VOLUME 9
1984
NUMBER 1

THE ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Aligarh Muslim University

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ASLOOB AHMAD ANSARI

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Annual Subscription :

Rs 30.00

£ 3.50 $ 6.00

Single Copy :

Rs 20.00

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S. Viswanathan

A CONTEXT OF SPENSER'S EPISODE OF DESPAIR

It has been recognized that the powerful impact of Spenser's account of Red Cross's encounter with Despair (*The Faerie Queene,* Bk I. Canto 9) is mainly a matter of effective dramatic realization of allegory and of the excellent debating skills of the able, though specious, rhetorician Despair. Also, successive scholars have illuminated many of the doctrinal aspects of the episode.[1] But enough attention has not been paid to the impetus given to it by the force of two traditions in terms of which the poet would seem to go to work—the medieval-Renaissance convention of Despair and the debate of the Four Daughters of God, both of which originally theological or doctrinal conventions found vivid embodiment recurrently in the dramatic tradition of the mysteries, the miracles, the moralities and the interludes. The probable backgrounds of the Despair episode in these two conventions which almost become in this case two-in-one because of their conjunction in the dramatic tradition are worth exploring.

The temptation of Despair which takes the form of a counsel of despair and an invitation to suicide figures in a number of the mystery and morality plays as a crucial challenge to man in a 'boundary situation.' Examples among the mystery plays are the hanging of Judas in the N-town cycle or the Hegge cycle, and the plays about the hanging of Judas in the Towneley cycle. A whole range of morality plays and interludes carry a Despair episode as a turning point in their action. In these plays, the protagonist, at a climactic moment

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in the action and at an advanced point in his career, is overpowered with a consciousness of his lapses and backslidings, led in despair to attempt suicide and is invariably rescued into repentance of his sins and salvation thanks to the intervention of an agent of mercy—which is exactly the experience of Red Cross as conceived and presented by Spenser in the Despair episode. Among those plays are *Mankind* (1465-70): *Lusty Juventus* (1550); *Nice Wan* (1550); *Misogonus* (1570); and *The Marriage of Wit and Science* (1568). Besides the Calvinistic, play-length elaboration of the idea of despair in Nathaniel Woodes' *The Conflict of Conscience* (1572) and the classic portrayal of it in the last scenes of Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, the motif of despair occurs in a minor way in plays like Greene and Lodge's *A Looking Glass for London and England* (c.1590), *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes Published* (1599), not to mention the farcical attempt of Sordido to hang himself in Ben Jonson's *Every Man out of His Humour* (1599) (*III.ii*).[2] While editors have cited Despair as the figure appears in Skelton's morality as an analogue and probable source for Spenser's Despair, no detailed attention has been paid in this connection so far to the other plays mentioned. At the instance of Mischief, New-Gyse in the morality *Mankind* (ed. Mark Eccles, *The Macre Plays,* EETS, O.S, 262, Oxford, (1969) by way of teaching Mankind who has been brought to despair how to hang himself very nearly hangs himself. This comic-ironic touch of the Biter Bit is employed by Spenser who makes Despair after his failure with Red Cross hang himself in despair, though not to death. Skelton in his *Magnificence* was working within the morality convention, and, if Spenser borrowed from him,[3] the ultimate source is the morality play.

Indeed we may ask whether the vividness of Spenser's rendering of Despair, the graphic portrayal of person, locale, speech and action, is not a result of the spirit of this morality convention infusing itself into the individual talent of the poet. Without subscribing to the anti-Spenserian view of Derek A.

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Traversi.[4] that allegory comes alive in Spenser only in those places where the poet is in some sort of contact with such surviving manifestations in popular traditions of medieval allegory, we can grant that Spenser's allegory draws sustenance alike from popular pageantry and from the popular as well as learned versions of the emblematic convention. The Despair episode, an instance of Spenser's allegory at its best, is conceived and presented in the mode of authentic allegorical visualization which is at once a mode of apprehension and a mode of communication; this faculty of allegorical vision is a heritage of the poet, especially a legacy to him of the morality tradition among other medieval and Renaissance traditions. The probability of Spenser's acquaintance if not familiarity with the moralities and the interludes can hardly be disputed. Many morality Plays and Interludes, and, in fact, most of the ones I have cited as examples of drama in which the Despair motif figures were available in print in Spenser's day, and perhaps several of these continued to be performed in his times.[5] Moreover, now that our appreciation of the dramatic qualities of the mysteries and the moralities and of the continuity of their vital influence into late Tudor times has increased lately thanks to the work of scholars like H C Gardiner, Glynne Wickham, F M Salter, T W Craik and OB Hardison, Jr., we cannot discount the probable debt of an allegorical visualizer like Spenser who also set up for a moral teacher to the morality convention, though anything like an exploration of the larger relations between the poet and the dramatic tradition is not within the purview of the present note. For all the systematic suppression of the mysteries and the moralities by the new Church, the morality spirit did not die out, as witness the adaptation of the morality for propaganda, religious as well as political, Roman Catholic as well as protestant, and the conversion of it into the Interlude. For all his prejudices against the old religion, Spenser was no Puritan sectarian and was only slightly left of the centre of the Anglican *via media*. Certainly he was rooted well enough in the

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native English tradition not to deny himself the use of the artistic and cultural conventions of medieval England. In all likelihood, the conscious, or at any rate unconscious assimilation of the then still live morality convention, as much as of the other traditions of visual representation like disguisings, mummings, maskings, pageants, emblems and iconography in which the allegorical habit of mind found expression after the suppression of morality drama, stood Spenser in good stead in the literary evocation of configurations of inner realities by way of allegorical poetry.

The doctrinal concerns of Spenser in the episode of Despair are with the need for faith to overcome the challenge of despair with the ministrations of grace, the relations of faith and grace, the damnableness of accidie, wanhope and 'self-homicide', and, particularly, the rival dispensations of Justice and Mercy. The word 'justice' and allied terms like 'just', 'retribution' are bandied about between Despair and Red Cross. Taking the cue from Red Cross's first invoking of the concept of justice,

> What Justice can but Judge against thee right,
> With thine owne blood to price his blood, here shed in sight ?

Despair harps on the idea of retribution for sin and on the sinfulness of man and human life in a deliberate perversion of Old Testament and Augustinian emphases, and uses these as his main argument in all but persuading Red Cross to kill himself. The case for Mercy is briefly, but effectively, presented by Una who stops Red Cross from taking his life, and reminds the knight that he is one of God's chosen (not in the strictly Calvinistic or Anglican sense of the Lord's elect, one predestined for salvation, but in the Martin Bucerian and Spenserian and Miltonic reapplication of the notion in the sense of dedication to a divinely appointed mission or task) whose life-mission is the destruction of the Dragon and the attainment of sainthood. Spenser presents the debate between Justice and Mercy as a clash between the points of view of Despair and Una, for it is Una, not Red Cross, who repudiates Des-

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pair's insistence on Justice with a simple assertion of the superiorty of Mercy and Grace, which assertion is addressed to Red Cross.

> Is this the battle which thou Vauntst to fight.
> With that fire-mouthed Dragon, horrible and bright ?. . .
> In heav'nly mercies hast though not a part ?
> Why shouldst thou then despaire, that chosen art ?
> Where Justice grows, there grows eke greater grace,
> The which doth quench the brond of hellish smart,
> And that accurst hand-writing doth deface.

