignorance at how the colours of his painting should be fixed. Such a distinction between the mechanic arts, mere skill of hand, and the creation of genius, the realization of inspiration, was essential to the new and exalted concept of the artist as creator, listening intently to the Word of God,

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imitating God in his own secondary but still divine creation.

Like so much else, this idea came late to Britain. Alexander Pope seemed to be speaking for an earlier age when he wrote in 1711 that

> True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
> As those move easiest who have learned to dance.

He might perhaps have said the same of painting, though already apprentice gentlemen like Pope himself were beginning to dabble in painting. It was not until 1768 that a Royal Academy of Art was founded in England, but when it appeared its success was immediate and remarkable. Its exhibitions drew all that was best and brightest in London society; artstocratic mothers aud affluent husbands clamoured to have their darlings painted by Gainsborough and Romney; gentlmen like Coleridge's friend Sir George Beaumont, aspiring to become artists, exhibited at the Royal Academy; and artists like Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Lawrence, aspiring to become gentlemen, became Presidents of the Royal Academy and were knighted. By the end of the 18th Century, every gently bred miss was urged by her governess and conduct book to become an artist as well as a musician, a dancer, and a linguist, and she was expected to decorate fans and fire-screens with the products of her genius. Artists painted in colours and on canvas prepared for them commercially by others, often without understanding how to do so themselves or what were the relevant properties of these preparations. Painters painted; drawing was left to technicians, mechanic craftsmen like engineers and engravers; as Blake complained about 1811, 'A Certain Portrait Painter said To me in a boasting way 'Since I have Practisd Painting I have lost all idea of Drawing' (p. 1033).

Book-illustration too underwent a process of subdivision, specialization, and amateurization. At least up to the early 19th Century, professional engravers served a traditional seven-year apprenticeship, as William Blake did; they

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began perhaps by grinding the master's graver, levelling the rough edges of the copper, and heating the acid for etching, and worked up through making squared, true-size drawings to be reproduced, cross-hatching large, shaded areas of the design, and laying in the etched outlines, inking the copper, and pulling proofs, until eventually they could be trusted to make whole engravings themselves, which the Master would then touch up and sign. Blake served just such an apprenticeship with the great antiquarian line-engraver James Basire, and he was always proud of the traditional methods Basire taught him. In his Public Address of about 1811, Blake attacked the fashionable methods of engraving established by Willim Woollett in his youth :

> Woolett I know did not know how to Grind his Graver. . . he has often proved his Ignorance before me at Basires by laughing at Basires Knife tools & ridiculing the Forms of Basires other Gravers till Basire was quite dashd & out of Conceit with what he himself knew but his Impundence had a Contrary Effect on me. [p. 1037]

A prosperous engraver's shop might take on an enormous range of works to be printed, including large frontispieecs to books, tiny vignette tailpieces, separate portraits or genre scenes to grace the cabinet or the portfolio, bill-heads, advertising flyers, ornamental wrappers or labels for books and magazines, tradesmen's cards, invitations, and calling-cards. Basire's shop probably did all of these and more, and William Blake is known to have done many of them after he had set up in business for himself.

Some great engravers of the past such as Durer and Hogarth had also been artists, but most engravers in Blake's time were content or were forced to restrict themselves to copying the works of other men. When the work copied was a great one, their business was to translate it onto copper as faithfully as possible; when it was trifling, they might tactfully touch it up here and there. In any case, like a good translator, they were most faithful when least obtrusive. But as

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painters came to depend more upon access to a broad public through engravings, they became restive at having to depend upon another hand for their public image. The best of them wished to re-unite the designer and the engraver in his own hand, though without all that tedium of drudging through an entire apprenticeship, and they seized eagerly upon short-cuts. Rembrandt and a few others made themselves masters of etching as an original medium of expression and, when lithography was invented about 1800, artists were delighted with the facility it gave them to draw directly on stone and achieve painterly effect without having to learn a whole new language of art. In England, almost all the noted artists of the time tried out the new form—and so did William Blake. For some, it opened up a whole new world, but for Blake it offered few resources of which he was not already master, and he seems to have tried it only once.

A Master Engraver also had many engraving techniques at his command, sometimes for use singly, often in combination. The first outline was usually laid on in etching, and for crude or hasty designs such as Gillray's political caricatures, this was often the last step as well. The most elaborate plates, such as Basire's after Benjamin West's 'Pylades and Orestes' (1771), were highly finished line-engravings, but sometimes other methods were used, such as mezzotint or stipple-engraving, and in Blake's time the simplest book-illustrations were usually engraved in relief on wood-blocks.

English book-illustration came of age in the middle of the 18th Century, with the works of William Hogarth and William Kent and Richard Bentley, and it reached its apogee of ambition and, I believe, of accomlishment about fifty years, later, in the 1790s. By this time there was a distinguished school of painters at the Royal Academy led by Sir Joshua Reynolds and Benjamin West, there were many distinguished engravers in England led by William Sharp and Francesco

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Bartolozzi, there were print-publishers of vaulting ambition such as John Boydell and Thomas Macklin, and there was an increasingly eager and affluent audience for their works. England's honour was engaged in illustrating her national literary treasures, and there was a vigorous export trade to France and Holland and Italy which had previously provided so many of England's greatest paintings and illustrations. The skill, sophistication, range and frequency of accomplishment, popularity, and Englishness of book-illustration increased enermously during this half-century. Among its proudest accomplishments were the *Antiquities of Athens* by Stuart & Revett (1762-1816), Macklin's great folio Bible (1791-1800), and especially the Boydell Shakespeare (1793-1805). Such works were produced by huge teams of highly specialized painters, engravers, authors, editors, compositors, printers, and publishers, almost all of them working in isolation and virtual ignorance of the labour of the others and producing work of a very high professional standard. Paradoxically, however, the English book-illustrations of the time most highly valued today are often at almost the opposite pole of these triumphs of industrial specialization, in the works of James Barry, John Flaxman, John Linnell—and William Blake. These artists achieved their triumphs through a return to the craft-techniques which the new commercial specialization had made uneconomical and inefficient.

Increasingly the roles of the Master Engraver were divided among many specialists, some of whom could scarcely have performed the tasks of their colleagues. Some engravers specialized in laying in the first etched outlines of the design; Blake was particularly known for this, in 1806 he was described by Flaxman as 'the best engraver of outlines',[5] and he sometimes did such work for other engravers, as he did for John Linnell in 1818.[6] Some were known particularly as stipple engravers, like Bartolozzi, or as line-engravers, like Sharp, and some scarcely attempted works other than wood

engraving such as Bewick, who transformed the medium once more into a high art. Some became writing engravers like Thomas Tompkins and William Staden Blake, and specialized in lettering dedication and trade cards and the imprints on other men's engravings. Some engravers did not even pull their own proofs, and it was normal for the final press-run to be pulled by a printer who specialized in printing intaglio engravings.[7] Some copperplate printers specialized yet further and concentrated upon printing in colour or, more commonly, upon tinting the works by hand after they had been printed. Indeed, in the 1790s Thomas Martyn established a school near Blake's birthplace primarily to teach boys to colour his natural history prints.

William Blake was very unusual in maintaining the old craft ways and in performing all these function himself. He was justly proud of his virtuosity as an engraver, and in 1808 he wrote, 'I defy any Man to Cut Cleaner Strokes than I do or rougher where I please' (p. 1052), and when a Society was established to try to engross the highest patronage for engraving to its members, he said indignantly,

> I in my own defence Challenge a Competition with the finest Engravings & defy most critical judge to make the Comparison Honestly [] asserting in my own Defence that this Print [*of the Canterbury Pilgrims,*] is the Finest that has been or is likely to be done in England. . . [p. 1052]

His skill as an etcher may be seen in the first state of his wonderful engraving (1788) after Hogarth's *Beggar's Opera* design, his line engravings in his marvellous *Job* plates (1826), his stipple work in his thirty-seven Plates for Flaxman's Hesiod (1817), his drawing on stone in his only lithograph, of Enoch (1807), and his only woodcuts in the masterful tiny vignettes for Thornton's Virgil (1821). Each of these techniques required not only different tools but also a different artistic vocabulary, in the ways of creating a shadow or even a line. Few of Blake's contemporaries were

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as versatile in engraving as he, and none created masterpieces in so many forms of the medium.

But Blake went further than his contemporaries in another way as well, for he invented a new method of etching in relief, combining the relief principle of wood-engraving with the materials and techniques of etching on copper and using it to combine text and design for letterpress relief-printing in a way which had not previously been possible. This new method he called Illuminated Printing and in it he published almost all his poetry from *Songs of Innocence* (1789) to *Jerusalem* (1804-?20). Technologically it was his highest achievement; its methods were not clearly known to his contemporaries, nor are they to ours, and in this form it has not been satisfactorily practised since his death. With Illuminated Printing, he achieved something which his fellow engravers did not even attempt.

Blake performed two more functions of the craft-engraver's office which most of his contemporaries had abandoned to specialists. He had his own printing press, probably from as early as 1784, when he was twenty-five, and he not only pulled his own proofs, as some other engravers still did, but he printed works in commercial quantities. He and his wife printed all his own works in Illuminated Printing for almost forty years, and we can understand what a substantial labour this was when we reflect that there were one hundred plates in *Jerusalem* alone and that in the copies of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* which happen to have survived there are over thirteen hundred prints. Further, he and his wife sometimes printed his own plates for commercial publishers, as he certainly did for William Hayle's 'Little Tom the Sailor' broadside (1800), his *Designs to A Series of Ballads* (1802), and his *Life and Posthumous Writings of William Cowper*, three volumes (1803-4). On 30 January 1803 he wrote :

'My Wife has undertaken to Print the whole number of the Plates for

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> Cowper's work which She does to admiration & being under my own eye the prints are as fine as French prints & please every one. . . The publishers are already indebted to My Wife Twenty Guineas for work delivered. . . [p. 1561]

He may well have printed much more than we have any record of.

Some of this printing was a good deal more sophisticated than, was ordinarily attempted by commercial printers. Blake's works in Illuminated Printing were often altered in the printing process, by wiping the margins free of ink, by inking parts of the surface lightly so that the plate-maker's mark would not show, or by masking part of the design. Further, the Illuminated Books were almost always printed in colour—in blue or green or orange rather than black—and apparently some of his commercial prints were as well. For instance, Blake told Hayley on 26 November 1800, 'my wife...has .. printed...a few *[copies of 'Little Tom the Sailor']* in colours and some in black which I hope will be no less favour'd' (p. 1548). And finally, Blake invented a method of colour printing, in several colours simultaneously, covering the entire surface of the plate, and this he used both for some of his own works in Illuminated Printing such as *The Book of Urizen* (1794) and *Songs of Experience* (1794) and for his separate designs without text, such as the magnificent 'Newton'. The method of this technique was known neither to his contemporaries nor to ours, and its extraordinary effects have never been duplicated.

There is one final step in the production of a print which Blake often performed and which was very unusual among engravers. Almost all copies of his own works in Illuminated Printing are, of course, tinted in watercolour by hand, and this was an exceedingly laborious and ill-rewarded process. Ordinarily such tinting was done outside the printing-house entirely, either as a cottage industry farmed out to many hands or in a separate factory assembly-line, one person

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adding, say, green to the leaves, the next pink on the faces, a third blue for the sky, and so on. The best known firm doing this kind of work was Ackermann's in the Strand, particularly for fashion plates and for topographical views, and the purchase-cost of these coloured prints was so low that the tinters can scarcely have earned living wages—it must have been done by children and wives and apprentices. But Blake was one of the greatest tinters of outlines of that or any other time, and his contemporaries sometimes bought his books not for the poetry or even for the designs but for the colouring. A few customers even insisted that they should 'be Printed without the Writing', leaving only the coloured designs, 'tho to the Loss of some of the best things', as Blake lamented when he acquiesced (p. 1648). Some of his separate commercial engravings were also tinted, such as 'Evening Amusement' (1782) and 'Zephyrus and Flora' (1784), and even some of those in books were coloured, such as the ones in *The Wit's Magazine* (1784) and Stedman's *Surinam* (1796), and Blake could have had a hand in these. He certainly coloured a few copies of his engravings for Young's *Night Thoughts* (1797), Hayley's *Ballads* (1805), the Canterbury Pilgrims (1810), Virgil (1821), and *Job* (1826), and, though for most of these he made only one or two sets of coloured engravings, he may have coloured the forty-three folio plates for Young's *Night Thoughts* on a commercial scale, for more than twenty copies are known which are coloured either by Blake or after his pattern.[10] Blake's achievements as a tinter of engravings are beyond both the achievement and the ambition of contemporary engravers.

Painters of course worked for particular patrons and had to cater to very individual tastes, though they could reach a wider audience through exhibitions such as those at the Royal Academy and through prints from their designs. Engravers had more direct access to a wide public, but of course they too had a commercial mediator in the printseller or

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bookseller who commissioned their work and who took the risks and the profits, and these publishers too had their individual tastes and their commercial specialities. Some specialized in sentimental scenes depicted in a graceful, rather unfinished style, often in stipple, some concentrated upon comic scenes and caricatures quite roughly finished; some published antiquarian prints in a severe, unembellished style; and the most ambitious of them commissioned folio prints from History Paintings which were supposed to be very highly finished line-engravings such as Basire's print after West's 'Pylades and Orestes' (1771) but in fact were generally in a mixture of etching and engraving. Blake worked in all these styles for numerous publishers, including most of the chief illustrated-book publishers of his day, but, except in his last few years, he was not recognized as an engraver of genius, he rarely had commissions of a major, reputation-establishing kind, and he came to feel, with justice, that the perverted taste of his time had obscured his talent both as engraver and as artist. 'Fuseli indignant almost hid himself-I am hid' (p. 1450).

The first twenty years of his career as a commercial angraver after he finished his apprenticeship in 1779 were modestly successful, at a time when the market for English engravings was expanding repidly. As he wrote to his friend George Cumberland in 1800 :

> It is very Extaordinary that London in so few years from a City of meer Necessaries .. should have become a City of Elegence in some degree... There are now I believe as many Booksellers as there are Butchers & as many Printshops as of any other trade [ ] We remember when a Print shop was a rare bird in London. (p. 1535)

In the first decade after he embarked upon the ocean of business following the completion of his apprenticeship in 1779, he was moderately successful as an engraver of other men's designs on a modest scale, producing signed plates for a couple of dozen books for a dozen publishers. More than half of the plates were for just two booksellers, however.