As does the much later debate in Heaven in Milton's *Paradise Lost* Bk III, the debate in Spenser belongs with the medieval tradition of the debate of the Four Daughters of God.[6] The visual stage representation of this allegory in its full, original form is to be found in the morality, *The Castle of Perseverance*. Mercy rescues Mankind in *Mankind* from despair and from 'self-homicide' by convincing him of the reality of and necessity for repentance. The debate, originally a theological convention, was thus assimilated into the larger tradition of morality drama. In morality plays like Skelton's *Magnificence*, and in later protestant versions of it, the allegory is simplified into the Justice-Mercy polarity. Likewise, Spenser, protestant that he is, adapts the tradition to his doctrinal purposes by simplifying it into a clash of the rival claims of Justice and Mercy. He almost suggests a coalescence of the ideals of faith, grace truth and mercy by the relations portrayed between Red Cross and Arthur, and between Red Cross and Una who is an embodiment of truth and of grace and mercy as well.[7] The overall emphasis in Spenser's scheme is on salvation through mercy and grace, through faith rather than good works, in short, which was the Calvinist-Puritan and Anglican view also.

Attention to those two backgrounds of the Despair episode not only confirms the force of the theological undergirding of Book I of the poem but shows how what may be called some dominant theatre-images and dramatic memories

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of the moralities and the interludes figure centrally in the episode of Despair. What is more, the structural function of the motif of Despair in Book I of *The Faerie Queene* is strikingly similar to that of it in the moralities. Particularly in the light of Robert Potter's recent findings about the centrality of the theme of repentance for and forgiveness of sins in most of the morality plays it is clear that the movement of thought and feeling in Book I closely resembles that of those Plays. Like the morality here, Red Cross moves from innocence to experience, and in the process inevitably encounters 'vices' which are agents of temptation. While he can easily face and overcome the challenge of plain enemies like Error and Sansfoy, the 'vices' which practise false seeming like Duessa and Lucifera entrap him insidiously and all but undermine him, especially when he is parted from the good angel, Una. The intervention of divine grace in the form of Arthur rescues him from Orgoglio's dungeon. But the lapse into despair from which Red Cross promptly recovers, thanks to the ministration of Una, is a necessary prelude to true penitence which he undergoes in the House of Holiness (Canto X). The exercises in self-flagellation and self-mortification suggesting the old religion, which Red Cross engages in that spiritual sanatorium, mark the final stages in the evolution of Everyman-Red Cross from the all too fallen state of nature into the knight-saint in a state of grace who is fully ripe for the final encounter with the Enemy, the Dragon. In Book I, at any rate, the continued metaphor or dark conceit of the true, warfaring Christian is, after all, meant fo represent the struggle for spiritual evolution and, ultimately, salvation with its various stages and processes, the idea of martial heroism thus serving as an allegory for Holiness, true religious fulfilment. Hovering at the brink of despair only to recover from it in the nick of time is an inevitable stage in such a spiritual education and evolution.

At the very least, an appreciation of how Spenser draws upon the Morality figure of Despair, directly or indirectly,and,

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still less directly, on the debate of the Four Daughters of God would bring home to us the preoccupations and processes of mind of the poet in the classic episode of Despair.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] Nevertheless, Spenser's portrayal of Red Cross's predicament as one closely resembling a typical Calvinist 'case of Conscience' as in Nathaniel Woodes' *Conflict of Conscience* deserves examination. While this presupposes an anti-Calvinist bias on Spenser's part, the emphasis on mercy as against Justice, though traditional enough, suggests a Calvinist orientation. I propose to deal with this ambivalence elsewhere, and not in the present essay.

[2] The role of Despair in the morality plays and the Prodigal Son or 'youth' interludes and some Elizabethan plays has been noticed by MC Bradbrook, *Shakespeare the Craftsman* (London. 1969), PP. 160-161. and by Susan Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God: Despair in Medieval and Renaissance Tradition', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 12 (1965), 18—59, p.18. More recently, Robert Potter developing his important and illuminating thesis that the morality plays are repentance drama has called attention to the key function of the motif of despair in the plays, *The English Morality Play: Origin, History, and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition* (London, 1975). 'The greatest danger for mankind in the moralities is not falling into sin (for all men sin) or yet in delaying repentance (for that can be amended), but in despairing of the possibility of the forgiveness of one's sins', Potter, PP. 47—48.

The Usurer in Greene and Lodge's play is moved to despair and threatens suidide, Cf. Avarice in *Piers Plowman*, B Text, ed. W.W. Skeat; EETS, London, 1869, V. P. 289. In *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*, Providence appears as a character and saves Neronis from despair and suicide. The play though printed in 1599 as acted earlier by the Queen's Men probably belongs to 1570-1584. Some resemblances between *The Faerie Queene* and the play were pointed out by F. E. Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama* (Boston and New York, 1907), I, P. 199). The great theatrical moment in

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Dr Faustus in which Faustus is on the one side counselled by the Old Man to seek repentance and mercy and on the other offered a dagger by Mephistophilis with which to Kill himself may be remembered in this connection (V..65.) The s. d. reads : 'Mephistophilis gives him a dagger.).

[3] When Spenser in his letter to Raleigh says 'magnificence' when he means the Aristotelian idea of 'magnanimity', could it be that his half-memories of Skelton's title as much as the Ciceronian concept of 'magnificence' in its Christianized form deflected Spenser's attention? The discussion of the concept in Rosemond Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery* (Princeton, 1966), 57-143, is the most detailed.

[4] Derek A. Traversi, *'Spenser's Faerie Queene', A Guide to English Literature-1, The Age of Chaucer* (London, 1954). 213-228, esp. 219-220.

[5] The dates of the first editions of some of the morality plays are— *Everyman*, c.1515; *Magnificence*, ed. J. Rastell (before 1533); *Nice Wanton*, ed. J. King, 1560; *Lusty Juventus*, editions by W. Copland and A. Veale (both around 1565), *Misogonus* (1565) and *The Marriage between Wit and Science* (1575-79) are late enough for Spenser's acquaintance with them. The interest of Spenser's schoolmaster Mulcaster in the native English traditions in general and in plays and acting in particular lends further credence to this probability.

Incidentally, the cave seems to have been a property of the morality stage. Cf. the cave in *Everyman*, and the caves of Despair and of Mammon. The stage tradition deriving from the moralities was to represent a suicide or a would-be suicide as carrying, emblematically, a poniard in one hand and a rope in the other, for example, Hieronimo in *The Spanish Tragedy* (III—XII).

[6] See J. M. Evans, *'Paradise Lost' and the Genesis Tradition* (London, 1968), 232—233, for the relation of the debate in Milton's Heaven to this convention. On the history and Protestant modifications of this medieval convention, see Evans, 38—39; C. A. Patrides, *Milton and Christian Tradition* (London, 1966), 131—132; Honor Matthews, *Chapter and Symbol in Shakespeare's plays* (London, (1962). pp.71 ff. The figuring of this tradition in the miracle plays as evidenced by such extant examples as we have is traced by R. G. Hunter, Chapter 2. 'Forgiveness of Sins in the Medieval Drama', *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness* (New York and London, 1965), esp. 13—14. Unfortunately, Hope A. Traver, *The Four Daughters of God* (Bryn Mawr, 1907) has been inaccessible.

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[7] Arthur as well as Red Cross can be regarded as primarily a Knight of faith. Cf. C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 159—160. There is an implicit suggestion in Spenser of the interpenetration of nature and grace, faith and grace, truth and mercy in terms of the relations of his characters, and attention to this might help to resolve the Woodhouse-T. M. Gang controversy (*ELH*), XVI, pp. 194—228, XXVI. 1—22, XXVII. 1—15).

Kathryn Koller, 'Art, rhetoric and 'holy dying' in 'The Faerie Queene' with reference to the Despair canto', *Studies in Philology* 61 (1964), pp. 128—39 provides an authoritative account of the relation of the canto to the *ars moriendi* tradition.

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POLITICAL MAN IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLISH HISTORY PLAYS

In the English History plays, based as they are on English and French chroniclers, including Hall, Holinshed and Froissart, Shakespeare's mind is primarily engaged with the problem of political unity and personal order in their intricate relationship and its far-reaching implications, explored within shifting perspectives. With the supreme artist's instinctive tact and deliberate manipulation and control, Shakespeare knows how to achieve a telescoping of incidents, adaptation of the past epochs to the exigencies of the contemporary world and at the same time he throws into relief the major assumptions of the Tudor system of polity. In other words he is able to seek and uncover some sort of pattern in the tangled web of history and to make sense of the refractory material lying within his access. He is concerned with the ironically conceived providential view of history, the self-determining individual's responsibility in the shaping and unfolding of events ('Every subject's duty is the King's; but every subject's soul is his own'. *King Henry* V, iv, i, 182-84), and the frame of disorder which constituted the then existing ethos. The continuing strife between the houses of York and Lancaster, rooted in the principle of division and nurtured by the natural depravity of man, often resulted in the stirring up of tempers and spilling of much unnecessary blood :

> And here I prophesy: this brawl to-day,
> Grown to this faction in the Temple garden,
> Shall send between the red rose and the white
> A thousand souls to death and deadly night.[1]
>
> *1 Henry* VI, II, V, 124-27

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The futility of this intestine division, which projects itself into the structure of the state, is dwelt upon by the king who firmly believes in the need to maintain its organic nucleus in ordered harmony and cohesion and prevent the cracks into chaos to develop :

> Good Lord ! what madness rules in brainsick men,
> When for so slight and frivolous a cause
> Such factious emulations shall arise !
>
> IV, i, 111-13

But despite awareness of the degrading immorality of factionalism and its cancerous growth it was allowed to have its way during long stretches of English history. Concurrently, and in a way accentuating the gravity of the situation at home ('Civil dissension is a viperous worm,/That gnaws the bowels of the Commonwealth') is the deep-seated animosity between the English and the French which is early witnessed in the confrontation of the ferocious, though plain, Talbot and the cunning, devil-inspired, enigmatic Joan la Pucelle, and the demon of rebellion raising its ugly head every now and then in Scotland as well as Ireland. As late as the time of Henry V this fear has not been uprooted altogether but seems to endure and persist :

> For you shall read that my great-grandfather
> Never went with his forces into France
> But that the Scot on his unfurnish'd kingdom
> Came pouring, like the tide into a breach,
> With ample and brim fullness of his force,
> Galling the gleaned land with hot assays,
> Girding with grievous siege castles and towns;
>
> 1, ii, 146-52

All through the first tetrology the baleful shadow of the wars of the Roses falls ominously across the dramatic action and accounts for the malaise from which the society reflected in it suffers. Shakespeare is also deeply preoccupied, within the dramatic context, with creative explorations into the seminal Renaissance concepts like interlocking hierarchies, obedience

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and justice and especially the widely held notion of allegiance due to the reigning monarch, whatever his personal and political failings and limitations. But, pre-eminently, it is the behaviour of the political man and the mechanics of his interaction within the structure of the body politic which looms large in the History plays. Exeter, who plays the choric role in *1 Henry VI*, while addressing Richard Plantegenet, reflects upon the swarm of entanglements into which the body politic is plunged at the moment :

> But, howsoe'er', no simple man that sees
> This jarring discord of nobility,
> This shouldering of each other in the court,
> This factious bandying of their favourites,
> But that it doth presage some ill event,
>
> IV, i, 187-91

This same perception of things is put in a rather abstract, allegorical manner by Gloucester, and one may very well refer the terms back to their human co-rrelatives within the given context in view of the potent adversaries by which the King was hedged in on all sides :

> Ah ! gracious lord, these days are dangerous.
> Virtue is chok'd with foul Ambition,
> And Charity chas'd hence by Rancour's hand;
> Foul Subornation is predominant,
> And Equity exil'd your Highness' land.
>
> *2 Henry VI*, III, i, 142-46.

From almost the middle of *1 Henry VI* onwards Suffolk begins to dominate the political scene and in the next play of the series he is sharply and vehemently at odds with Gloucester, the rival politician, and he is all the time contemplating how best to achieve his rival's ouster. Exceptionally gifted and resourceful, and with his razor-edg'd, incisive intellect always at his command he would not hesitate to employ any means, however ignoble or brutal, to have Gloucester removed from the arena of conflict :

> And do not stand on quillets how to slay him :
> Be it by gins, by snares, by subtlety,

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> Sleeping or waking, 'its no matter how,
> So he be dead; for that is good deceit
> Which mates him first that first intends deceit.
>
> *2 Henry VI*, III, i, 261-65

In *2 Henry VI* the position of the king is constantly menaced by the stratagems employed by the eagle-eyed Duke of York for securing the English crown for himseif: the crown in fact constitutes the prime symbol of his soaring ambition :

> Whiles I in Ireland nourish a mighty band,
> I will stir up in England some black storm
> Shall blow ten thousand souls to heaven, or hell;
> And this fell tempest shall not cease to rage
> Until the golden circuit on my head,
> Like to the glorious sun's transparent beams,
> Do calm the fury of this mad-bred flaw.
>
> III, i, 348-54

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In spite of his calculated shrewdness the Duke of York is, however, baulked and frustrated in his designs but later on his son, Richard, consumed by the same devouring passion, bearing as he does in his heart 'th' aspiring flame of golden sovereignty', fixes his gaze on this glitttering image and all his energies come exclusively to be concentrated on it. Sharing his thoughts with his father he gloats over the prospect of its achievement with almost sensual ecstasy and unburdens himself thus :

> And, father, do but think
> How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown,
> Within whose circuit is Elysium
> And all that poets feign of bliss and joy.
>
> *3 Henry* VI, I, ii, 28.31

The pivotal characters are the servile politicians, with over-vaulting ambition, astute as well as conscienceless, clandestine in their counsels, masters of flamboyant and hollow rhetoric, taking advantage of any loophole in the specific situation they are placed in and always alert to pounce upon any opportunity that offers itself to enable them to indulge in their unbridled lust for power. Chaos, disorder

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and lack of stability and permanence are of the essence of the climate of these plays and mistrust, suspicion and betrayal of one another seem to determine the pattern of personal relationships. There is evidence in these plays of an ominous and unending cycle of crime and retribution, intrigues and counter-intrigues, usurpations and betrayals, and the reprisals that they inevitably entail and the incalculable damage and suffering that they cause. Characters like Suffolk and his paramour, Margaret, who gradually turns into a fierce Amazon, belong to the same tribe and pursue their objectives with uninterrupted perseverance and without any slackening of attention. There is something fascinating about their chivalric romance, the gripping and inundating passion by which they are overwhelmed and which knits their splendid physical selves into an inviolable union. This relationship recalls to mind the one which existed between Launcelot and Guinivere who might be regarded as deathless symbols of lasciviousness as well as unswerving loyalty to each other. Suffolk is shrewd enough to contrive Margaret's matrimonial match with the King in very dubious circumstances (neither of them had had the opportunity of meeting) so that he might be able to rule over the King and subdue the crafty barons by his power over the Queen. Gloucester and the Duchess have in any way to be swept aside in order that Suffolk and Margaret may storm their way into the citadel of power and consolidate their positions accordingly. A sort of tension is thus set up by the polarization of pressure groups, each one of which not only struggles for supremacy but also for widening the area of its influence to the maximum degree. Pre-eminent among such politicians is Richard III—the gigantic, misshapen prodigy—in whom one finds a curious blend of intense passion and self-indulgent egotism, effrontery, glamour and cool clear-sightedness and who is bent upon following his unethical courses with stubborn ruthlessness. He is an epitome of cunning, hypocrisy and sheer malevolence, is given to cold meditation and is fully conversant with the