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One was Harrison of Paternoster Row who published popular money-spinners with sentimental designs often by Blake's friend Thomas Stethard, such as *The Novelist's Magazine* (1782-84), *The Protestant's Family Bible* (1780-81), and *The Wit's Magazine* (1784). His other chief patron of the decade was Joseph Johnson, a more serious publisher of useful works such as John Bonnycastle's *Introduction to Mensuration* (1762) and Thomas Henry's *Memoirs of Albert de Haller, M. P.* (1783), and most of his early publications normally had no more than a frontispiece by way of decoration. During this decade, Blake's name as *designer* appeared on only two book-illustrations,[11] and the more important of the two, *An Elegy Set to Music by Thos Commins* (1786), is for sheet music sold by an obscure music-publisher named J. Fentum about whom nothing more is known. It is curious how frequently Blake's most important commissions came from publishers with whom he apparently had no other dealings.

In his second decade as a commercial book-illustrator, from 1789 to 1798, Blake was considerably more successful, for though he worked for about the same number of publishers and books, he produced more than twice as many plates, many of them were folio in size, and he *designed* almost as many plates as he had engravd all together in the previous decade. His most important patron was still Joseph Johnson, for whom he illustrated ten books, but the books were more generously illustrated both in terms of the number of plates and in terms of their size and quality. The most important of these are the sensational ones after Blake's friend Fuseli in Darwin's natural history poem called *The Botanic Garden* (1791) and the ones by his friend J. G. Stedman showing the torture of Negro slaves in Stedman's *Narrative of a five years' expedition, against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796), published by Johnson snd Johnson's good friend James Edwards, one of the most important publishers of illustrated

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books of the decade. Six of the fifty plates Blake made for Joseph Johnson in the decade were also designed by him for Mary Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life* (1791), but they are surprisingly tame. His reputation was more securely advanced by the splendid folio plate he etched and engraved for Boydell after Hogarth's design for *The Beggar's Opera* (1790), and the four accomplished line-engravings on an heroic scale which he made for Stuart & Revett's *Antiquities of Athens*, Vol. III (1794), which Flaxman said were executed 'in a very masterly manner'.[12] But his most important commission of this or any other decade was from Richard Edwards, the brother of James, for an enormously ambitious folio edition of Young's *Night Thoughts* with one hundred fifty plates engraved *AND DESIGNED* by Blake In the event, only Part One with forty-three plates appeared in 1797 before the publisher gave up business, but the work is still one of the most ambitious and extraordinary publications of the century, particularly in the coloured copies.

Blake made plates in forty-five books during these two decades for twenty different publishers, but only five of them commissioned him then to make plates for a second book, and forty percent of the books were published by his radlcal friend Joseph Johnson. By 1797, his fortunes were closely tied to those of three publishers : 'Joseph Johnson, who published at least eighteen books with Blake plates, James Edwards, co-publisher with Johnson of Stedman's *Surinam*, and James's brother Richard Edwards, publisher of the *Night Thoughts*, for which Blake made over five hundred large wateroolour designs and for which he expected to engrave one hundred fifty folio plates. But in 1798 Richard Edwards went out of business, probably for personal rather than commercial reasons;[13] his brother James retired early with a comfortable fortune in 1799'[13] and Joseph Johnson was charged by a vindictive government with sedition in 1798.

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and, despite a character testimonial at his trial from James Edwards,[13] he was convicted and sentenced to a year in prison. The effect for Blake was an abrupt closing of his best prospect through no fault of his own. As he wrote to George Cumberland on 26 August 1799 :

> As to Myeslf about whom you are so kindly Interested, I live by Miracle... For as to Engraving in which art I cannot reproach myself with any neglect yet I am laid by in a corner as if I did not Exist & since my Youngs Night Thoughts have been publishd Even Johnaon & Fuseli have discarded my Graver... It is now Exactly Twenty years since I am upon the ocean of business & Tho I laugh at Fortune I am perswaded that She Alone is the Governor of Worldly Riches, & when it is Fit She will call on me [;] till then I wait with Patience in hopes that She is busied among my Friends (pp. 1529-1530)

After this time, most of Blake's commissions came through authors, such as William Hayley, for whom he illustrated seven books, or through artists, such as John Flaxman who procured many commissions for him, rather than through the publisher directly.

In the period from 1799 to 1806, Blake made plates for fourteen books, eight of them because of Hayley and Flaxman, and four more may have derived from his friendship with the artists Henry Fuseli, who illustrated two, and Prince Hoare, who wrote two. His most ambitious plate of the time was one of 1799 for the great Boydell Shakspeare then coming to its majestic conclusion, but its presence is an anomaly or accident, for it is called a 'Variation' of a design in the same volume by James Opie, and it is bound after a 1792 engraving by Simon of virtually the same scene by Opie.[14] For three years Blake lived at Felpham, sixty miles from London, to work under the eye and friendship of William Hayley, thus of course weakening his commercial connections with the city. The works he undertook then were modest in size and subject, in keeping with what his friends thought were his best interests. In 1802 Blake wrote indignantly :

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My dependence is on Engraving at present & particularly on the Engravings I have in hand for Mr H. & I find on all hands great objection to my doing any thing but the meer drudgery of business & intimations that if I do not confine myself to this I shall not live... This from Johnson & Fuseli brought me down here & this from Mr. H. will bring me back again for that I connot live without doing my duty to lay up treasures in heaven is Certain & Determined .. (p. 1557)

And Flaxman told Hayley, 'if he places any dependence on painting large pictures for which he is not qualified, either by habit or Study, he will be miserably decievd'.[15]

When Blake returned to London in 1803, he found that he had lost touch with the booksellers. As he wrote to Hayley then :

Art in London flourishes. Engravers in particular are wanted. Every Engraver turns away work that he cannot execute from his superabundant Emyloyment, yet no one brings work to me [.] I am content that it shall be so as long as God pleases. I know that many works of a lucrative nature are in want of hands [;] other Engravers are courted. I suppose I must go a Courting which I shall do awkwardly .. Yet I laugh & sing for if on Earth neglected I am in heaven a Prince among Princes & even on Earth beloved by the Good as a Good Man [;] this I should be perfectly contented with but at certain periods a blaze of reputation arises round me in which I am considerd as one distinguishd by some mental perfection but the flame soon dies again & I am left stupefied and astonishd [ ] O that I could live as others do in a regular succession of Employment [;] this wish I fear is not to be accomplishd to me...

(p. 1582)

This was almost the end of Blake's career as a commercial line-engraver. From 1807 through 1814 apparently he was not commissioned to make any plates for the booksellers at all,[16] and from 1814 until the last three years of his life his chief works for the booksellers were thirty-seven stipple plates for Flaxman's Hesiod (1817) and twenty-six marvellous wood engraving for Thornton's Virgil (1821). The only exceptions are plates of armour and gems for Rees's *Cyclopaedia* (1815-18) and others of soup tureens and sugar bowls for the salesmen of the Wedgwood pottery firm.

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Blake withdrew from the profession of engraving in thunder and in flame, and just when his future seemed to be bright. The engraver and entrepreneur Robert Hartley Cromek came to him in the autumn of 1805 and commissioned him to make forty designs and twenty folio engravings in illustration of Blair's *Grave*. Blake of course was delighted, and he set to work with his customary energy. Meanwhile, Cromek reduced the number of engravings from twenty to fifteen to twelve, and finally he transferred the lucrative commission for the engravings from Blake to the fashionable Louis Schiavonetti — all without telling Blake. The effect upon Blake was devastating. He filled his Notebook with scurrilous doggerel about Robert Cromek (Bob Screwmuch) and Schiavonetti (Assassinetti) (p. 936), and he withdrew into himself. His neglect of engraving was conscious and deliberate. In 1808 he told George Cumberland that he had

> now so long been turned out of the old channel into a new one that it is impossible for me to return to it... my time... in future must alone be devoted to Designing & Painting. (pp. 1644-45)

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Then in his last decade, Blake was befriended by a young artist named John Linnell who was a line-engraver of genius, and at Linnell's urging and expense Blake embarked upon his greatest triumphs in line-engraving, his twenty-two *Illustrations to the Book of Job* published in 1826 and his seven plates of Dante's *Inferno* which were left magnificent but unfinished at his death in 1827.[17] Linnell was not a commercial publisher, and he was certainly more interested in supporting a man of genius than in making a profit. He paid over £ 150 for *Job*, but he did not bother to advertise it, and he did not even print the Dante plates until eleven years after Blake's death,. in 1838. Blake never had a more underatanding and generous publisher for his prints.

Why was Blake so slighted by the trade? It was not because of his obscurity, for he was certainly widely known

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as an engraver, however his paintings might be laughed at and his poetry ignored. As he commented in 1805 on the three greatest illustrated-book publishers of his time, or perhaps of any time in England,

> I was alive & in health & with the same Talents I now have all the time of Boydells Macklins Bowyers & other Great Works. I was known by them & was lookd upon by them as Incapable of Employment in those Works— (p. 1630)

He affected in deggerel to be indifferent to this treatment :

> Was I... angry with Macklin or Boydel or Bowyer
> Because they did not say 'O what a Beau ye are'?
> (p. 937)

but the slighting of his skills as a craftsman must have wounded him deeply.

At least part of what inhibited the great booksellers were the priorities and methods of commerce. The organization of an enormous undertaking like the Boydell Shakspeare with hundreds of huge engravings plus the text to thirty-seven plays published over a period of twenty years (from the prospectus in 1786 to completion in 1805) required huge numbers of specialists working in harmony. A new ink was invented, new types devised and cast, scores of painters commissioned, a show-room for the paintings created, outline etchers, line-engravers, writing engravers, copperplate printers hired, compositors and letter-press printers paid, subscribers found, paper bought, artistic egos massaged, advertisements placed, plays and prints distributed. The more ambitious the undertaking, the less attention could be given to artistic detail and the more every step had to be standardized. Only the most highly specialized technicians could be employed efficiently, and there could be no place for the old-fashioned craftsman who expected to practice all the mysteries of his craft : To make his own ink, lay in his own outlines, perform all the etching and engraving himself, pull his own proofs, and even

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pull the finished copies for publication. The work of all the specialists had to be finished together before any Part could be published, and no new subscription-monies could be elicited to pay all these labourers until a Part was distributed. Only an enormously prosperous house such as that of Boydell in the 1780s could have hoped to carry on such a work, requiring the gigantic investment of some £200,000, but even the Boydells must have had to strain prodigiously to keep the enterprize afloat on the sea of commerce. Indeed, eventually they could not do so when the English crusade against atheistical France closed the continental markets to the export of English prints, and the firm averted bankruptcy only by holding a lottery for the Shakspeare paintings.

It was the development of a sophisticated commerce which had made such an undertaking imaginable to begin with, and it was just this sophisticated commerce with its endless specialization which prevented their using, on his own terms, the old-fashioned kind of master craftsman like Blake. In his Public Address of about 1808, Blake wrote :

> Commerce is so far from being beneficial to Arts or to Empire that it is destructive of both as all their History Shews for the . . Reason of Individual Merit being its Great hatred. . . while the works of Strange & Woollett are lookd upon as the same Art with those of Rafael Albert Durer there can be no Art in a Nation but such as is Subservient to the interest of the Monopolising Trader who Manufactures Art by the Hands of Ignorant Journeymen .. Englishmen rouze yourselves from the fatal Slumber into which Booksellers & Trading Dealers have thrown you Under the artfully prepagated pretense that a Translation or Copy of any kind can be as honourable to a Nation as An Original . . I know that all those with whom I have Contended in Art have strove not to Excell but to Starve me out by Calumny & the Arts of Trading Combination. . .
>
> (pp. 1037-1039, 1042-1043)

Blake is arguing that the same man should be responsible for all the parts of a work of art, from the composition of the design to the engraving of the plates, as he had been commissioned to do with his illustrations to Young's *Night*

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Thoughts and Blair's *Grave* and *Job* only then will the conception and the execution of the work be equal and appropriate. Indeed, for Blake conception and execution are indistinguishable; what *is* distinguishable is imitation, mere servile copying. 'He who copies does not Execute', he wrote; 'he only Imitates what is already Executed [.] Execution is only the result of Invention' (p. 1042); 'I am like others [,] Just Equal in Invention & in Execution as my works Shew' (p. 1052). 'Execution is the Chariot of Genius' (p. 1463). The rigid separation of functions of designer and engraver was, Blake believed, a product of recent commercial advances. 'This Absurd opinion . that a Copy Could be better than an original or near so Good' 'never was supposed...till a few Yeara ago it became the interest of certain envious knaves (p. 1053).

As a consequence of the separation of roles which was normal in commercial publishing, Blake had three fairly distinct careers as a book-illustrator. The first was as a journeyman engraver of other men's designs, of which he made about two hundred fifty engravings in all. This provided his bread and butter, and for twenty years he lived quite well by it. In 1804 he described these two decades after he finished his apprenticeship when he was bound to the book-publishers as 'twenty dark, but very profitable years' (p. 1614). In 1799 he professed to be 'contented whether I live by Painting or Engraving' (p. 1528), though if he had to practice these arts separately he preferred the former : 'I have an Order for Fifty small Pictures [from the Bible] at One Gainea each which is Something better than mere copying from another artist' (pp. 1529-1530). His second career was as a maker of literary illustrations in watercolours for the portfolio rather than the publisher. The vast majority of the designs Blake made throughout his life were for book illustrations, and in the 1790s, under the friendly patronage of Thomas Butts and John Flaxman, he began his great series of designs for the

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Bible, Gray's poems, and Young's *Night Thoughts*. In the next three decades he made major suites of designs for *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, Comus, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso*, Job, and Dante, composing in all well over a thousand designs for these works alone.

But these watercolours were not public works; they were visible only in the cabinets and on the walls of his friends, and they probably brought him on an average scarcely a guinea apiece. These were not the means to reach a wide public.

His only method for reaching a wide public was through a combination of these two careers into a third, through the method of Illuminated Printing which he invented and in which he made almost four hundred plates, many more than for the commercial publishers.[18] Blake worked for many book-publishers, but the publisher for whom he did more work than for all the rest put together was William Blake. The first conception of this method was apparently on a broad commercial scale. In his *Island in the Moon* (1784), he wrote of a method which 'would have all the writing Engraved instead of Printed & at every other leaf a high finishd print... they would Print off two thousand' (p. 899). However, Blake's practice was far more modest than this. The plates were etched in relief, not engraved in intaglio, the designs were in outline only rather than highly finished line engravings, and the Print-runs were at most two dozen, not two thousand. Some of the reasons for the changes were the same as those which fostered specialization among commercial publishers: Highly finished plates took too long to complete, the printing of intaglio engravings was much more time-consuming than of relief-etchings, and there was little market for such works. More important to Blake, he was not producing two dozen copies of a work of art but two dozen separate performences, for each print was individual and different from the others, at least in colouring and often in

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number and arrangement of plates as well. Sometimes he produced copies to order rather than printing first and then waiting for a buyer.

In fact, Blake was scarcely competing with the commercial publishers, especially in financial terms. It is very unlikely that with his works in Illuminated Printing he did more than clear his expenses of paper, copper, etc. If we include his foregone wages as engraver, printer, and tinter, he almost certainly published all his poems and Prophecies at a loss. It is exceedingly unlikely that, after these expenses are deducted, there was any profit left for Blake as publisher, much less royalties for Blake as designer and author. The wages of genius for him were golden glory rather than golden guineas.