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elaborate strategy for removing all impediments which may obstruct the path leading to the attainment of sovereignty :

> Why then I do but dream of sovereignty;
> Like one that stands upon a promontory
> And spies a far-off shore where he would tread,
> Wishing his foot were equal with his eye;
> And chides the sea, that sunders him from thence,
> Saying he'll lade it dry to have his way;
> So do I wish the crown, being so far-off;
> And so I chide the means that keeps me from it;
> And so I say I'll cut the causes off,
> Flattering me with impossibilities,
>
> *3 Henry VI,* III, ii, 134-43

Buckingham is another typical politician, liberated from conscience and the moral law, noisy and vociferous, capable of manipulating difficult situations, hoodwinking the audience and mesmerising them. He is one who, like Richard III, sees politics *qua* politics, untrammeled by any other consideration: he is also gifted, like him, with an unclouded vision and a histrionic talent which he uses to his best advantage :

> Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian,
> Speak and look back, and pry on every side,
> Tremble and start at wagging of a straw;
> Intending deep suspicion, ghastly looks
> Are at my service, like enforced smiles;
> And both are ready in their offices,
> At any time to grace my stratagems.
>
> *Richard* III, III V. 5-11

In 2 *Henry IV* Morton informs Northumberland about the Bishop's cunning in exploiting religion, on behalf of the rebels, with a view to lending some odour of sanctity to insurrection. This he does in order to enlist the support of the common man for this cause who any way is completely muddle-headed and therefore liable to be duped easily :

> But now the Bishop
> Turns insurrection to religion;
> Suppos'd sincere and holy in his thoughts,
> He's follow'd both with body and with mind,
> And doth enlarge his rising with the blood

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> Of fair King Richard, scrap'd from Pomfret stones;
> Derives from heaven his quarrel and his cause;
> Tells them he does bestride a bleeding land,
> Gasping for life under great Bolingbroke;
> And more and less do flock to follow him,
>
> I, i, 200-9

Among the various stratagems to be adopted is currying favour with the common man, touching his raw spots with some delicacy, making enough elbow-room for his partialities and enticing him by holding out before him the prospect of limitless freedom for the satisfaction of his anarchic instincts. This task is facilitated because the common man, more often than not, is swayed by momentary passions, is impulsive in his judgment and evaluation of things: he is little aware of the complexity of political issues and is volatile, gullible and fickle-minded. Richard III is an adept at dissimulation and farcical play-acting which is aimed at winning the people over to his side and disengaging them from his formidable rival, Edward. He also asks Buckingham to convince the common man not only of Edward's proneness to 'luxury' but also ascribe bastardy to Richard himself though taking care not to overstep the limit of circumspection and prudence while engaged in this endeavour:

> Moreover, urge his hateful luxury
> And bestial appetite in charge of lust,
> Which stretched unto their servants, daughters, wives,
> Even where his raging eye or savage heart,
> Without control, listed to make a prey.
> Nay, for a need, thus far come near my person: . . .
> Yet touch this sparingly, as 'twere far-off,
> Because, my lord, you know my mother lives.
>
> III, V, 79-93

Richard is capable of any kind of shameless chicanery: to him goes the unenviable credit for the virtuoso performance, suggested by Buckingham, in which he has to stand, in apparent show of humility, flanked by two churchmen, holding the prayer-book in his hand, and swearing not to be prevailed upon to acceptance of the grave and hazardous

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responsibilities of kingship offered to him on behalf of the common people. This is obviously done to create the impression of total aversion to worldly temptations whereas in actual fact what is secretly purported is smoothing his way to an easy and unopposed advancement. The cue is provided thus :

> And look you get a prayer-book in your hand
> And stand between two churchmen, good my lord,
> For on that ground I'll make a holy descant;
> And be not easily won to our requests.
> Play the maid's part: still answer nay, and take it.
>
> III, vii, 46-50

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A tangential light is thrown on this strategy by Richard II's observations regarding Bolingbroke; the former is instinctively aware that Bolinghbroke's ducking before the common man and ingratiating himself into his favour may have the disastrous consequence of toppling down of Richard's stewardship of the state, and this may well prove disastrous to all his studied and long-drawn-out manipulations :

> Ourself and Bushy
> Observ'd his courtship to the common people,
> How he did seem to dive into their hearts
> With humble and familiar courtesy;
> What reverence he did throw away on slaves,
> Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles
> And patient underbearing of his fortune,
> As' twere to banish their affects with him.
>
> I. iv. 23-30

Apart from the element of premoniton and anti-phonal curses, so conspicuously serving as the controlling design of the first tetrology and by which its peculiar resonance is palpably felt and which has been so felicitously brought out by Clemen,[2] one of the facets of the clash of power is the primacy and ineluctibility of retribution. Man has, of necessity, to taste the bitter fruit of his diabolic scheming and plotting and the cognate actions following it sooner or later and the wages of sin earned by the perpetrators of these actions do not

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go unpaid. Putting it differently one may uphold that the machinery of divine retribution is bound to be set moving and no one can escape being caught into its operations. In *2 Henry VI* Vaux hastens to inform the king about the deplorable condition, in the closing moments of his life, of Cardinal Beaufort, who had been implicated in Humphrey's murder :

For suddenly a grievous sickness took him,
That makes him gasp, and stare, and catch the air,
Blaspheming God, and cursing man on earth,
Sometimes he talks as if Duke Humphrey's ghost
Were by his side; sometimes he calls the King,
And whispers to his pillow, as to him,
The secrets of his overcharged soul:

III, ii, 369-75

This is a vivid dramatic rendering of the fact of the soul, pressed heavily under the accumulated load of guilt, and being now exposed to gnawing by the worm of conscience which denies it ultimate screnity. It may also be looked upon as an enactment of the moment of unconscious self-exculpation. Similarly, Margaret, a sort of Norn, becomes the instrument of vengeance when sharpening her vituperative tongue, she pushes her bitter and uncompromising enemy, the Duke of York, mercilessly, towards the very verge of desperation thus :

Stamp, rave, and fret, that I may sing and dance. . . .
[Putting a paper crown on his head.] . . .
As I bethink me, you should not be king
Till our King Henry had shook hands with Death.
And will you pale your head in Henry's glory,
And rob his temples of the diadem,
Now in his life, against your holy oath ?
O',tis a fault too too unpardonable!