By Blake's time, the way of the craftsman seemed to be blocked by what he called 'the Fiends of Commerce' (p. 962), like Apollyon bestriding right across the narrow road to riches. The artist-craftsman like Blake, if he were true to his breeding and his genius, could expect to lay up treasures only in heaven—and Blake grew to be content with such spiritual treasures. On earth he did not starve, but neither did he flourish, and the great commercial illustrated-book publishers of his time, the Boydells and Macklins and Bowyers, could not or at any rate did not use his genius profitably in a commercial world. In his time, the treasures of his genius were hidden in the portfolios of a few generous and far-sighted friends such as Thomas Butts and George Cumberland and John Flaxman and John Linnell. In our time, these treasures have come forth to illuminate the walls of public galleries and the shelves of public libraries, but their valuations in the world of commerce are as absurd in our day as they were in his, though at another extreme.

Today the specialization which inhibits a just evaluation of Blake is that not of commerce but of scholarship. Between art historians and bibliographers, chalcography and semiotics,

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archetypal and deconstructive criticism, we prove ourselves fragmented critics,seeing the part, not the whole. Blake wanted a single hand to perform all the acts of creation; we need the eye capable of judging all his arts and crafts together to form a new critical synthesis. We have among us magisterial literary critics such as Northrop Frye, but we yet lack the hand and eye which can frame the fearful symmetry of all Blake's united arts as designer, engraver, poet, printer, and thinker in one great act. In Blake's city of art, we each see different buildings and beauties, the poem, the painting, the print, and the myth. But we yet lack the vision of genius which can see the city not as the sum of its beauties but as the 'build[ing of] Jerusalem In Englands green & pleasant Land' (p. 318).

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Notes

1. Blake, who came to abominate the pretensions and standards of the academies of art, called them 'the Contemptible Counter Arts Established by such contemptible Politicians as Lowis XIV to the destruction of all true art as it is this day' (*William Blake's Writings* [1978], 1048—the edition quoted hereafter by page references in the text).
2. Pope, *Essay on Criticism* (1711), II. 362-63.
3. Of course there are many kinds of engraving which have nothing to do with printing, such as on public monuments, on silverware, on seals, and on die-stamps, but these were ordinarily undertaken by different specialists with different tools and techniques.
4. David Bindman, *William Blake His Art and Times :* [Catalogue of an exhibition at] The Yale Center for British Art [15 September—14 November 1982, and at] The Art Gallery of Ontario [3 December 1982—6 February 1983] (New Haven, Toronto, London, 1982), reproduction on p. 69.
5. *Blake Records* (1969). 233; cf. p. 190. Blake claimed that 'Wooletts best works were Etchd by Jack Brown [e]. Woolett Etchd very bad him-self. Stranges Prints were when I knew him all done by Aliamet & his french journeyman whose name I forget. *[P. 1035]*
Such specialization of functions naturally leads to mechanization, to

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the substitution of the machine for the craftsman, and Blake protested: 'A machine is not a Man nor a work of Art, it is destructive of Humanity & of Art.' (p. 1037)

6. *Blake Records*, pp. 256-258, 580-1, 584.
7. It is especially difficult to get information about copperplate printers, whose names rarely appear on the works they printed, who apparently did not have to register their presses with the government as letterpress printers did after 1798, and who were exceedingly numerous. Aside from those of the full-time copperplate printers, there were scores of rolling copperplate presses in shops selling prints and in the hands of professional engravers. Woodcuts could be printed in an ordinary typographic printing press, and one normally presumes that the printer of the text was also the printer of the woodcuts. Lithographs, on the other hand, had to be printed on a different kind of press, and, because the process was controlled by patent, it is much easier to identify the few lithographic printing houses; often the name appears on the print.
8. *Blake Records*, p. 29.
9. For what was written by Blake and his contemporaries about his work as a printer, see 'William Blake's Techniques of Engraving and Printing', *Studies in Bibliography*, XXXIV (1981), 241-53.
10. See *Blake Books* (1977), 642-47, and *William Blake's Designs for Young's Night Thoughts*, ed. D. V. Erdman at al (1980), Vol. I. Several copies have turned up since these works were printed.
11. He probably also copied as an apprentice two dozen or more views of monuments engraved with Basire's signature for *Vetusta Monumenta* (1780) and [Richard Cough] *Sepulchral Monuments in Great Britain*, Vol. I (1786).
12. *Blake Records*, p. 189.
13. Details of the Edwards brothers are set out in *The Edwardses of Halifax :* The Making and Selling of Beautiful Books in London and Halifax 1749-1826 by William, John, Richard, Thomas, and Especially James Edwards, The Medicean Bookseller (Columbus : the Ohio State University Press, ?1989), It seems probable that, in terms of foregone wages, Blake was the largest investor in the *Night Thoughts* project.
14. The Shakspeare designs were engraved in two sizes, one, like Blake's, very large (43x29 om) for issue with the plays, and one enormous (68x51 cm) for separate issue. The design Blake copied (differing slightly from that of Simon) was also engraved by another hand in the largest size. Since the Simon 1792 plate must have

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been finished before Blake began his, dated 1799, perhaps Blake's was supposed to be in the largest size. Whatever the explanation, clearly the accident was not likely to help Blake in his engraving career.

15. *Blake Records,* p. 72; cf. p. 167.
16. His plate for Hayley's *Romney* (1809) is dated 1809, but Blake clearly finished it many years before, probably in 1805; and *The Prologue and Characters of Chauccr's Pilgrims* (1812) with two plates by Blake is primarily a puff for Blake's great separate engraving of the Canterbury Pilgrims—it was probably scarcely published in the ordinary way, and Blake may well have been paid nothing for his engravings for it.
17. He also produced a delicious little plate of 'The Hiding of Moses' for the Christmas keepseak called *Remember Me!* in 1824.
18. For his work on the borders of commercial publishing, see 'William Blake as a Private Publisher', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library,* XLI (1957), 539-60.

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Santosh Nath

TENNYSON'S 'THE EAGLE'

Tennyson scholars have viewed 'The Eagle' as part of the repertoire of Tennyson's sensitive nature description—'a sharply etched image...generating its own human analogies...'[1] A biographical study of the poem, however, will contribute to its significance which has escaped the attention of his readers till now. The following analysis attempts to instal the poem to the status it deserves by explicating its symbolic significance and unmistakable emotive appeal.

There are two aspects of the poem that need consideration : (a) the poet's choice of the subject; and (b) the time of the poem's composition.

(a) As for the subject, factually speaking, the eagle is a large bird of prey. Its feather-clad head, short, sharply hooked bill, and habit of preferably killing its own prey, distinguish it from the unfeathered head and longer bill of the vulture. As an emblem, the eagle is a heraldic symbol which dates from Persian, Egyptian, and Roman times. As such, it can be said to stand for supreme, overbearing power, which can subjugate and annihilate life at will. The essence of the subject chosen as the theme, therefore, is its immanent suzerainty and sway over life.

The poem begins with the poet's elaboration of the natural context, the setting, the fabric of the cosmic world which is the majestic habitat of this powerful bird. It is a solitary world where the eagle, 'close to the sun,' is 'ring'd' with the 'azure' halo of the sky in his eminence. There, on that great height, he 'clasps the crag with crooked hands,' and is thus

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set apart from the rest of the universe. The rasping sound, created with the alliteration of the 'kl' 'kr' in the lines, imparts a grimness to the rugged strength of the bird as he 'stands' gripping the pinnacle of the sheer rock with his 'crooked' talons, lord and master of all he surveys. The triplet carries within it an unmistakable consciousness of his own power by the eagle and an over-awed awareness of it by the narrator.

The sea, described in the opening line of the second triplet, presents a diametrically opposite prospect. The single line devoted to it brings into focus the built-in contrast between the situation of the sea as against that of the eagle. While the eagle 'stands,' permanent, solid, with a tenacious hold on the mountain wall, the sea—'wrinkled,' and therefore old and decrepit—'beneath him crawls.' The juxtaposition of height and depth, the lofty perch of the eagle near the sun, surrounded with the sky, is contrasted with the 'debased' sea, down below. The sea is not merely below him—it is 'beneath' him, in status, in situation, and in the cosmic order of things. The manner of its movement, too, is significant. It 'crawls.' The state of its being 'wrinkled' focusses on the negative connotations of the word with extreme brevity. The sea is old, weak, ennervated. The description of the sea throws light on the relationship between the eagle and the sea. While the eagle is a powerful overlord, the sea that moves below him is at his mercy and cringes for ever. The sole occupation of the eagle is that he 'watches.' This single expression is a pointer to the subtlety with which Tennyson highlights the wantonness, shrewdness, cunning, and whimsicality of the bird in a neat and compact manner. It also throws light on the 'humour' and the unrestrained authority of the bird to choose his moment of attack. The description of the attack itself, the alacrity and the suddenness of the swoop with which it pounces on his prey, are intensely dramatic. The kinetic image of the bird—projected with : 'And like a thunderbolt he falls'—depicts the vigour and the abruptness

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of the charge, while the 'And' of this line links the swoop to 'watches' and thus heightens the effect of 'watches' with an intentness in the eagle's biding his time and carefully selecting the opportune moment to charge. The sustained use of the present tense seems to be a cue to certain universal truths underlying the images of the eagle and the sea. It puts the content of the poem out of time.

(b) As regards the time of composition, Christopher Ricks, in his introductory note to 'The Eagle,' in *The Poems of Tennyson*, writes that though it was first published in 1851, 'its placing in Eversley suggests composition before 1842, and its triplets are those of 'The Two Voices' and 'Stanzas' (both 1833).'[1] This remark embodies the suggestion of 'The Eagle' being contemporaneous with these two poems. 'The Eagle,' in a way, is closer to 'The Two Voices. There is an underlying thematic relationship between the two poems which can be profitably explored.

It is interesting to note that 'The Two Voices,' generally taken to be composed under the shadow of Hallam's death, was begun a few months prior to the tragedy. This is shown by Ricks in his headnote to the poem in *The Poems of Tennyson.*[2] Tennyson's father had died in 1831 after a prolonged and debilitating illness. J. H. Buckley writes about the loss thus : 'Tennyson had indeed been close to nervous collapse ever since his father's death in March. His sense of bereavement, greater than he could have anticipated, had led him into a not unfamiliar hypochondria.'[3] W. D. Paden has also made a significant observation in this regard. He differs from the commonly accepted view that 'Morte d'Arthur' is related to Hallam's death. Though the first drafts of this poem were written late in 1833, or more probably in 1834, Paden says that the entire period was a crucial one for Tennyson. According to him the view that King Arthur, in a way, symbolizes Arthur Hallam '...leaves much unexplained. Arthur Hallam's virtue was potential rather than operative, his

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triumph was foreseen rather than achieved. In this he was unlike King Arthur. The 'Morte d'Arthur' deals with the end, not the beginning, of an epoch./The alternative is obvious. The Reverend Dr. George Clayton Tennyson had died in 1831; he had been in his son's mind as a father, the symbol of authority, as a priest, the symbol of orthodox faith—of a faith that was apparently, crumbling before insidious scepticisms .. The Reverend Dr. Tennyson had been a convinced and earnest Christian; after his death his son, like Bedivere, found himself in a world that had no faith—and, less fortunate than Bedivere, with no untroubled faith himself.[4]

It can be said that while 'The Two Voices,' a poem contemporaneous with 'The Eagle,' is about the poet's suicidal cogitations, 'The Eagle' reflects Tennyson's concept of death. The animal is both a bird of prey as well as an emblem that augurs doom. The poet gives semantic clues to his deeper perception of death in the context of life in a concentrated and pointed manner. The 'eagle' is shown as beyond the ken of 'life' (symbolized as the sea), which 'crawls' 'beneath, his inexorable gaze. The sea is depicted not merely in its calm, docile, aspect, it is portrayed in words connoting old age, physical decrepitude, and a kind of subjugation to the might and will of 'death' (in the form of the eagle). The spectacle of the contrast between the loftiness of the bird's solitary majesty in its eminent perch with the seeming prostration of the ennervated sea. crawling beneath his intent stare, images not just 'life' but a specific state of life. The vision of life projected here seems to emanate from the memory of the protracted illness of his father, inching towards death. Though the poem appears to have been conceived about the same time as 'The Two Voices' and 'Morte d'Arthur,' when Tennyson was known to have been under the shadow of Hallam's death, the source of inspiration of this poem, much more than that of the former two, seems to be related to his father's death. Inspite of the fact that the poet was

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aware of the impending doom—the eventual outcome of Rev. Dr. Tennyson's terminal disease, when the moment finally did arrive—it came like the fall of a thunderbolt that nearly shattered all his hopes and aspiratioas. The waiting for the finale, and then, ultimately, its actual arrival, are superbly yet succinctly managed with :

> He watches from his mountain walls,
> And like a thunderbolt he falls.

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Tennyson's vision of the eagle as a symbol of death encompasses human life. The word 'watches' brings the entire world under his purview so that his action is raised from a single event and enfolds the whole world which he 'watches' with a keen eye on his future victims. The simultaneity of the existence of death at two different planes, the personal and the universal, has been skilfully presented within the short span of six lines.

'The Eagle' is possibly the only non-mythical symbolic poem reflecting the poet's reaction to death. It depicts the supremacy of death over life through the contrasting images of the eagle and the sea, the former a trope of all-powerful 'death' and the latter, of helpless 'life.' The title of the poem, however, is qualified with a sub-title, 'Fragment.' This possibly can be a clue to lead us to think that the vision presented here is just a partial vision, a segment of the poet's total vision of the great truth of life—Death.

We find, then, that 'The Eagle' is not just a descriptive but a deeply symbolic poem. As a symbolic poem it envisions Tennyson's first experience of death at close quarters. His choice of the eagle as a symbol of 'death' is apt and reflects his knowledge of history and his sensitivity to nature. His artistic acumen can be seen in his subtitling the poem as a 'fragment.' This suggests thal his vision of death as an inexorable power over life is only a partial vision and not the whole truth. Though overweighed with the burden of sorrow

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at his father's death, the poet, it seems, is not ready to succumb to the concept of the immanence of death. The intent of the sub-title could be to indicate his own limited experience at such a young age and the possibility of discovering the indomitable nature of 'life'. The vision of 'life' that is not over-awed by death and does not 'cringe' before it but faces and overcomes it with courage and nobility is still dormant in him. It forges forward on Hallam's death and makes him prove the immanence of life in poems like 'Ulysses', 'Tithonus,' and 'Tiresias.'[6]

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Notes

1. Dwight Culler, *The Poetry of Tennyson* (New Haven and London, 1977) pp. 242-43, quoted by Paul F. Mattheisen in 'Tennyson and Carlyle : A Source for 'The Eagle',' *The Victorian Newsletter*, No. 60, (1981), p. 1.
2. *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. C. Ricks (London, 1969), pp. 495-96.
3. Ibid., p 522.
4. J. H. Buckley, *Tennyson : The Growth of a Poet*, (Cambridge, Mass , 1974), p. 42.
5. W. D. Paden, *Tennyson in Egypt* (Lawrence, 1942), pp. 86-87.
6. Based on deductions in my Ph. D. thesis,' Treatment of Greek Mythology in the Poems of Tennyson', A. M. U., Aligarh, 1989, chapter 3.

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Vanashree Tripathi

TENNYSON'S 'ULYSSES' : A STYLISTIC INTERPRETATION

The paper aims at highlighting certain linguistic hierarchies in Tennyson's poem 'Ulysses' with the intention of focussing attention upon the poem's structure. The paper also aims to show how layers of movements within the overall structure of the poem are generated by the use of noun, adverb, verb and adjectival phrases which attempt to catch the quest of the protagonist in varying degrees of intensity and implication.

The poem has come under heavy attack since the late nineteenth century for its downright almost artless call to action, a pre-Victorian exaltation of the heroic virtues and correspondingly an attack on loafing as Kingsley Amis puts it. Tennyson's grace and classic charm began to be dismissed as facile sweetness by the later critics, and all the security which they thought he reflected was in imminent danger, and impatient as always, youth turned away from him not because he wrote of things they had not experienced and could not understand but because they thought that Tennyson as a thinker could sermonise, and sermons delivered with a whisk of the prophetic cloak are dull and sometimes comic reading[1]. It is my reading that the readers searching for facile conceptual truth, find Ulysses' contemplation as quixotic foolhardiness and it has not been easy for them to appreciate the contradiction of moods that 'Ulysses' projects. Homeric Ulysses the man of purpose and action is shown in the poem by Tennyson as roaming aimlessly, merely to relieve his ennui, and dragging his companions to him. However the reeders can see that

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Ulysses not only 'intends' to roam but stands forever listless and melancholic figure on the shore.

It is not for the first time that an archetypal persona is applied to present certain contadictory realities of present times, but it is interesting to discover that Tennyson found himself able to incorporate the direct sense of loss in the poem which by indirections found directions out. The linguistic behaviour of the poem will show the development of psychologically dominant sense that everybody at sometime or other is likely to surreder to the sense that the whole world seems to have gone wrong.

What arouses concern firstly in the poem is the sustained use of adjectives with a semantic value of immobility and inertness, the use of verbs symbolising 'will' or 'decisiveness alternated by futility and phallic seculation. These variations are made striking by the chafing clipped, impatient terms opening 'Ulysses'

> It little profits that an idle king,
> By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
> Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
> Unequal laws unto a savage race,
> That hoard, and sleep and feed, and know not.

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Thus the urgency and meaning with which Ulysses communicates indicate his ironic chart of action. The contempt in the opening line is pervasive and energizing with the 'barren crags' leading from 'idle king' and leading into the 'aged wife'—the marriage match does harsh justice. These adjectives introduce a spatial territory of stagnation and hence the reader almost shuts any anticipation of a planned action. While these adjectives may be metalinguistically characterized by a style of transferring epithet, verbs like 'hoard', 'sleep', 'feed', 'to rest' establish a tone of contempt. Yet this movement is at once followed by a different kind of affirmation :

> I cannot rest from travel : I will drink

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Life to the lees : all times I have enjoyed
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext tha dim sea : . . . .

The lines have amplitude, the affirmation, but a plumped one. Yet this is not necessarily a failure in the poem, since what is truly aimed at, may have been equivocal.

The repetition of adjectives in the following lines has been cast in the same mould as verbs in the opening lines : 'slow prudence', 'rugged people', 'Soft degrees', 'common duties', 'unbecoming men', 'dark broad seas'. 'frolic welcome', 'long day', slow moon', and the verbs 'hoard', leave,' 'subdue' 'gone', 'toiled', 'wrought', 'closes', 'waves', 'climbs', 'strove', 'die' and so on reiterate the poem's general norm and project the theme of physical confinement and mental despair. In order to arrive at this level of primary pattern, there is no need for the reader to impute similar or equivalent pattern.

Similarly, the use of participles like 'roaming', 'ringing', 'sinking', 'sounding' is one form of deviation to bring forth a quality of incessation. Besides, the use of to-infinitive recurs in a way as to convey to the reader on the one hand, the strong aspiration of a man past an active and adventurous life, and on the other hand, the speaker's frame of reference that can contain only knowledge that this yearnings are not for consummation. The following is an observation of the recurring to-infinitive constructions :

To rest unburnished, not to shine in use!...
To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
.. to make mild
... descent not to fail ...
.. to twinkle from the rocks
.. to seek a newer world
... to sail beyond the sunset.
to strike, to seek, to find and not to yield

By virtue of their juxtaposition to the condition of stillness,

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drabness, monotony and futility, illustrated in the poet's use of certain adjectives and verbs, they point to a certain thematic unity : the protagonist's, or any weather-beaten man's belief that his life is not just a past, that it still has a futtre. The poem's language, its reluctance while projecting the contradiction of morbid forces pervading the life of an adventurous spirit points clearly to a human incapacity that can raise only 'yearning' and not a confident assurance. In this context, the stylistic tissue of the poem through the use of the future time reference is remarkable because despite its unobtrusiveness, it is potent and omnipresent in implication.

There are, however, cadences in the poem which are far from enervated, but one might as well question whether they are not sapped and sopped by the insidious enervation :

> The long day wanes : the slow moon climbs : the deep
> Moans round with many voices. Come my friends,

However, the poet's explicit optimism is shown by his deliberate choice and interchange of futurities. At first, in : 'I will drink life to the lees', the speaker Ulysses uses will, not shall, that is, a determination, not a simple futurity; whereas the mitigating contradiction follow in the use of futurities all governed by and weakened by the modal 'may' :

> It may be that the gulfs will wash us down :
> It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
> And see the great Achilles, whom we knew,

Stylistically, it is throgh transferring a lingustic structure of definiteness, to one of probability, that the poem enables the reader to draw closer to the equivocal state of a solitary man. Yet again, the poet's attempt to minimize futurity by substituting the simple present tense is revealing. Lines like : 'Though much is taken, much abides', or 'I am a part of all that I have met' are ways to shut out the future. Further, a variety of linguistic forms that rejects the futurity can be located in expressions like :

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. . . Gleams that untravelled world whose margin fades
For ever and ever when I move.

Moreover, the poet does not say 'Every hour will bring new things', but he says : 'Every hour[is] a bringer of new things.' Also he says 'something... may yet be done', and not 'will be done., It should be emphasized that there is a relation between the poet's standard use of expression and the linguistic pattern. The syntactic-topical relations in 'Ulysses' have been used deliberately by Tennyson as correlatives to the physical and mental conditions of an old man who has not lost merely his youth but continues to suffer from a persisting urge to dissociate himself actively from the death in life predicament that has overcome him. The quest part of Ulysses' journey can only be depicted by an intelligent use of verbs or verbal phrases. In fact, Wlilliam Carlos Williams bases his theory of the poem on 'Action'; mainly on the use of verbs which, for him, activate identity—objects which are nouns. The character of Ulysses is an identity, though yet an identity which is trying to seek fulfilment; in other words, which is still in the *process.* All *processes* imply movement, and Tennyson's intelligent use of verbs at the base, with nouns, adverbs and adjectives occupying a subsidiary position make 'Ulysses' a great success in terms of deft and delicate use of linguistic patterns.

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Note

1. Humbert Wolfe, 'Introduction to Tennyson,' in *Fifteen Poets*(London, 1965), p. 391.

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STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF LARKIN'S 'AFTERNOONS'

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The usefulness of linguistic approaches and stylistic analysis in the understanding of literature has been a subject of debate for quite some time. Arguments for and against apart, one thing can be said with considerable amount of certainty that the process of studying linguistic features and stylistic analysis facilitate the understanding of literature in a systematic way. It also provides the reader with a solid ground on which to base his arguments and enables him to make judgements in a more systematic and precise way. This approach, on the one hand, never hinders him from making a deeper critical and/or philosophical explorations if he wishes so, and, on the other, saves him from pouring out disjointed utterances using literary text merely as a point of reference. The stylistic analysis works as a healthy compulsion to make the reader focus his full attention on the poem as he is supposed to relate all his observations, arguments, judgements and inferences closely to the text-its linguistic structure and stylistic features. The subject of stylistic analysis here is Philip Larkin's poem **Afternoons.**

A concern with the negative aspect of life appears in Larkin's poetry to be one of his major preoccupations. Awfulness of growing old and death can be noted as recurring features in his poetry. The hollowness of the predominantly mechanical and materialistic nature of the modern western life adds to his restlessness and he starts questioning the

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very worth of the social life around him. Eric Homberger has referred to him as 'the saddest heart in the post-war supermarket'.[1] His poetry takes place against the background of a general sadness. This sadness is reflected in the poem **Afternoons** as well, where he appears to be mainly concerned with the destructive role of time and the gloom of old age ending in death.

1. General Interpretation

The very title of the poem sets the reader in a particular phase of time, afternoon; time lying between the pleasant warmth and/or brightness of noon and the saddening gloom of evening. Evening itself is to be followed by the mysterious darkness of night. Afternoon also forms a diurnal equivalent of the season of autumn (notice the falling of leaves in ones and twos in the poem) in the year representative of later life, i.e. the middle age. So, time as a negative factor emerges as the focal point of the poem, and the plural form of the title which is a generic noun without an article gives it a kind of generality. The recurrence of this feature throughout the text (generic nouns and no articles) enhances the effect of generality. The poem is about the emotional misery of middle aged housewives (who are also mothers) who have lost their youth and beauty in the dull and boring routine of household chores.

In the first stanza, the poet looks at certain ritualistic social business in the context of ultimate decay and death—negativity of time, Falling of leaves in ones or twos suggests the passing of time as well as the idea of sad end or death. In the middle stanza, he considers the mechanical patterns of life in retrospect and prospect and discovers how it has all been subjected to persistent decay and how the negativity of time (symbolised by 'wind') has immensely added to its hollowness and meaninglessness. In the final stanza, the poetic argument culminates into the suggestion of the approaching old age to be followed by death. The uninterest-

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ing and unending routines consume all the pleasant time of mothers and even before they are aware of the situation they have already reached the point of no return. This statement about mothers is certainly generalisable to include all humanity. The last three lines in particular show mothers to be very much on the threshold of old age as they have already lost their beauty and enthusiasm, and thus the whole scene fades into a deep sadness. The three-tier structure (three stanzas) of the poem itself is representative of three equivalent parallels at three different levels—that is, forenoon, noon, afternoon in a day; summer, autumn, winter in a year; and young age, middle age and old age in a lifetime.

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2 Linguistic-Stylistic Features

In the following lines the linguistic and stylistic features of the poem will be considered in the context of their interpretative relevance.

2.1. Lexis

2.1.1. Repetition

There are not any two lines or many lexically full items which have been repeated. But, the words **'courting places'** (II.8) are repeated in the following line, that is the first line of the last stanza. But, they appear in two different grammatical constructions and one is involved in modifying the other, that is to say, nothing is happening to 'courting-places' themselves but something is happening to lovers. And also the lexical items **'their children'** (I.8) are repeated in the third line of the final stanza. This repetition not only foregrounds children but also forms a contrast with aging mothers, representing two different successive phases of life, i.e. the young age and the middle age. Though the words **'young mothers'** (I.6) have not been repeated, repeated references have been made to these lexical items almost throughout the last two stanzas with the help of the prepositions **'their'** (I 8, II.8, III.3, III.6) and **'them'** (II.2, II.7, III.7). These repetitions show as if these three items count as the main topic of the poem and

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the poem has to do something mainly with mothers, their children and courting-places. The use of possessive pronoun for each of the last two items brings in the idea as if mothers possessed them and something seriously significant is happening to their possessions. The use of the third person genitive pronoun also allows the poet some objectivity in that it is others he is talking about and not himself.

2.1.2. Lexico-Semantic Groupings

There is a good number of conceptual groups in the text which hold the poem together and form a channel to approach the meaning lying at the depth of the lexical structure. Here we will focus our attention on the words or phrases linked by the same details or details related in meaning.

a. The **'recreation ground'** (I.4), **'swing and sandpit'** (I.7), **'courting-places'** (II.8)

All the three phrases have to do mainly with the idea of delight, pleasure and a sort of physical and mental refershment which is far from being artificially imposed. That each phrase is relevant to a different age group gives the meaning a greater social relevance and widens the scope of the poetic exploration.

b. **'albums'** (II.4), **'television'** (II.6)

Both of them are concerned with visual impact as they are related to pictures and images. The only difference is that albums contain pictures of real but past (usually happy) moments whereas television entertainment shows unreal scenes which may sometimes appear to have a resemblance with the real situations though, unlike albums, television is relevant to future as well, but a future which is uncertain and may not be necessarily happy. The item 'albums' intensifies the element of nostalgia as it represents the preservation of the images of romantic past, never to be revived. And its place has been taken by externally imposed enjoyment through television.

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c. **'children'** (III.4), **'unripe acorns'** (III.4), **'young'** (I.6)

These are similar in respect of the fact that they are undergrown and have yet to live the full span of life. Again it suggests the idea of unknown and uncertain future which is full of suspense. Along with suggesting growth and mystery, they also involve a desire to explore, unravel and achieve. Children are in the process of becoming potential lovers (young) and experiencing things hitherto unknown to them (finding unripe acorns).

d. **'pushing'** (III.7), **'ruining'** (II. 8), **'fading'** (I.1)

Besides the similarity of the grammatical form (-ing), these words are interrelated in their negative connotation and suggest a transition from a desirable state of pleasure to a non-desirable one of sadness. The '—ing' form (progressive verb) shows that the action is in progress, and the happy present is gradually but steadily giving way to an unpleasant future. And this idea of unhappy and uncertain future is related to b and c.

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e. **'summer'** (I.1), **'beauty'** (III.6),

These two nouns have to do with the states and levels of warmth, energy, pleasure and joy etc. These are also united in that both of them are short-lived and give way to old age or winter.

f. **'mothers'** (I.6), **'husbands'** (II.2), **'children'** (I 8 & III.3)

These plural common nouns suggest the single idea of social life with family as nucleus. The plural forms extend the pale of observation. Here the poet seems to give a generalising effect to a particular observation about a family group. It is also to be noted that these nouns appear without any article and thus enhance the generalising effect.

g. **'summer'** (I.1), **'leaves'** (I.2) **'wind'** (II.7), **'trees'** (1.3)

These objects (all nouns) suggest the phenomena of

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nature, which in turn bring into light the instability of nature and its changeable and cyclic process. Almost all these items are of unstable and fluctuating nature which has a certain bearing upon human life. Perhaps the poet is trying through it to set the context in which social and family life may be seen, that is to say, the duration of the pleasure of family life is also as uncertain and short as that of summer and its beauty. It all soon fades.

h 'side' (III.8), **'bordering'** (I.3)

Both suggest periphery rather than centre and highlight the process of receding into background from the main field of activity. They show a centrifugal movement.

i. **'recreation ground'** (I.4), **'school'** (III.2), **'home'** (III.5)

These nouns hint at three aspects of a child's life in the modern social set up The sequence of the occurence of these words may also represent the psychological priorities of a child.

j. **'behind'** (II.1), **'before'** (II.7)

Both the prepositions express further ends of time; past and future. One brings into view the background and the other the foreground. These are also in equal time positions. It is as if the poet is seeing human life in terms of passing time and comparing the past with the future.