3 Henry VI, I, iv, 91-106

The ghoulishness paraded in the baiting of York on the molehill, adorned with the paper crown, reflects the exuberant vitality of a malevolent Margaret which exudes from her in such a nauseating way and the whole scene appears, so justly observed by Traversi, to be 'a sardonic parody of the

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Passion of Christ'.[8] It stands out uniquely as a depressing demonstration of the jeering and taunting capacity of Margaret and also of the fatality which dogged the footsteps of the opportunistic, time-serving politician who had been wading through evil for so long. It may be added that both Suffolk and Margaret have eventually to pay the price (the former by being exiled and then murdered by the mean-spirited Walter Whitmore and the latter by being condemned to live an accursed life) for their headlong indulgence in carnal passion, their abject ruthlessness and their penchant for weaving the subtle and intricate web of intrigue. Both are hounded alike by Fate and ultimately brought to bay by the pitiless logic of circumstances. After having master-minded a series of subtle diplomatic moves and checkmated his opponents Suffolk is reduced to the status of a cipher and Margaret ends up with being only a choric voice, ominous and shattering, with little positive drive and less stamina for action. What is peculiar and common to these two characters is high-spiritedness, angling for leadership and an excess of frenzied violence. Little by little the sense of alienation dawns upon them and they are degraded to being mere apparitions on the stage of public life. Margaret undoubtedly holds on longer but she also becomes ineffectual ultimately and witnesses the complete and sorry collapse of all her cherished dreams. They thus reap the harvest of their sins in an abundant measure and their end is a sad and bitter commentary on the sordid and freakish nature of political life, its vicissitudes and upheavals, on the fact that nothing really endures, and inordinate ambition, leading on to moral and spiritual chaos, has precious little chance of survival.

In *3 Henry IV* Queen Margaret and Warwick flock to the court of Lewis, the French king, each in a bid to bring him round and make him influence decisively the course of events at home. Margaret negotiates support for Henry's struggle for preservation of his hereditary claim to the throne of England as against Edward and the band of malevolent lords

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surrounding him. Warwick, on the contrary, seeks an alliance with France on behalf of Edward who offers to marry Lewis's sister, Princess Bona, as a price for the alliance and for weakening the power of Henry. Margaret uses all her seductive, feminine persuasiveness and charm and all the energy of her soul in an effort to evoke sympathy for her fallen, ineffectual angel of a man and Warwick brings his diplomatic sharpness and acumen, his argumentative skill, to bear upon his handling of the situation, and getting the better of his rival with the result that the French court turns into a veritable battle-ground for these fiercely warring combatants. It looks ironical, though, that on the sudden disclosure of Edward's perfidy the wind is taken out of Warwick's sails; he feels incensed, betrayed and humiliated and returns to his old allegiance to Henry VI. In *2 Henry IV* Hastings and Mowbray, the northern rebels, along with Lord Archishop are, despite earlier offer of amnesty, arrested in Gaultree forest by John of Lancaster whose strategic move in this regard is hardly distinguishable from pure fraud and the following verdict is passed upon them with unconcealed impudence :

> But, for you rebels, look to taste the due
> Meet for rebellion and such acts as yours.
> Most shallowly did you these arms commence,
> Fondly brought here, and foolishly sent hence.
> Strike up our drums, pursue the scatter'd stray:
> God, and not we, hath safely fought today.
> Some guard these traitors to the block of death,
> Treason's true bed and yielder-up of breath.
>
> IV, ii, 116-123

In a later context, Bolingbroke, who assumes regal power as Henry IV, reviewing his past career and cast into a melancholy mould, makes a sneaking reference to the 'bypaths and indirect crooked ways' by which he came to snatch the crown from the self-deluded, imbecile Richard II. Likewise, when Prince Hal ascends the throne of England as Henry V and allegiance owed to him is supposedly betrayed, ostensibly for the sake of some pecuniary gain, by Cambridge, Scroop and

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Grey, and transferred to the King of France, instead, Henry's indictment is brought out in these poised, yet deeply incriminatory terms thus :

> Show men dutiful ?
> Why, so didst thou : seem they grave and learned ?
> Why, so didst thou : come they of noble family ?
> Why, so didst thou : seem they religious ?
> Why, so didst thou : . . .
> Such and so finely bolted didst thou seem: . . .
>
> I will weep for thee;
>
> For this revolt of thine, methinks, is like
> Another fall of man.
>
> *Henry V, II, ii. 127-42*

Henry begins with overtones of irony and ends up, as Traversi aptly points out, with underscoring 'the universal implications of sedition'.[4] In *2 Henry IV* one becomes painfully aware of the ominous shadows of death and dissolution, of age and impotence and of sickness and decay falling and lengthening themselves out in the course of the play and these contribute in no small measure to its pervasively sombre tone which is sharply at variance with the comic abandon and hilarity associated with *part I*. Here everything modulates itself into the poignancy of nostalgia, the sense of being lost in 'the fury and the mire of the human veins'—, and reminds us not only of the fact of mutability but of disintegration also. Here Northumberland, a politician of no mean calibre in being both crafty and evasive and playing his cards with extra caution and secretiveness, crystallizes the sense of frustration and satiety with evil thus :

> Let order die !
>
> And let this world no longer be a stage
> To feed contention in a ling'ring act;
> But let one spirit of the first-born Cain
> Reign in all bosoms, that, each heart being set
> On bloody courses, the rude scene may end,
> And darkness be the burier of the dead!
>
> I, i, 154-60.

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The young Clifford, casting his dismal glance over the body of his deceased father in *2 Henry VI*, is enraged and exasperated almost to bursting-point and envisages that universal catastrophe may descend upon the world. He solemnly vows to wreak vengeance against the house of York, to extirpate it root and branch, and invokes total disruption of the framework of created things so that 'Nature's moulds' are cracked and 'all germens' spilt so that nothing is likely to fructify :

O! let the vile world end,
And the premised flames of the last day
Knit earth and heaven together;
Now let the general trumpet blow his blast,
Particularities and petty sounds
To cease! Wast thou ordain'd, dear father,
To lose thy youth in peace, and to achieve
The silver livery of advised age,
And, in thy reverence and thy chair-days, thus
To die in ruffian battle? Even at this sight
My heart is turn'd to stone: and while 'tis mine
It shall be stony, . . .
Henceforth I will not have to do with pity:
Meet I an infant of the house of York,
Into as many gobbets will I cut it
As wild Medea young Absyrtus did: V, ii, 40-59

References in the fore-going three passages to 'Another fall of man', one 'spirit of the first-born Cain' reigning 'in all bosoms', 'the premised flames of the last day', 'the genreal Trumpet' blowing 'his blast', and 'particularities and petty sounds to cease' add up, layer by layer, to the accumulating gloom or anarchism—'the moste my(s)chief on molde mountyng wel faste' [Cf. Langland's *Piers Plowman*, 67]-offer us an image of the final Doom. The speakers, having faint awareness of it, turn into clairvoyants intuiting the occultist Truth that some form of the apocalyptic judgment is bound to overtake the blundering, perverted and sinful humankind. These utterances, it may be intriguing to note, seem to be reiterated, in the developing Shakespearean canon, in Kent's highly disturbing question: 'Is this the promised end?' and

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Edgar's no less uncomfortable query: 'Or image of that horror?' towards the end of *King Lear*. A nebulous kind of gnosis may be predicated of this articulation of anarchy and its symbolic form.