2.1.3 Semantico-syntactic Deviations

The poem contains some metaphoric and symbolic expressions which do not fall within the set categories of grammar or syntax and yet hold a strongly meaningful position in the structure. The interpretative context of such deviations from the conventional use of language makes their position clear.

a. **'Summer is fading'** (I.1)

The collocation of the word 'fading' with 'summer' is a deviation from its conventional use in the context of colour. In normal expression it would be something like 'summer is

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ending'. Hence, we have to interpret it non-literally. Here, summer is treated poetically as one of the colours (seasons) on the canvas of the year which is growing paler and paler every moment. The growing paleness or fading suggests the fast approaching autumn to be followed by nothing but winter. So, a pleasant present is soon going to be followed by an unpleasant future. It clearly indicates what is happening to women. They are becoming less and less attractive with every passing day and their beauty is fast giving way to ugliness.

b. 'In the hollows of afternoon' (I.5)

Again the collocation of 'hollows' with afternoons sounds a bit odd in terms of conventional use of language. 'Afternoon' is as abstract a noun as time, whereas the word 'hollows' suggests non-abstract measurable space. The normal expression would be 'hours of afternoon'. Here too therefore we have to look for a non-literal interpretation. In the interpretative context, this deviational use helps us understand the mysterious emptiness and joylessness overtaking the atmosphere. Since the family group is spoken about in the same context it shows in a way the meaninglessness of social or family life.

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c. 'Stand husbands in skilled trades' (II.2)

Instead of something like'... in shabby clothes' or '...sullen mood' we have '...in skilled trades'. This immediately directs the mind of the reader to the mechanical and materialistic style of social life. Husbands have ceased to be lovers or fathers and their identities do not exist in isolation from their skills and trades : means of earning bread to keep the bodies alive. They appear to be tools (not persons) used in trades. It again seems to be related to the idea of the happy past when they were lovers and fathers more than mere bread-earners, which is a sad present likely to go worse in future.

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d. 'An estateful of washing' (II.3)

There are two oddities here : 1. the neologism 'estateful' and 2. the semantic relationship in the phrase as a whole. Interpreted non-literally, the line conveys the sense of heaps of washing. This semantic deviation also makes the expression ironical. It suggests lots and lots of boring household chores, consuming the best portion of mothers' lives, rather than any such possession that they should be happy about.

e. 'That are still courting-places' (III.1)

The use of the singular pronoun 'that' in the beginning of the third stanza has a little oddity about it because of its occurence after a pause and calls for an amaphoric interpretation. In normal expression it would be 'Those are ' if there is a pause involved or it would be a part of a continuous utterance. This little oddity serves the purpose of shifting the emphasis onto 'still'. Through repetition 'courting-places' has been foregrounded and by using the singular pronoun 'That' after a pause foregrounding has been reinforced. The idea is that there is nothing wrong with the 'courting-places' themselves, but the mothers are now too old, unattractive and fat to be courted there by anyone.

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f. 'Their beauty has thickened' (III.6)

Beauty is an abstract noun which is neither thin nor thick. It is also a deviation and requires us to look for a non-literal interpretation. Thickness is closely associated with the idea of fatness which suggests unattractiveness and lack of beauty. It has been pointed out earlier that mothers are drifting towards the old age. And in the course of time they are constantly losing the attributes of youth like slimness and physical charm and are getting fatter and fatter (and therefore uglier) day by day, particularly unnoticeably but inexorably.

g. 'To the side of their own lives' (III.8)

Life, like beauty, is also an abstract noun which can be understood in terms of a beginning, middle and end rather

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than sides But, the devotional use of 'side' concretises the image of periphery, i.e an area removed from centre, and thus highlights the unavoidable sad end linked to human life. Most of these deviational patterns also highlight the contrast between the happy, enjoyable but short youth (which has almost become past) and unavoidable eventual death (which lies ahead). Old age, therefore, seems to be the 'side' beyond which lies the mysterious darkness of death into which everything nice and pleasant is bound to disappear. It is the 'side' of mothers' own lives and yet so alien to and differnt from the sort of lives they feel nostalgic about. This forms a major paradox and is crucial to the poem. Moreover, the use of the definite article with the singular form 'side' reinforces the idea of the universality of the phenomenon. That is to say, the lives may be different in their individual capacities but they end up the same way.

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3. Semantic Parallelism

Children 'Expect to be taken home' (III.5), 'Something is pushing them/To the side of their own lives' (III.7-8). Children expect to be taken home. Returning home suggests the end of their recreational pleasure. At the same time, we notice that 'something' is pushing mothers to the 'side' of their lives. The recreation ground was a source of pleasure for children from where they are returning home most probably to home-work or to be back in the dull environment of the household routine. It is going to be less enjoyable anyway as compared to the recreation ground. Similarly, youth was the main field of activity and enjoyment for mothers from which they are moving towards the duller side of life; charmlessness and boredom of old age ending eventually in death. Both suggest forced and inevitable retreat from a pleasant state to a non-pleasant one.

4. Grammar

Having taken into account most of the noticeable lexical expressions in their various forms, the attention should be

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focussed now on the grammatical features of the poem to see if they could be related to the central theme of the text.

4.1. Definiteness

A number of nouns and noun phrases in the poem are definite as they take the definite article. For instance :

The leaves (I.2)
The new recreation ground (I.4)
The hollows of afternoons (I.5)
The albums (II.4)
The wind (II.7)
The lovers (III.2)
The side (III.8)

From these definite references it is possible to conclude that the poet is drawing attention to some specific situations around him but finds them to be generally true. That is to say, everything is in a flux and moving towards a sad end.

4.2. Indefiniteness

Besides the above noted definite nouns there is a large number of indefinite nouns and noun phrases (they take no article) as well, for example :

Summer (I.1)
trees (I.3)
afternoons (I.5)
Young mothers (I.6)
Swing and sandpit (I.7)
husbands (I.2)
skilled trades (II.2)
washing (II.3)
courting-places (III.1)
school (III.2)
lives (III.8)

The simultaneous use of definite and indefinite nouns suggests a sort of tension between specificness and generality, as the poet is making specific references to general things and

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general references to specific things. In other words, the poet seems to be emphasizing that his observation about some specific situations is not relevant to those situations alone but has a wider scope and universal relevance. On account of these uses, generality and specificness merge with each other and create a new situation which is qualitatively different from the individual characteristics of either.

4.3. Tenses

Mainly two of the four forms of the present tense have been used in the poem to the exclusion of the rest :

a. present indefinite
fall (I.2)
assemble (1.6)
stand (II.7)
are (III.2)
are (III.5)
to be taken (passive) (III.5)

b. present continuous
is fading (I.1)
is ruining (II.8)
is pushing (III.7)

c. present participle
bordering (I.3)

d. present perfect
has thickened (III.6)

It is highly noticeable that four (mainly two) forms of the present tense alone have been used. It implies a kind of generality of attitude and universality of experience. Present tense often refers to recurrent phenomena and universal truths. Therefore, the use of this tense (to the exclusion of past and future tenses) suggests that the specific situations that the poet is here dealing with have a sense of continuity and carry a time-free, non-contingent, universal dimension. At the end of the poem the use of the present perfect tense is also very suggestive in that the youth and its attributes are over and old age has certainly come for the mothers who used to be young in the recent past.

4.4. Nouns

Except for four nouns (summer I.1, swing and sandpit I.7, school III.2) all the rest are plural including the one in the

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title of the poem as well as numbers (ones and twos I.2). This feature reinforces the generality of the observation of the poet.

4.5 Pronouns

Some pronouns are quite often repeated; for instance :

(a) 'their' is repeated five times throughout the poem in I.8, II.8, III 3, III.6, III.8 (thrice repeated in line 8 of each stanza). This most repeated possessive pronoun highlights a. the idea of possession in the first place, and b. shows that it is others' possessions he is talking about and not his own situation, which places him at a distance from the object of observation and allows him the maximum amount of objectivity.

(b) The objective pronoun **'them'** is repeated thrice in II 1, II.7, III.7 (twice in line 7 of the last two stanzas). The simultaneous repeated use of possessive and objective pronouns clearly suggests that something is happening to the possessions of mothers.

(c) **'our'** appears once and stands for the least subjectivity.

(d) **'that'** also appears once and has an amaphoric interpretation as it refers back to an already mentioned object in the text.

5. Phonetics

The alliterative and assonantal patterns seen in many lines reinforce the meaning of the poem as well as add to the effect created by certain images and metaphors. In the first two stanzas the assonance of the sound /s/ helps create the image of afternoon atmosphere, and also gives it a touch of mystery.

(a) 'behind them', before them'

The first syllables of the two prepositions are similar /bI/, and /ðem/ is repeated.

These similar sounding prepositions are important in the sense that they divide the poem into two parts in terms of time and

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locate the character in the middle of the two. They foreground the locus where from the forward as well as backward vision is possible.

This is also an example of parallelism representing pleasant past versus less pleasant future.

(b) The title ends in /s/, which remains a heavily repeated phoneme throughout the poem.

I.2. /s/ is repeated thrice at the end of three words
leaves ones twos

I.4. /r/ and /n/ recur in three words
From, tree, bordering (note assonance /rɒ/ and /bɒ/

I.5. /n/ and /s/ repeated in words
In, hollows, afternoons
^ ^ ^

I.6. /m/ and /s/ are repeated in
mothers assemble
^ ^

I.7. /s/ alliteration
swing and sandpit

I.8. /r/ resonates in the line
free their children
The first and last words in this line end in nasalised /n/ and /ŋ/
setting children

II.1. /s/ repeated five times in this line
alliteration of /æ/ in and and album

II.4-5. The words lettered and wedding have voiceless fricatives /d/ and /t/ in the middle.
The first two words of line 5 (Our Wedding) start with a capital letter and are italicized and therefore foregrounded. Thus, the sense of loss of a pleasant past Is foregrounded.

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II.5,6,7. The last syllables of the three lines have some form of nasalised /n/.

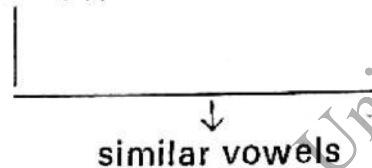
II.8. The words 'ruining' and 'courting' both end in /n/

III.2. lovers /lʌvə(r)/, are all /əra:l)

III.3. Assonance of /n/ in the words
And, children, intent, on

III.4.(a) Assonance of /n/
Finding, unripe, acorns

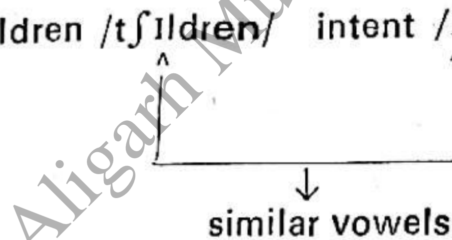
(b) more /mɔ : (r)/ acorns /eIcɔ :rnz/



similar vowels

III.5. /t/ repetition
expect, to, taken

III.3. children /tʃIldren/ intent /Intent/



similar vowels

III.7. something /sʌm ɣ ɪŋ/ pushing /puʃɪŋ/

It can be seen in the above noted phonetic pattern that the recurrence of sounds /s/ and /n/ or /ŋ/ is a frequent feature throughout the poem. To be more precise the frequency of /n/ is higher than that of /s/. There are lines which either end in or start with /s/ which reflects a tendency to associate the side with suspense and mystery. And it has already been pointed out elsewhere that time is pushing mothers to 'the side of their own lives' (ie old age to be followed by death), which is going to be a mysterious as well as awful experience for them in that it is a phase permanently removed from the pleasures of youth. The assonance of /n/ and /ŋ/ occurs mainly within the lines (that is between the structural sides)

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throughout the poem. This feature is reflective of the negative effect of time or the process of decay and death which can be noticed throughout the text. The very recurrence of /n/ (the first sound of a number of frequently used negative words like no, not, none, nothing, nasty, nuisance etc) fills the inside of the text with negativity and the reader has a feeling that something undesirable is going on. Just as the inside of a life is subject to decay and death and its sides are full of suspense and mystery, the structural interior of this poem is full of sadness and a sense of loss and its structural sides are surrounded by the sounds of suspense and mystery. These phonetic features, therefore, are not only in total harmony with the dominant theme of decay and death in the text but also thicken its atmosphere with elements of nostalgia, discontent, awe and sadness.

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5.1. Rhyme

I (a) In the first stanza the first line rhymes with the third line

fading
bordering

I (b) The second line rhymes with the fifth line

twos
afternoons

II (a) The first two lines of the second stanza rhyme

intervals
trades

II (b) The third line rhymes with the fifth

II (c) The fourth line rhymes with the seventh

lettered
wind

III (a) The last words of fifth and seventh lines are half rhymes

home
them

The rhyme scheme also involves the phonetic features of /n/ and /s/, and so the last comment is relevant in this case as well.

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6. Conclusion

As the analysis progresses the concrete structure of the poem starts appearing transluscent and access to its content becomes easy and more holistic. In fact, even while trying an analysis of form the doors to interpretation open up. We have seen, therefore,t hat it is through conceptual grouping of lexical items, semantic parallelism, deviation and fore-grounding that the poet gathers the unifying theme. Since, the poem basically deals with the negative effect of time, assonance adopted by him also plays an important part in creating and maintaining the atmosphere of sadness as required by a particular phase of time; afternoons or old age. From the above discussed lexical groups in stanza 1 we can associate two different looking thirgs to each other and inter-pret them similarly. The conceptual grouping makes it apparent that the poet is speaking about the mystery of time which has surrounded youth and beauty to destroy. The assonance of /s/ creates the atmosphere of mystery and /n/ that of increasing nothingness. The deviations in the second stanza address to the social scene and reflect upon the mechanical and uninteresting way of life generating a sort of apathy, senselessness and loss of individual personality. The preposi-tional phrases 'behind them' and 'before them' are also phrases of time in the overall context and help take the retrospective or prospective view of life. The semantic parallel of afternoons or fading summer, that is wind, makes it clear that the poet is occupied with time's move towards the sad end, that is degeneration and death. The parenthesis in the last stanza foregrounds the so-called lovers who are (quite ironically) in school. The use of parenthesis is a clear indication of the implicit irony. There is a structural motiva-tion to note that the night has approached very close because the assonance of /s/ of the first and second stanza gradually leaves place for the assonance of /n/. The plural forms of nouns etc. do also suggest generality of a specific observation.

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The idea of death suggested in the first stanza (by the falling of leaves) has been related to the second stanza where the poet speaks about the aging mothers who are at the verge of old age which will be followed by death. He shows them busy in their routine household chores, losing their youth, beauty and charm fast. Time has already pushed them from the phase of carefree youthful joy to the boredom of middle age (which is full of social and family obligations) and is still pushing them further. The third stanza takes the theme to the climax where it is clearly suggested that soon the happy past is about to be replaced by the gloom of old age ending in death. It is so because the mysterious progression of time will push the aging mothers from the joyless and boring phase of obligations and duties to unavoidable death. So, the poem is about the negative effect of time which exercises a destructive effect on every thing The use of present tense gives this observation a universal tone.

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Notes

1. The poem being analysed here is included in Philip Larkin. *The Whitsun Wedding* (London, 1964). p. 44.
2. Andrew Motion, *Philip Larkin* (New York, 1982). p. 59.

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Harish Raizada

SYMBOLISM AND IMAGERY IN *BLEAK HOUSE*

I

Flaubert once remarked : 'exterior reality must enter into us, must make us almost cry out, if we are to reproduce it well'.[1] It gives a writer 'force interne' and makes his works, as Kafka pointed out 'serve as the axe for the frozen sea within us'.[2] Dickens's later novels reveal this quality of intensity in the portrayal of reality in an amazing degree. From the early eighteen fifties onwards, ie. in the Great Exhibition era, he gets deeply concerned about the 'Condition of England question' first raised by Carlyle in 1839 in his *Chartism*. He is so much worried about the perversions of the Victorian society and the pervasive sense of evils rooted in its system that he launches his weekly magazine, *Household Works*, on 30 March, 1850, not only to entertain but function as the instrument of serious social purpose. Hence onwards he makes his novels also a vehicle for exposing the greed, apathy, and cruelty he saw around him. He now assumes the role of the spokesman for the conscience of his age and crusades militantly against the religious, political, social, economic and educational evils, and class prejudices.

With his rising concern for his responsibility to his readers — being 'a man among men'[3] — Dickens is also conscious of his responsibility *qua* artist lest his novels degenerate into denunciatory and didactic tracts. He rescues himself from this dilemma by means of his powerful creative imagination which helps him to transform gross reality treated in his novels, into artistic pictures. Emile Faquet's remark about Flaubert,

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'the imagination was his muse and reality his conscience',[4] is equally true about Dickens. He also believed that the works of a true artist should reveal the shaping power of the higher qualities of the methods of genuine realism and the higher qualities of the methods of genuine romance. He explained his manner of stating the truth when he wrote in the 1853 Preface to *Bleak House*, 'I have purposively dwelt on the romantic side of familiar things'.[5] We may describe this 'fanciful treatment' of reality by Dickens as his 'romantic realism' or as T.A. Jackson calls it 'imaginative realism'.[6]

One of Dickens's devices to remove the banality of realistic details is his rich use of symbolism and imagery in his treatment of the facts of life. Wallace Stevens points out : 'Reality is a cliche from which we escape by metaphor'.[7] It is metaphor which while working like a germ of energy among the 'facts, adds the yeast of imagination to the material dough. Dickens does not treat of facts or describe his landscape because they are interesting and picturesque, but because every detail treated fits into an imaginative pattern and has a symbolic significance. This is why even when the actual appears to predominate, one cannot fail to discern the strong and basically simple outline of a symbolic configuration beneath the realistic detail. By using this symbolic mode of peception of reality, Dickens creates a new technique of 'symbolic realism' for his later novels. The realistic details treated by him serve to suggest some thing about setting that transcends tangible details and thus becomes symbolic or the visible sign of something invisible. This device not only accentuates the sharpness of his social satire but also saves it from turning polemical and trite. Still more the symbolic mode helps him to express hidden recesses and motives of the human heart, i.e. the mysterious nature of characters, which eludes apprehension by the human eye, and thus portrays the real man and the whole man.

Edmund Wilson emphasizes the significance of symbolism

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in Dickens's novels when he remarks :

> ... The people who like to talk about the symbols of Kafka and Mann and Joyce have been discouraged from looking for anything of the kind in Dickens and usually have not read him, at least with mature minds. But even when we think we do know Dickens, we may be surprised to return to him and find in him a symbolism of a more complicated reference and a deeper implication than these metaphors that hang as emblems above the door. The Russians themselves, in this respect, appear to have learnt from Dickens'.[8]

Taking the cue from Edmund Wilson many modern critics liks Edgar Johnson, Hiller Miller, K.J. Fielding, Monroe Engel, Steven Marcus, John Lucas, and others have made stray remarks on symbolism in the novels of Dickens. In the absence of any detailed and systematic study of symbolism in his novels, it is worthwhile to diagnose how he sets out to interpret the social malaise of mid-Victorian England in terms of his own symbolic art in the first of his social group of novels, *Bleak House*, which ushers in a new technique in his writings. It is significant to note that Edmund Wilson considers this novel as Dickens's 'masterpiece'[9] of his middle period and it is in its context that he credits him with the use of symbolism in his novels.

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II

The descripton of the 'fog' choking the whole of London by its dense, brown obscurity as a setting of the narrative at rhe beginning of *Bleak House*, sets in a sombre tone of the story and suggests its dominant theme and key image.

> The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest, near that leaden-headed old obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed old corporation— Temple Bar. And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.
>
> Never can there come fog too thick, never can there come mud and mire too deep, to assort with the groping and floundering condition which this High Court of Chancery, most pestilent of hoary sinners, holds, this day, in the sight of heaven and earth.[10]

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Thus, we learn, sits the Lord High Chancellor 'with a foggy glory round his head', in his High Court of Chancery 'in the midst of the mud and at the heart of the fog' (p 19), surrounded by his legal luminaries 'mistily engaged in one of the ten thousand stages of an endless cause, tripping one another up on slippery precedents, groping knee-deep in technicalities, running their goat-hair and horse-hair warded heads against walls of words, and making pretence of equity with serious faces, as players might' (p.16), trying in vain to reach at truth : 'Well may the court be dim, wasting candles here and there, well may the fog hang heavy in it, as if it would never get cut.' (p. 16). Here the fog with its natural aura of obfuscation is used as a limited symbol to reveal the fogginess and lack of clarity of law and obscured thinking of those who dispense justice. But when we find fog treading like 'some prehistoric monster' through mud and gaslight over every nook and corner of London :

> Fog everywhere. Fog up the river. where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. (p 15)

and law spinning its labyrinthine webs to trap innocent people and ruin their lives :

> This is the Court of Chancery; which has its decaying houses and its blighted lands in every shire ; which has its worn-out lunatic in every madhouse, and its dead in every churchyard; which has its ruined suitor, with his slipshod heels and threadbare dress, borrowing and begging through the round of every man's acquaintance ; which gives to monied might the means abundantly of wearying out the right. (pp. 16-17)

the fog-law analogy acquires more pervasive and sinister significance. The law turns into the archetype of those vested interests that plunder society under the guise of being the custodians of society, strangle the general welfare and grow fat on the miseries of the poor. It becomes one of the instruments that give 'monied might the means abundantly of

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wearying out the right', the visible symbol behind which lurk the forces of greed and privilege spreading their tantacles of corruption. The fog does not remain confined only to the Court of Chancery or London but covers all England and symbolizes crying and wide-spread evils of the Victorian society.[11] These evils are as impersonal as the fog which is their central symbol. The fog also becomes the fog of ignorance — the wilful ignorance of upper class based on a limited concept of self-interest, the self-deluding ignorance of the misguided and ineffectual philanthropists like Mrs Jellyby, Mr. Chadband and Mrs. Pardiggle, and the pitiable ignorance of those too down-trodden in the society to know or care for their miseries. To every question addressed to Jo, he replies: 'I don't know nothink' (p. 209).

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The mud through which dogs and crowds of men wade in the streets of London jostling each other, also acquires symbolic significance like the fog :

> As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and if would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holburn Hill .. Dogs, undistinguishable in wire. Horses, scarcely better; splahed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill temper, and losing their foothold at street corners where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since day broke (if the day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, slicking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest (p. 15).

It exposes evils of ill-sanitation, which breed diseases and in fact not only the neglected poor like Jo but also the proudest of the proud and the highest of the high.

III

Like the settings of landscapes, tha places and houses of residance are also treated by Dickens both for their literal and symbolic significance in *Bleak House*. The Court of Chancery is the key instituion of the novel. In the initial stages :

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symbolizes the great gloomy and rotting city of London and the villainy of the British legal system in gross. Gradually it monstrously expands to encompass the whole country, and turns from a microcosm of the legal world to the macrocosm of the corrupt nineteenth century England, virtually the mundane equivalent of hell. It 'stands for the whole web of clotted antiquated English institutions in which England stiffles and decays.'[12] The sterility of the legal system is conveyed through its failure to decide the interminable law suit of Jarndyce and Jarndyce — a suit which is 'in itself a monument of Chancery practice', and in which the 'aggregate of costs' consumed 'amounts at the present hour to from sixty to seventy Thousand Pounds' (p.32) ! The unduly prolonged Chancery suit acquires the magnitude of a 'dead sea' (p.490) in which Richard, an interested party, like others before him sinks 'deeper and and deeper' 'every day, continually hoping and continually disappointed, conscious of change upon change for the worse in' himself, and of 'no change for the better in anything else' (p.505).

The rottenness of Chancery Court is symbolized by the junk-shop kept by the illiterate and half-mad Krook. Stuffed with old parchments, discarded legal papers, old ink bottles, tattered law books, it resembles the Court of Chancery with its piled up files Mr Crook is called the Lord Chancellor by his neighbours and he himself feels that 'there's no great odds betwixt' him and his 'noble and learned brother' — 'We both grub on in a muddle' (p.60). His large grey cat, Lady Jane, that sits on his shoulders, watches with greedy eyes the poor caged birds, larks, linnets and goldfinches, of the crazy old woman Miss Flite as the Chancery lawyers and attorneys do their clients. Most of these birds like clients die in cages because their lives are 'so short in comparison with Chancery proceedings' (p.63).

Closely connected with the Court of Chancery is another place, Chesney Wold, where resides the Lord High Chancellor,

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Sir Leicester Dedlock, 'an honourable, obstinate, truthful, high spirited, intensely prejudiced, perfectly unreasonable man' (p.22), who along with his swarm of parasitical cousins, other cogs on the wheel of Government machinery, gives the Court of Chancery its peculiar powers of working mischief. Though theirs is 'a deadened world' (p.21), they represent the whole governing system of the country and are behind its legal system, maintaining it and protecting it from all innovation. Defending the legal system Sir Leicester remarks that it cannot be altered in any iota except for the worse or without risk of opening the flood-gates of revolution and anarchy, and encouraging 'some person in the lower classes to rise up somewhere—like Wat Tyler' (p.26)

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The sombre-looking Chesney Wold, with the Ghost's Walk, which exercises profoundly depressing effect on Guppy and his friend, is symbolic of decadence of the landed aristocracy of England like that of the Dedlocks 'whose family greatness consists in their never having done anything to distinguish themselves for seven hundred years' (p.9‹). The very first sight of Chesney Wold sets the tone for all the events that take place there : 'The waters are out in Lincolnshire. An arch of the bridge in the park has been sapped and sopped away . . . and there is a general smell and taste as of the ancient Dedlocks in their graves.' (pp.21-22), The scene suggests the decay of a class and a way of living.

Tom-All-Alone's is another place connected with the Court of Chancery. It is the property of the late Tom Jarndyce (after whom it is named), the original plaintiff or defendent in the unending suit, Jarndyce and Jarndyce, which has over years ruined it. Turned into an urban slum it is the breeding ground for evil and disease and is a similar festering in the landscape of London as cemetery. Its typical inhabitants are the brick-maker's family and Jo, the crossing sweeper, the representatives of 'the great dumb-inarticulate class' and victims of English social inequities, whose miserable condition is beyond

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ractification by oppressive Government and lukewarm benevolent institutions. Tom-All-Alone's, we are told,

> ...is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people; where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their decay was far advanced, by some bold vagrants who, after establishing their own possession, took to letting them out in lodgings. Now, these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery. As, on the ruined human wretch, vermin parasites appear, so, these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in maggot numbers, where the rain drips in; and comes and goes, fetching and carrying fever, and sowing more evil in its every footprint than Lord Coodle, and Sir Thomas Doodle, and the Duke of Foodle, and all the five gentlemen in office, down to Zoodle, shall set right in five hundred years —though born expressly to do it (p. 209).

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When Mr. Snagsby enters Tom-All-Alone's along with Mr. Bucket, he 'sickens in body and mind, and feels as if he were going every moment deeper down, into the infernal gulf' (p.289). His experience is similar to that of Richard's descent deeper and deeper into the infernel sea of Chancery suit. When Jo dies of fever caught from Tom-All-Alone's, Dickens writes with seathing sarcasm: 'Dead, your Majesty, Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead, men and women, both with Heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us every day' (p.592) Tom-All-Alone's has its revenge for it sends out noxious vapours, its waifs bearing pollution and infection, its criminals returning evil for evil that has formed them.

> There is not an atom of Tom's slime, not a cubic inch of any pestilential gas in which he lives, not one obscenity or degradation about him not an ignorance, not a wickedness, not a brutality of his committing, but shall work its retribution, through every order of society, up to the proudest of the proud, and to the highest of the high. Verily, what with tainting, plundering, and spoiling, Tom has his revenge. (p. 573)

With reference in the description of Tom-All-Alone's (p 209) to Goodle, Doodle Foodle and Zoodle, representatives of the British

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politicians of different shades, there can be no mistake in identifying the place as symbolic of Victorian England.

'Tom-All-Alone's : The Ruined House' was the first title drafted by Dickens for the novel. Later he substituted it by 'Bleak House', s modified and less bitter metaphor for England. Bleak House is a gay and welcome dwelling house of Mr. Jarndyce, where Ada, Richard Carstone and Esther Summerson, three orphans involved in Chancery suit, come to stay. Describing its history Mr. Jarndyce tells Esther Summerson that earlier the house was called 'the Peaks' (symbolic of prosperous England); bur when Mr Jarndyce's uncle Tom Jarndyce, its owner, got entangled in the Chancery suit, he gave it its present name, and lived in it shut up :

> In the meantime, the place became dilapidaled, the wind whistled through the cracked walls, the rain fell through the broken roof, the weeds choked the passage to the rotting door. When I brought what remained of him home here, the brains seemed to me to have blown out of the house too; it was so shattered and ruined (p. 99).