Characters like the Duke of York, his son Richard III, Bolingbroke and, to some extent, Harry Percy are all stark individualists, preferring to live outside the pale of organized society, goaded by egoistic impulses and recognizing the authenticity of their valuation alone. Both the Duke of York and Richard III are pitted against Henry VI, Bolingbroke against Richard II and Harry Percy against Prince Hal. Richard III, 'the lump of foul deformity', 'the bunch-back'd toad', 'the troubler of the poor world's peace', possessed of a morbid and febrile imagination, is the 'I am myself alone' sort of adventurer. In a way he is the earliest adumbration of Macbeth and like Macbeth, too, he ultimately realizes the pathos of his alienation resulting from the rupture of all communication, the withdrawal of all human sanctions: 'As Honour, love, obedience, troops of friends' (Cf. *Macbeth*, V, iii, 25). He is moved by a sort of cheerful malevolence and knows how to accommodate himself, actor-like, to any kind of situation by his own variety of ingenious *adhocism* and that way his professed 'aloneness' is considerably neutralized. In *3 Henry VI* he reveals himself with terrifying honesty, and such a piece of confessional poetry is rare even in Shakespeare:

> Then, since the heavens have shap'd my body so,
> Let hell make crook'd my mind to answer it.
> I have no brother, I am like no brother;
> And this word 'love', which greybeards call divine,
> Be resident in men like one another,
> And not in me: I am myself alone. V, vi, 78-83

His sadism derives from an acute and distressing sense of his physical deformities: he highlights them uninhibitedly and skilfully uses his morbidity and his histrionic talent to cover up a multitude of sins, specifically his proneness to violence, and his moral obtuseness. His constant endeavour to climb

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up the Fortune's Wheel is an obvious instance of seeking psychological compensation for all his inborn privations. He is sharply juxtaposed to Henry VI: whereas the former is a shrewd connoisseur of the categories and qualities of men—the bewildering heterogeneity of the human species—, the latter is saintly, inept and vacillating. Among the wielders of secular power he is the only one who is singularly unmotivated by vengefulness and falls a victim to his own ebullient and mistaken generosity. His saintliness and serenity cast their own illumination but prove not only unsettling but disastrous. Not unlike Richard II, with whom he has several points of contact, he is a good man but a feeble ruler; both of them prove themselves wholly inadequate to the medieval notion of performance within their status: responsibilities of kingship. But Richard's inwardness, self-complacency and exalted notion of the royal prerogative elicit pathos and are touched with a degree of elevation and sensitivity. He is able to relish the poetic contemplation of his huge sorrows and is given to luxuriating in self-pity, extracting from his plight an exquisite and 'sad refinement of sensation'. Henry VI's piety, on the other hand, acquires satiric overtones and invites only derision and ridicule. It may be added that Bolingbroke, who has been pitted against Richard II as a tough and irresistible opponent and supplants him eventually is, even more than Richard III, a political strategist of a high order—one who has been mellowed by experience, is a clear-headed manipulator of exigencies and is engaged with dogged perseverance in consolidating his gains and pursuing his objectives undeterred by any set-backs. Richard III's crudeness looks all the more ugly and repulsive when it is weighed against Bolingbroke's artifice, adroitness and owl-like vigilance. Richard III, however, turns eventually into a tortured soul: a sceptic and an opportunist who has scoffed heartily at the sanctity of love and prided himself on his exclusiveness realized at long last the enormity of his crimes and the bane of ostracism. One in whom could be seen earlier the power and artistry of con-

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scienceless evil is struck by the awareness that he has nothing but the opaqueness of the void to strike his head against. The unscrupulous politician and trickster is made to see the futility and absurdity of his manoeuvrings in the hide-and-seek game of power politics. As a self-enclosed identity he stands condemned both by the immediate context of things and by his inner tortuousness:

> Richard loves Richard: that is, I am I.
> Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.
> Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why—
> Lest I revenge. Myself upon myself? . . .
> My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
> And every tongue brings in a several tale,
> And every tale condemns me for a villain . . .
> All several sins, all used in each degree,
> Throng to the bar, crying all 'Guilty! Guilty!'
> I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;
> And if I die, no soul will pity me. V, iii, 184-202

Against these power-hungry and 'lust-dieted' politicians, involved in the labyrinthine depths of conspiracies and murderous actions and caring not a whit either for the stability and well-being of the state or the citizens of the state is set Richmond—the exiled opponent of Richard III and a sort of Providential visitant. According to Henry VI's sudden intuition and the Irish bard's prophecy he is the one on whom the future of England largely depended. The cryptic and unexpected announcement of his being on the seas and likely to come down in a 'fell swoop' at the time when Richard was at the nadir of his political fortunes is emblematic of the fact that a new leaf is likely to be turned in the affairs of the state. Towards the end of the play when Richard gets in sleep intimations of the impending doom from whisperings of the ghosts of his victims 'raining' in his ears Richard is likewise addressed by the same ghosts and he is invoked and looked up to as the long-awaited Messiah whose therapeutic touch is likely to salvage the tottering and bleeding kingdom from the ravages it had been subjected to. He soliloquizes and the soliloquy is characteristically marked by religious overtones:

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O Thou, whose captain I account myself,
Look on my forces with a gracious eye;
Put in their hands Thy bruising irons of wrath.
That they may crush down with a heavy fall
Th'usurping helmets of our adversaries;
Make us Thy ministers of chastisement,
That we way praise Thee in the victory. V, iii, 109-115

Richard's significant contribution–the fulfilment of his assigned mission–lies in uniting the white Rose with the red which symbolically implies bringing to an end the age-old and finally enervating conflict between the Yorkists and the Lancastrians: 'Enrich the time to come with smooth - fac'd peace, / With smiling plenty and fair prosperous days' (V. v, 33-34)-an aguury which more or less comes true. Richard may thus be regarded as offering a fugitive,–though only a fugitive–gleam of hope in the ever-widening area of darkness and despondency.

With Hal we move on to a character whose slow evolution is under constant scrutiny and we are made to see him progress from libertinism to some degree of sobriety and even sternness. His indulgence in frivolities may be treated as a mere cloak for keeping his real virtues unsuspected so that he may spring a surprise on the casual beholder when he chooses to unmask himself or when the lid is off. Mixing up with his cronies of crime and debauchery is a form of self-enforced discipline, for it affords him the opportunity to keep close watch over 'the unyok'd humour of their wildness', to be a participant in their rogueries in order to abjure his involvement in them when this is necessitated by the exigencies of the changed situation. In the 'I know you all' soliloquy he commits himself to complete dissociation from all these vagabonds and to throw off 'the loose behaviour,' when the opportune moment arrived. He has to absolve himself prudently from the imputation of all those sins which had been laid at his door and thus 'redeem the time' lost earlier in profligacy. This soliloquy is meant to reflect his

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capacity for detachment and for exercising rational control over all sorts of aberrations, subduing his untutored impulses and bending his wishes to his iron will but it also betrays the touch of artifice, conscious hypocrisy and attitudinizing by which his personality is tarnished. To the king's expostulation with him on his lapses Hal's grandiloquent outburst seems to vibrate with overflowing energy.