Mr Jarndyce tells Esther of another property of theirs, in the city of London, which was also ruined by the wicked legal monster :

> 'It is a street of perishing blind houses, with their eyes stoned out; without a pane of glass, without so much as a window-frame with the bare blank shutters tumbling from their hinges and falling asunder ..Although Bleak House was not in Chancery, its master was, and it was stamped with the same seal. These are the Great Seal's impressions, my dear, all over England ..the children know them' (p. 100).

The similarity between Tom-All-Alone's and Bleak House, as emphasized here is significant. The present Bleak House, though it retains its 'dreary name', is not 'a dreary place' (p. 42). Dickens, however, suggests here that disease, corruption, and oppression, the 'blessings' of an acquisitive society, if not checked in time, are bound to infect even the little gaeity left in England, and turn it into a completely dreary and gloomy place. Bleak House loses much of its

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mirth when Esther Summerson catches infection and contagion of Tom-All-Alone's pestilential vapours through Charley who catches it from Jo, and beautiful and young Ada turns widow as her husband Richard Carstone dies as a dejected and hounded person because of the Chancery suit. The new 'Bleak House' with its pretty little orchard having cherries and apple trees, which Mr. Jarndyce constructs away from fog, smoke and mud of London, amidst lovely and tranquil rural surroundings, as a wedding gift for Esther, is symbolic of Dickens's Utopian picture of the England of his dreams.

Other households, though minor ones, emblematize significantly the darkness of Victorian England through their disorderly, dirty, broken-down interiors. Mrs. Jellyby's house remains 'littered down with waste paper and Borrioboolan documents, as an untidy stable might be littered with straw' (p. 386). At the time of Caddy Jellyby's marriage 'nothing belonging to the family, which it had been possible to break, was unbroken ... nothing which it had been possible to spoil in any way, was unspoilt; and that no domestic object which was capable of collecting dirt, from a dear child's knee to the door-plate, was without as much dirt as could well accumulate upon it' (p. 387). Symond's Inn, where Richard Carstone's legal adviser, Mr Vholes, lives, is constructed of 'old building materials which took kindly to the dry rot and to dirt and all things decaying and dismal' (p. 501). Richard Carstone himself lives in a room which is full of 'a great confusion of clothes, tin cases, books, boots, brushes, and portmanteaus, strewn all about the floor' (p. 566).

IV

Finding the British Parliament with its party system ineffective in saving the country from going to pieces, Dickens thinks divine wrath or revolutionary fire[13] to be the only cure for the ills of the country. Fire in the form of spontaneous combustion, incessant rains and epidemic are the instruments

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of divine wrath to annihilate the corruption inherent in the Victorian society. Just as spontaneous combustion disposes of Lord Chancellor Krook and his junk-shop so will, Dickens suggests, fire sweep away the confusion of all law and all forms of social injustice for the sham Lord Chancellor symbolizes not only the Court of Chancery and the corruption of law but 'all authorities in all places under all names so ever'. Nothing will do short of the complete annihilation that they will ultimately provide by blowing up their own corruption. The symbolism of Krook's death by spontaneous combustion becomes obvious when Dickens comments :

> The Lord Chancellor of that Court, true to his title in his last act, has died the death of all Lord Chancellors in all courts, and of all authorities in all places under all names soever, where false pretences are made, and where injustice is done. Call the death by any name Your Highness will, attribute it to whom you will, or say it might have been prevented how you will, it is the same death eternally... inborn, inbred, engendered in the corrupted humours of the vicious body itself, and that only—Spontaneous Combustion and none other of all the deaths that can be died (pp. 418-19).

If fire is needed to blow up Chacery Court, persistent rains will slowly decay the deadening world of feudal aristocracy-Chesney Wold : 'The pictures of the Dedlocks past and gone have seemed to vanish into the damp walls in mere lowness of spirits as the housekeeper has passed along the old rooms, shutting up the shutters' (p. 72). But before it disintegrates its secrets will be found buried in Tom-All-Alone's for that is where lies rotting Lady Dedlock's lover and that is where she herself comes to die. Chesney Wold has its corollary in these wretched hovels of the neglected poor; its dignity is built on their degradation. At the end of the story, Chesney Wold, the proud residence oi Sir Leicester Dedlock is reduced to sombre and dull repose with 'no flag flying now by day, no rows of lights sparkling by night; with no family to come and go, no visitors to be the souls of pale cold shapes of rooms, no stir of life about it' (p, 793).

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Epidemic is for Dickens Nature's counterpart for revolution. In his mind disease and oppression were closely linked. In 1854, the year he finished *Bleak House*, he warned Lady Burdett-Coutts of the danger the government faced if it did not take proper measures to control cholera : 'You will see such a shake in this country as never was seen on Earth since Sampson pulled tha Temple down upon his head'.[14] Tom-All-Alone's is the breeding ground for such diseases and epidemics. It not only kills its own inhabitants but also poisons and infects as a retribution every order of society. Just as Tom-All-Alone's slowly and piecemeal crumbles into ruins from the rottenness of its old beams and raking plaster, so the internal rottenness of the social structure that not merely tolerates but perpetuates such dirty hovels will inevitably destroy itself, die of its own self-engendered diseases, annihilate itself by its own corruption.

V

Though the legal metaphor is central in the novel, the the overtones of religious symbolism as discerned earlier in the manifestation of the Divine wrath in the form of Spontaneous Combustion are also prominent in the narrative. At places religious symbolism is associated with the Court of Chancery and the unending law suit. Ada is called a 'child of the universe', so are Esther Summerson and Richard Carstone, the other orphans involved in the law suit (Esther through her mother Lady Dedlock), 'children of the universe'. Their 'father' is the Lord High Chancellor who legally entrusts them to the guardianship of Mr. Jarndyce. The involvement of a large number of people in the terminable legal muddle which remains unfinished during their life span, suggests the symbol of 'Original Sin'.[15] Its curse visits upon and ruins people generation after generation. Mr. Jarndyce meaningfully remarks : 'How mankind ever came to be afflicted with Wiglomeration, or for whose sins these young people ever

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fell into a pit of it, I don't know; so it is' (p. 101). The men trapped by suit or Original Sin, are like innocent birds, larks, linnets, goldfinches, etc. lying prisoners in the cages of Miss Flite dying 'over and over again'. Like human beings they will also get their freedom on the Day of Judgment. 'On a day of such good omen', when they are free 'they shall sing as much as they like' (p. 64). Miss Flite expects judgment in her suit by the Day of Judgment : 'I expect a judgment. Shortly. On the Day of Judgment. I have discovered that the sixth seal mentioned in the Revelations is the Great Seal. It has been open a long time' (p. 43) ?

George Santayana is of the view that the sin of Lady Dedlock and Captain Hawden, of which Esther is the illegitimate fruit, is treated by Dickens 'as if it were the sin of Adam, remote, mysterious, inexpiable'.[16] Small pox which disfigures Esther Summerson spmbolizes the visitation of the sins of parents on children.

VI

Dickens is very particular about the names of his characters. Sometimes he uses strange names like Mr. Pumblechook or Martin Chuzzlewit purely for fun but at other occasions when concerned with serious problems he makes them symbolically significant. In *Bleak House* we heve several names which are like visible signs of the invisible qualities possessed by the characters who bear these names. The Dedlocks Sir Leicester Dedlock and his relations of the feudal order, are like 'dead lock' spmbolic of their static and and deedaned life. Lady Dedlock's name Honoria ('honourable') Dedlock is ironically symbolic of her disgrace or lack of honour manifest in her illicit love for Captain Hawdon. Hawdon, on the other hand, turns 'Nemo' ie. the wretched 'Nobody' or 'No one' (p. 182) after his beloved deserts him and marries Sir Leicester Dedlock. His personality is completely suppressed and he survives only as a non-entity.

Esther Summerson's name suggests her function in the

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story and the life of the inmates of Bleak House : she is the 'summer sun', a bright, sustaining force for those around her, in contrast to the darkening force of evil symbolized by the dense fog. Dickens was sceptical of all institutions, churches, charitable societies, Parliament, government offices as effective means of doing good to the people. He believed that the real good could only come from the natural flow of benevolence and spontaneous actions of kindness of the individual. It is the sunshine of kind impulses of persons like Esther that alone can dispel the darkness caused by the wicked socio-political forces. The symbolic significance of the name of Esther Summerson's lover Allan Woodcourt has been explained by Taylor Stoehr on the basis of his hesitation in wooing Esther : 'Woodcourt, to spell out Dickens's pun – would court Esther if he could'.[17] There are, however, some obstacles which prevent him from doing so. Her mother considers Allan's ancestors superior to those of Esther. Esther's own consciousness of her guilt makes her feel unworthy of Allan. After her illness she loses all hopes of her having Allan as her lover and is satisfied with having no contacts with him.

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VII

The dehumanization of the acquisitive Victorian society with its rampant evils of greed, ingratitude, revenge and murder, is reflected through the use of animal imagery and symbolism by Dickens. Like Ben Jonson in *Volpone* and Shakespeare in *King Lear*, he also suggests how wickedness metamorphoses human beings to behave like animals and beasts of prey.

Richard Carstone's lawyer, Mr. Vholes, is shown as a compound of cat and vampire, always peeling off his black gloves 'as if he were skinning his hands' (p 503). He watches his client as a cat watches a mouse's hole : 'Mr. Vholes, after glancing at the official cat who is patiently watching a

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mouse's hole, fixes his charmed gaze again on his young client, and proceeds in his buttoned-up half-audible voice' (p. 504). When he gives his desk a rap to impress upon Richard Carstone how much he is interested in his case, we are told : 'Mr. Vholes gives it a rap, and it sounds as hollow as a coffin' (p. 505). He and his other lawyer colleagues who live on human flesh are described as cannibals : 'Mr. Vholes and his relations being minor cannibal chiefs, and it being proposed to abolish cannibalism, indignant champions were to put the case thus : 'Make man-eating unlawful, and you starve the Vholeses !' (p. 503).

The father of Smallweed's grandfather, with his hideous rapacity resembles a spider spinning his traps to entangle flies within strand upon strand of sticky and imprisoning filaments : 'The father of this pleasant grandfather, of the neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant, was a horny-skinned, two-legged, money-getting species of spider, who spun webs to catch unwary flies, and retired into holes until they were entrapped' (p. 268). Mr. Chadband, 'a large, yellow man, with fat smile' moves 'softly and cumbrously, not unlike a bear who has been taught to walk upright' (p. 246). Richard Carstone, in his unsettled condition, considers himself 'a very unfortunate dog' (p. 300). Inspector Bucket, the official blood hound raises his fat forefinger 'to the dignity of a familiar demon' (p. 648).

Like Yank in Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*, Jo, the neglected orphan, 'is of no order and no place; neither of the beasts, nor of humanity' (p 58). Allan Woodcourt finds it difficult to lodge him at some safe place because 'It surely is a strange fact that in the heart of a civilised world this creature in human form should be more difficult to dispose of than an unowned dog' (p. 580). He is often described as a 'lower animal': 'Jo, and the other lower animals, get on in the unintelligible mess as they can' (p. 210). He eats and drinks, 'Like a scared animal' (p. 580). At times he looks like

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a 'blinded oxen, over-goaded, over-driven, never guided' (p. 210), or a 'vagabond dog' (p. 210). Dickens sarcastically suggests : 'Turn that dog's descendents wild, like Jo, and in a very few years they will so degenerate that they will lose even their bark — but not their bite' (p 211). In this monied culture of the morally degraded Victorian England even he the virtue of benevolence turns 'rapacious' and the normal husband and wife like Prince Turveydrop and Caddy Jellyby give birth only to an enfeebled deaf and dumb child.

Dickens anticipates existential view of man as a forlorn and abandoned creature in this absurd world. Like Heideggar he considers death to be the individualizing experience and a means of man's release. Death imagery which figures prominently in his novels, *Oliver Twist* and *Dombey and Son*, acquires more significant overtones in *Bleak House*. Death here functions as 'a touchstone of reality' and is a measure of the wretchedness of man's earthly life, but more kindly than the torments inflicted by corrupt, organized society. Some of the characters in the novel wish they were never born. Esther painfully remembers how as a child she heard her godmother saying to her : 'It would have been far better, little Esther, that you had had no birthday; that you had never been born '(p. 29) ! Befriended by Esther Summerson, Caddy Jellyby expresses her misery by confiding to the former : 'I wish I was dead ! .. I wish we were all dead. It would be a great deal better for us' (p. 54) ! Esther herself, when she learns of the secret of her parentage, feels : 'It would have been better and happier for many people, if indeed I had never breathed' (p. 470). There is a touch of philosophic detachment in the illiterate Jo's attitude towards death. When Charley forbids him to sleep at the brick kiln because people die there, he says : 'They dies everywhere They dies in their lodgings — she knows where; I showed her — and they dies down in Tom-All-Alone's in heaps. They dies more than they lives, according to what *I* see' (p. 398). He thinks of death

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as being 'moved on as fur as ever I could go and couldn't be moved no furder' (p. 590).

In the novel we are given a death-roll of nine prominent characters, besides the baby by fever and a lively young French woman left to be hanged. The cemetery—emblematic of man's ultimate destination — where the dead are brought to be buried, lies in the heart of the city 'with houses looking on, on every side, save where a reeking little tunnel of a court gives access to the iron gate — with every villainy of life in action close on death, and every poisonous element of death in action close on life' (p. 148). It is:

> hemmed-in churchyard, postiferous and obscene, whence malignant diseases are communicated to the bodies of our dear brothers and sisters who have not departed; while our dear brothers and sisters who hang about official black stairs——would to Heaven they *had* departed! (p. 148).

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In its emotional power and the miraculous integral suffusion of social criticism and artistic myth, *Bleak House* ranks among Dickens's greatest works. No other novel of his except *Hard Times* lashes with such sharp and biting sarcasm the evils rooted in nineteenth century England and reveals his artistic vision with such rich imagery and powerful symbolism as does this masterpiece of his fictional writings.

Notes and References

1. See Damian Grant, *Realism* (London, 1970), p. 59.
2. See John Lucas, *The Melancholy Man* (London, 1970), p. 204.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
4. Emile Faguet, *Flaubert* (1899), p. 66.
5. Preface to the first edition of *Bleak House*, included by Stephen Wall, ed. *Charles Dickens*, Penguin Critical Anthologies, (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 95.
6. T. A. Jackson, *Charles Dickens : The Progress of a Radical* (London, 1937), p. 295.