> For every honour sitting on his helm,
> Would they were multitudes, and on my head
> My shames redoubled ! For the time will come
> That I shall make this northern youth exchange
> His glorious deeds for my indignities.
> Percy is but my factor, good my lord,
> To engross up glorious deeds on my behalf,
> And I will call him to so strict account
> That he shall render every glory up,
> Yea, even the slightest worship of his time,
> Or I will tear the reckoning from his heart.
>
> *Henry IV*, III, ii, 142-52

A grim resolve to write off his past shines through this utterance but one cannot at the same time help noticing the corrugated brows of Hal and the firm-set purpose of shattering the image of his adversary into bits, and this may legitimately be paralleled with Hotspur's rhetorical flourish about capturing 'honour', whatever the stakes. Later, Hal lets himself be admonished by the Lord Chief Justice (symbol of impersonal and irrevocable law) and casts off Falstaff, one of his own Corinthians (symbol of gluttonous instincts) whose continued proximity to his own self was felt as a thorn in the flesh all along. And not only Falstaff but the whole tribe of rapscallions in whose company Hal had so recklessly and consistently dissipated his energies is discarded as something not only unwholesome but also detrimental to the performance of the role lying ahead of him. But his emergence as a composite figure of statesman and king, and his donning the robe of a military hero, a sage counsellor and arbiter and an impeccable public man in *Henry V* does not

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really carry conviction. The reader remains cold and unresponsive to this made-up type of efficiency and ruthlessness, the latter quality being perhaps a necessary adjunct of the former. Neither the Bishop of Canterbury's eloquent and hyperbolical eulogy of him:

> Hear him but reason in divinity,
> And, all-admiring, with an inward wish
> You would desire the king were made a prelate:
> Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs,
> You would say it hath been all in all his study :
> List his discourse of war, and you shall hear
> A fearful battle render'd you in music:
> Turn him to any cause of policy,
> The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,
> Familiar as his garter; that, when he speaks,
> The air, a charter'd libertine, is still,
> And the mute wonder lurketh in men's ears
> To steal his sweet and honey'd sentences;
> So that the art and practic part of life
> Must be the mistress to this theoric: 1, i, 38-52

nor his incitation of his people to battle against the French before Harfleur :

> Then imitate the action of the tiger;
> Stiffen the sinews, conjure up the blood,
> Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage;
> Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;
> Let it pry through the portage of the head
> Like the brass cannon; let the brow ov'rwhelm it
> As fearfully as doth a galled rock
> O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,
> Swill'd with the wild and wasteful ocean.
> Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,
> Hold hard the breath, and bend up every spirit
> To his full height ! On, on, you noblest English ! III, i. 6-17

marked as it is by energetic and formalized rhetoric stimulates the reader to any warm gesture of appreciation. This trumpeted harangue by a king playing the role of an iron-visaged military commander bends under the strain of artificiality and emotional turgidity and therefore strikes a false

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note. In Its hectic accents this demagoguery, aimed at arousing the passions to high tension-power, sounds like dated war poetry.

The behavioural pattern of the political man, as implied earlier, is reflected in the ominous and recurrent cycle of conspiracies, betrayals and tyrannicide-all tending towards the subversion of the stable and settled order of things. The politicians who congregate at the beginning of *3 Henry VI* to forge an unholy alliance against the reigning monarch, as elsewhere, too, are moved by dark, mysterious and unfathomable passions and savage, primitive impluses and they are not only high-strung and restive but also fiercely vindictive and blood-thirsty. But these proclivities are brought out not only in overt actions and commented upon in a serious vein but are also represented on the comic plane and through the medium of devastating irony. Hotspur's strutting at the beginning of *1 Henry IV* is typical of an irascible, impetuous and combustible politician and titillates us because of the false ring of its romantic rhetoric :

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> By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap
> To pluck bright honour from the pale-fac'd moon,
> Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
> Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
> And pluck up drowned honour by the locks,
>
> I, iii, 199-203.

Prince Hal, who has no reason to admire Hotspur and every valid reason to despise and deflate him, pooh-poohs his military exploits with a hearty chuckle and hardly concealed pungency of tone thus: 'I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the north, he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, 'Fie upon this quiet life, I want work' (II, iv, 99-103). Hotspur's delineation of a certain spruce lord, 'perfumed like a milliner', mightily self-pleased, 'practising behaviour to his own shadow' like Malvolio,dressed up most punctiliously, who came to demand war-prisoners of him on behalf of the king,

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is invested with deep and withering scorn, and the war-lord's personality is deftly burlesqued in the course of this fine etching based upon exactitude of detail:

> for he made me mad
> To see him shine so brisk, and smell so sweet,
> And talk so iike a waiting–gentlewoman,
> Of guns, and drums, and wounds, God save the mark!'
>
> I, iii, 52-55.

Similarly, in *2 Henry VI* the character of Jack Cade which comes to us living and vibrant is of vital importance and attracts attention on many counts. He and his followers of a shady character-'gullible architects of anarchy' –are not as artless as Bottom and his associates in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*, although some sort of vague equivalence between them may be in order. They offer, nevertheless, analogues to those who were thrown up by the popular upsurge towards the waning of the Middle Ages. Their rebellion is engineered by the Duke of York and Jack Cade is deluded into believing that he is the descendant of Lord Mortimer and must struggle to push his way through. His quirks are delightful, his techniques are primitive, his cocksureness is derisive and there is a spice of earthineess about him. Through him are ridiculed the pretensions, the petty jealousies and stratagems of men of political acumen and experience who coax and exploit their followers and adherents for their own shoddy purposes. Cade's repudiation of law, learning and the whole social order, his subversiveness, in general, refelects the reaction of the common man against the savagery and brutality of those who occupy the highest place in the social hierarchy. Simultaneously, it alsoi nsinuates that dread of anarchy which may be experienced as a result of some radical change in the social structure if power were to pass into the hands of those who are lamentably unequipped for its judicious exercise. Cade's bumptious facade, his muddled utopianism, with an impure streak of masochism lurking behind it and the masquerades he puts

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on are an index of the palpably comic dimensions of his personality :

> As for these silken-coated slaves, I pass not:
> It is to you, good people, that I speak,
> Over whom, in time to come, I hope to reign;
> For I am rightful heir unto the crown. IV, ii, 122-25

His postures of an inflated ego, his whimsicalities and his odd gesture of conferring knighthood on his own self offer a sort of parody of the shams and pretensions of his superiors-those who count in the wider sphere of power politics and are, therefore, inordinately ambitious, wily, treacherous and ruthlessly opportunistic. He conjures up the vision of being already installed as Proctor in place of Gloucester: 'This monument of the victory (*Sir Humphrey's armour*) will I bear; and the bodies shall be dragg'd at my horse heels till I do come to London, where we will have the mayor's sword borne before us'. (IV, iii, 10-13). This obviously provokes boisterous laughter and this sort of fantastic self-exaltation renders the irony lying behind it both pungent and delectable. Jack Cade is an arrogant, puffed-up, self-deluded, shrewd madcap and one who is unduly conscious of his capacity to mould the rabble multitude any way that he chooses. His mistaken notion of his royal lineage, his sky-blown shemes for his Utopian kingdom and his habit of walking on stilts are entirely derisive, and he is removed from the scene of action with the same inconsequentiality with which he had been put into focus.