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7. Wallace Stevens, *Opus Posthumous* (New York, 1957), p. 179.
8. Edmund Wilson, *The Wound and the Bow* (London, 1961), p. 34.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
10. Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London, 1953), pp. 15-16. All textual references are to this edition of the novel.
11. For the use of the image of 'London fog', Dickens had perhaps in his mind Carlyle's passage in *Latter-Day Pamphlets*: 'A blind loquacious pruriency of indiscriminate Philanthropism substituting itself, with much self-laudation, for the silent divinely awful sense of Right and Wrong;—testifying too c'early that here is no longer a divine sense of Right and Wrong that in the smoke of this universal, and alas inevitable and indispensable revolutionary fire, and burning up of worn-out rags of which the world is full, our life-atmosphere has (for the time) become one vile London fog, and the eternal loadstars are gone out for us)'. See 'Model Prisons', March, 1850.
12. Edmund Wilson, p. 33.
13. Carlyle, *op cit.*
14. *The Heart of Charles Dickens : As Revealed in His Letters to Angela Burdett-Couths*, ed. Edgar Johnson (New York, 1952), p. 273.
15. See J. Hillis Miller, '*Bleak House* and the Moral Life', *Bleak House : A Selection of Critical Essays*, ed. A. E. Dyson (London, 1969), p. 164; and also Mark Spilka, 'Religious Folly, included in the work cited above, p. 209.
16. George Santayana, 'Dickens', *Soliloquies in England* (New York, 1923), p. 61.
17. Taylor Stoehr, 'Bleak House : The Novel as Dream', included in *Bleak House : A Selection of Critical Essays, op. cit*, p. 242.

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Usha Bande

WHY DOES MISS PRINGLE HATE SAMMY? A NOTE ON *FREE FALL*

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In William Golding's *Free Fall*,[1] Samuel Mountjoy is engaged in a quest to discover the exact moment when he lost his freedom and innocence. As Sammy, the 'only teller' of his 'curious story,' takes us through the 'shuffle fold and coil' (p. 6) of his memory, he assesses the corroding influences of all those who figured significantly in his childhood and boyhood. He blames Philip, Miss Pringle and Father Watts-Watt, in no uncertain terms, for exposing him to cunning, hatred and perversity, respectively. He is particularly puzzled by Miss Pringle's attitude because he finds no reason for her callousness. According to Sammy, her scripture lessons and stories of miracles fascinated him so deeply that he always identified with her and thought of themselves as 'two of a kind.' Despite the sincerity of his admiration for her and his genuine religious fervor, she treats him cruelly and creates a little devil out of the 'earnest metaphysical boy' (p. 206). A Horneyan approach can give us a clue to Miss Pringle's personality and help us find answers to the questions: Why does Miss Pringle hate Sammy? Why is she deaf to the sincere curiosity of a little boy, and blind to his natural talents?

According to Horneyan tenets, Miss Pringle comes in the category of those 'expansive'[2] persons who have perfectionist standards and who identify themselves with their 'moral and intellectual' superiority. Such a person is proud of 'the flawless excellence of the whole conduct of life' (*NHG*,

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p. 196), Moreover, a perfectionist needs and welcomes respect from others as a confirmation of his high opinion of himself, but he scorns 'glowing admiration.'

From Sammy's account, we get a clear picture of Miss Pringle's excellent tastes in matters of dress and life-style. She is 'an exquisite niminy-piminy Lady-like' person whose face wears 'a smile of professional benevolence, as arranged and external as her clothes' (p. 195); she has an obsession for cleanliness; she hates to touch her students as if for fear of contaminating her hands. These external tastes reveal a person with superiority of tastes and an 'arrogant contempt for others.' In her imagination, she is a 'lady,' belonging to a high social order, much above the hobnob multitude she is thrown with. But, the realities of life are far more harsh than the vision of a glorified self. Her job in a school mainly catering to the lower strata of society denies her self-image. In her frustation she hates the children she has to teach, but this attitude creates further conflicts as her perfectionist standards demand that she should be exemplary. Her teachings idealize love, humility, faith and meekness—values that religion upholds. Her superior image of herself forbids her from following her teachings and being meek and loving and so on. The gap between her aspirations and achihvements, example and precept generates frustration and its allied reactions.

Adult Sammy, the narrator, attributes Miss Pringle's cynicism to her sexual frustrations at not being accepted by Father Watts-Watt. Sammy's thesis is that Miss Pringle had secrectly hoped to marry Father Watts-Watt, but the eccentric priest adopted Sammy, a slum boy, and rejected her. She pours the venom of her anger on him because he is the cause of her frustration I believe, however, that the reasons for her sadism are not so simple and obvious, and that neither young Sammy nor the mature one has fathomed the deeper psychological sources of her behaviour. Miss Prirgle is a victim of her

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'shoulds' and 'claims'. She upbraids herself for not standing up to her standards. As her proud, superior self she should not be amid those whom she would not like to touch, but as a teacher she should follow her precepts and extend love. She is unable to love, but she takes pride in *'knowing* about moral values and *being* a moral person (*NHG*, p. 196). She insists that others, particularly her students, should stand up to those values. She despises them for failing to do so. This is her externalization. She saves herself from self-loathing by projecting her moral values on others. The meaning she reads in Sammy's sketches and the uproar she creates is an example of her misplaced emphasis on moral values.

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Miss Pringle has a grudge against life because life has not honoured her grandiose image of herself as a high-ranking lady. Her anger and bitterness show in her behaviour. Sammy recalls that she ruled not by love but by fear. Her weapons were 'subtle, and cruel, unfair and vicious. . . .They . . . tore flesh' (p. 195). She dislikes Nick. She hates Sammy. There appears some viability in Sammy's complaint that Miss Pringle made him a target of her hate because he 'must have taxed her' by his innocence and talent, besides his low birth. With his talents and innocence Sammy is a threat to Miss Pringle's inexorable standards of perfection and superiority. Her sadistic impulses descend down with full force when she notices Sammy's eagerness to please her and be near her. If she were to allow him to identify with her, she would be, conversely, identifying with him, a slum boy; this is what her 'lady-like' self finds repulsive and hate-worthy. To the boy Sammy, Miss Pringle's attitude is puzzling but, to the adult Sammy she is an incarnation of human evil. In his bitterness he indicts her as an architect of his character, 'you were forced to torture me. You lost your freedom somewhere and after that you had to do to me what you did (p. 251) He witholds his accusing voice when he sees her, years afterwards, still living in self-deceptions, content that she has had a hand in

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shaping famous persons like Samuel Mountjoy, the painter and Philip, the minister. But, whatever her personal compulsions in treating young Sammy shabbily, her *modus operandi* results in instilling a sense of guilt in him, not so much for what he does as for what he is, his very being.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Life of Graham Greene, Volume I : 1904-1939 :
By NORMAN SHERRY, Viking Press, New York, 1989. 783 pp.

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The very fact of Norman Sherry's *Life of Graham Greene* sparks at least two ironies. At 783 pages, this first half of a projected two-volume work already runs to more than twice the page count of Greeene's longest novel, *Brighton Rock* (1938). The second irony turns on the gulf dividing a writer whose seedy, bitten-up people usually move in shabby, nasty settings and the de luxe format of that writer's biography. The large print, generous margins, and creamy king-size pages of Sherry's authorized *Life* belie both Greene's preference for the run-down and his frequent use of grandeur as a benchmark of moral corruption.

Perhaps the biography's elegance refers most accurately to the wit, energy, and dedication of the biographer. The thoroughness of detail found in Sherry's opening pages typify the book's inclusiveness. We learn here the day of the week Greene was born, the exact time of his birth, and his birth weight. Also included is a description of the weather in Berkhamsted, England, on both 2 October 1904 and the previous month; information about the flooring, lighting, and seating capacity of the chapel where he was baptised; the date he cut his first tooth. Sherry goes on to include pocket biographies of those who influenced Greene, like Kenneth Richmond, the London psychiatrist who treated him for depresseion at age seventeen, and one Don Pelito, the four foot-six-inch model for the Judas figure in *The Power and the Glory* (1940), whom Sherry himself met in 1978. Interviewing

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people, reading old letters, sifting school records, Sherry displays both the diligence and alertness required of a good biographer. He compares information given to him in person with that found in either manuscript or print. For the sake of accuracy, he will correct Greene's flawed memory (or spelling). Then he will enter his man's psychodrama, showing, for instance, how Greene's worries about money, health, and career led to recurrent nightmares in the early 1930s. His gains can be easily assessed. Rather than drowning the reader in a sea of facts, he proves that a biography can be inclusive but not boring.

An array of skills enrich the *Life.* Sherry can vary his pace, approach and subject-matter without losing sight of his purpose — that of dovetailing the formation of Greene's sensibility with the *oeuvre* that has made him one of our century's leading writers in English. By turns analytical and anecdotal, Sherry will trace Greene's childhood fears to their source and then note their recurrence in the fiction. Symbols from Greene's unhappy childhood like the green baize door and the cracked bell show him overcoming his early traumas in part by transmuting them into important writing; a lifelong fear of drowning also underlies one of the best scenes in *The Quiet American* (1955).

The ability to blend materials enables Sherry to work out a set of artistic principles from Greene's book reviews of the early 1930s, too. In the aesthetic sphere, Sherry is first rate. He finds meaning not only in the feelings stated in Greene's letters but also in the letters' imagery and stylistic control. Writing with economy and good sense, he summarizes the failings of Greene's first published novel, *The Man Within* (1929) :

> The story is slight with much repetitive action, the setting and characters often unrealized and the dialogue sometimes maladroit Apart from the middle chapters dealing with the assize courts, the reader enters a romantic and unrealistic world populated by unlikely smugglers (371)

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This disclaimer reveals but one of Sherry's strengths. Let's look at some others. For example, much of his persuasiveness rests on his lively sense of fun, a near requirement for a portrayer of a prankster like Greene. Thus the chapter called 'A Seminal Year' includes the observation, 'That night, from the window of his hotel, he [Greene] saw a man and woman copulating' (163) ; and some years later, when a sick Liberian says that he's suffering from gonorrhea, we're told, 'Graham turned green' (556).

Only a sharp, versatile mind — one sensitive to both the prankish and the morbid—can do justice to Greene's 'complex, ambiguous nature' (259). No idolator, Sherry will refer to his man's 'strong streak of perversity' (158). Looking in the right places for ideas, he also shows this perversity shaping Greene's art. Violence dogged Greene from the start : 'When he was ten the First World War began; when he was thirteen there was the Russian Revolution; when he was twenty-two there was the General Strike in Britain' (5-6). This background of upheaval aggravated a childhood fear of birds, bats, and darkness; even when he was small, he felt pulled between the need for both security and the solitude his budding imagination needed to find creative outlets. The bipolar tug intensified in 1918 when he began boarding in the school where his father was headmaster. Sherry's account in Chapter 5 of Greene's persecution by his fellow students and his belief that his parents betrayed him make the chapter, 'The Greening of Greene,' the linchpin of the book. The transformation of the shy, physically awkward lad into the betrayal-ridden adult who preferred the filth and fever of the primitive tropics to the comforts of home discloses some of the burden of artistic expression. Greene accepted the frustrations and denials of authorship in order to win success. The author in Greene has thrived at the expense of the person, dredging up childhood anxieties and dwelling on his failings to the point where his hard-won success had lost its savor (in *A Sort of Life* [1971]), he chides himself for having failed at failure).

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Did he fail his biographer, too? 'I will never lie to you Norman, but I will not answer all your questions' (xvi), he once told Sherry. Perhaps his reticence explains his shadowiness as a family man. More could have been said of the fact that his African and Mexican journeys of the 1930s coincided with the age when his two children were starting to walk a time when his wife needed him at home. And though Sherry does remind us that Greene and Vivien divorced, he might have explained the rift by means of the contrast developed in *It's a Battlefield* between love and lust. Whereas lust is simple, love introduces complexities which can interfere with sex and blunt sexual pleasure. This tragic contrast could explain a great deal about Greene's marriage. Besides appearing in a 1934 book, it preceded only by months Greene's departure for Liberia in January 1935, and it coincided with the time when he began to rip pages from his diary. Though much has been said about the pain Graham Greene has suffered, perhaps more attention needs to be given to the pain he inflicted.

It would be good, too, to know his thoughts when he named his son (born in September 1936) Francis Francis was the name of the unlucky main figure in his rejected first novel, 'The Episode'; of the treacherous, guilt-raked hero of *The Man Within*; and of the frightened child who dies in 'The End of the Party' (1931). Certainly Greene wanted better for his new son than the woes suffered by his like-named characters, but Sherry sidesteps the issues called forth by Francis's puzzling name, intriguing as they are.

If he's protecting Greene's privacy, then perhaps his silence shouldn't be faulted. But his *Life* can be improved elsewhere. *The Prefaces of Henry James* was edited by R. P. Blackmur and not Leon Edel, as Sherry claims (524), and Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* didn't first appear in 1947 (245, 373), but in 1948. Another problem inheres in the book's style. Sherry handles complex ideas and moral ambiguities with a deftness befitting his mercurial subject. And though his interest in

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Greene remains steady, his prose softens and sags over the long pull. Future editions of the biography should remove cliches like 'set the wheels in motion' (143), 'throw in the towel' (249), and 'keep the wolf from the door' (447). Another rhetorical slip that has no place in a major biography is Sherry's growing tendency to cite a connection without troubling to define it : 'Greene's priest [in *The Power and the Glory*] suffers his greatest degradation in jail and this episode owes a good deal to Greene's experiences in Villhermosa' (712).

As these missed chances show, some parts of the *Life* please more than others. Readers may object to the volume of quoted material, for example, puffing out Chapter 14, an account of Greene's courtship of Vivien. Here, Sherry can't resist including many of the surviving letters Greene wrote at the time, thus forfeiting both control and perspective. The hard focus created by a succession of letters works better in a novel of psychological realism than in a biography. It also makes us question Sherry's judgment. What kind of material should a biography preserve? Chapter Thirty-two prints a 1933 letter describing the Greenes' new flat. Selection becomes a question again in Chapter 36. Appearing after an exciting account of Greene's Liberian trek, the heavily quoted chapter stubs along slowly. Whatever rhythm Sherry does coax out of it he forfeits in his rehearsals of Greene's dealings with agents, editors, and publishers, material that might have been summarized rather than spelled out. But he recovers quickly. Sluggish, earnest Chapter 36 yields to one of the book's most inspired chapters, 'The Pleasure Dome,' a discussion of Greene as both a film critic and film maker. Because Sherry backs off from his material, he recounts experience, probes its meaning, and formulates an aesthetic that sheds important light on Greene's artistry.

Most of the *Life* attains this distinction. Funny, perceptive, and generous in spirit, the work includes a wealth of data drawn from many sources. Organizing this abundance is

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Sherry's concept of Greene as a restless, energetic man forever seeking ways of escape — from depression and boredom, yes, but perhaps also from that penchant for ugliness that has chilled his heart while, paradoxically, building his vision. Much of the value of *The Life of Graham Greene* stems from the book's ability to filter the events it describes through the prism of Greene's personality. As he should, Greene focuses everything that goes on in the *Life*. Sherry deserves credit for keeping him at the animating core. Credit should also go to his sometimes enigmatic subject. One of the best strokes in a career studded by imaginative triumphs came in Greene's having chosen Norman Sherry to write his biography.

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