More or less the same stance may legitimately be taken in regard to Falstaff and the low comedy scenes occurring in Eastcheap, Gad's hill and the Gaultree forest in which he is so deeply implicated in the two parts of *Henry IV*. Supremely witty equivocator as he is Falstaff is a miracle of artistic creation : his mental acuteness and sophistries, his reduction of everything serious to mirth and jest, his powers of resilience, his refusal to be fubbed off, his 'manner of wrenching and twisting the true cause the false way', his enormous

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capacity for ingenious fabrications, his wriggling out of every tight corner and his utter contempt to be bound by any moral imperatives help rivet the reader's affections on this fascinating character. His deep involvement in the quasi-heroic adventures, along with those who are the veritable incarnation of tumultuous misrule and irresponsibility, offers a comic equivalent of the breath-taking and boisterous activities, the treacheries and subterfuges, and the ceaselessly mad pursuit of power and prestige in which the shrewd, rapacious and calculating chess-board players of power politics are so conspicuously absorbed. The combative militancy, the infinite exuberance and the devil-may-care audacity of Hotspur are cut to ridiculous proportions when juxtaposed to the reckless abandon and leisurely expansiveness of Falstaff and those with whom he participated in all the varied forms of debauchery. It hardly needs any stressing that the tight-lipped deliberations and behind-the-door dealings and negotiations carried on in Westminster hall are exposed for what they are and subtly and indirectly parodied when viewed against the perspective of the hilarity, quick-wittedness and verbal acrobatics indulged in by the frequenters of the Eastcheap tavern. Here life is lived in fine excess, qualms of conscience are shrugged off as mere squeamishnes, time is lazy-footed, human failings and lapses are allowed enough elbow-room and thus, inferentially, the mask of pretensions and hypocrisy worn by the finicky, the fraudulent and the self-seeking is torn off without any fuss being created. The highway robbing of the robbers—the implicit symptom of 'disorder'—planned to take place at Gad's Hill, offers a burlesque parallel in a comic setting of the exotic military exploits at Shrewsbury and later at Harfleur and Agincourt and thus exposes the total absurdity of the human situation. Or in other words the comic action is a variant of and reflects back on the affairs of the state pursued by the politicians in all solemnity and underscores the fact that the political game is at best a dubious exercise and is flawed in its essentials.

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The impersonation scene in almost the middle of *1 Henry IV* serves as a sort of mirror-image for both Prince Hal and Falstaff who are caricatured with superb and dense brushwork and, incidentally, the politics of corruption in which they are so thoroughly immersed is also exposed with exquisite artistic economy and finesse. The chivalric values of 'honour' (Cf. Hotspur's descant on it in *1 Henry IV*) and of 'reputation' (Cf. Mowbray's 'The purest treasure mortal times afford/Is spotless reputation—that away,/Men are but gilded loam, or painted clay' : *Richard II*, I, i, 177-79) so much made of by the political man and spoken of in such highly stylized rhetorical terms, with a certain degree of naivety, though, are revealed as mere fake entities the way Falstaff deflates them and bandies them about in a transparently disillusioning manner : 'Can honour set to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery then? No. What is honour? A word. What is in that word honour? What is that honour? Air. A trim reckoning!. . . Honour is a mere scutcheon—and so ends my catechism' (*1 Henry IV*, V,i, 131-141). His 'counterfeiting' is a mere sham and a camouflage for the innate fear of death which invades his muddy consciousness and which also parallels the subliminal fears and apprehensions of an identical nature by which his superiors in rank are assaulted both awake and asleep because of the continuous and recurring seqence of their misdeeds. They always find themselves hedged in by insecurity and precariousness because locked up in the icy circle of isolation they are denied that sense of comraderie and solidarity which is enjoyed by Falstaff and his fellow revellers. They feel that they have little to hold on to by way of mutual trust and reciprocal understanding as a source of sustainment though they are destined to play a crucial and decisive role in the escalcated drama of power struggle.

As if to place the sheer parody of the technique of the military commanders and the misuse of the 'king's damnable press' in perspective, Falstaff's recruitment of his battlion of

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soldiers follows hard on the heels of Hotspur's heroics of warfare. Derisively, and in a vein of bitter mockery, we are told that these soldiers consisted of 'discarded unjust serving-men, younger sons to younger brothers, revolted tapsters, and ostlers trade-fallen, the cankers of a calm world and a long peace, ten times more dishonourable-ragged than an old fazed ancient,. . .No eye hath seen such scarecrows. (*1 Henry IV*, iv, ii, 27-38). Later, when conscription for forming a bogus army of foot-soldiers is in progress Falstaff speaks to the following effect : 'Will you tell me, Master Shallow, how to choose a man? Care I for the limb, the thews, the stature, bulk, and big assemblance of a man ? Give me the spirit, Master Shallow. Here's Wart: you see what a ragged appearance it is—a shall charge you, and discharge you, with the motion of a pewterer's hammer, come off and on swifter than he that gibbets on the brewer's bucket. And this same half-fac'd fellow Shadow; give me this man, he presents no mark to the enemy —the foeman may with as great aim level at the edge of a pen-knife. And for a retreat, how swiftly will this Feeble the woman's tailor run off ! O, give-me the spare men, and spare me the great ones,! (*2 Henry IV*, III, ii, 252-65). These two utterances on the mustering of the militia constitute a delightfully poised ironic comment on the pathetic state of the army[5] and the utter incompetence of those in charge of conscription and also of those enrolled compulsorily, and it drives home the point with dexterity and with an air of casualness. It may be added that the succession of Wart, Shadow and Feeble underscores the varying degrees of imbecility involved, in the descending order, and the symptoms of disease and concupiscence in Falstaff, especially visible in *2 Henry IV*, are a reflection of the malady and disharmony of the senile politicians which is brought out in a very suggestive way.

The final rejection of Falstaff by Prince Hal as Henry V and Falstaff's death which was probably precipitated by disillusionment and consequent heart-break is riddled with a good deal of ambiguity. The Tudor society was haunted all

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along by the spectre of chaos, it had undergone travails of civil strife and had been exposed to naked aggression from outside. Now at long last it was about to acquire a degree of stability and equipoise after Hal had succeeded in putting himself firmly in the saddle and the Eastcheap rogueries could, therefore, no longer be countenanced. Falstaff's proneness to anarchism and his topsy-turvying of law and order had been glanced at quite early in 1 *Henry IV* thus : 'But I prithee sweet wag, shall there be gallows standing in England when thou art king? and resolution thus fubbed as it is with the rusty curb of old father Antic the law ? Do not thou when thou art king hang a thief' (1, ii, 56 - 60). His disenchantment with the impregnable Lord Chief Justice is therefore hardly surprising when law came to be enforced by the latter promptly and with an iron fist, accompanied with open disapprobation of the debauchery and licence Falstaff had so blatantly shared with Prince Hal and in such abundant measure during the days of their romantic escapades. Hal's attitude of chilliness and frosty unconcern towards 'the tutor and feeder of my riots' at the end of *2 Henry IV*:

> I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers.
> How ill white hairs becomes a fool and jester !
> I have long dreamt of such a kind of man,
> So surfeit-swell'd, so wild and so profane;
> But being awake'd I do despise my dream.
>
> V, V, 47-51

may sound shocking and callous but it had been anticipated in his judgment on Falstaff in *1 Hanry IV* in the impersonation scene thus : 'Thou art violently carried away from grace, there is a devil haunts thee in the likeness of an old fat man, a turn of man is thy companion. Why dost thou converse with that trunk of humours, that bolting-hutch of beastliness, that swollen parcel of dropsies, that huge bombard of sack, that stuffed cloack-bag of guts, that roasted Manningtree ox with the pudding in his belly, that reverend vice, that grey iniquity, that father ruffian, that vanity in years?

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(II, iv, 440-49). In the same play, 'Appetite', of which the parasitic Falstaff is a grotesque embodiment, makes a fresh inroad on the body politic, and the king, with a view to effectively counteracting his predatoriness, urges upon him, in a tone of cussedness : 'Leave gormandizing', and this injunction is barbed with multiple meanings and has a kind of saliency which has not been dwelt upon by any earlier critic. Falstaff was identified as an emblem of 'Vice' or 'Misrule', was called 'sweet beef' with which the lean earth was larded, was named by Prince Hal 'that roasted Manningtree ox with the pudding in his belly' and looked like one of the 'sacrifices in their trim', of Hotspur's ironic and berating description. In the impersonation scene he also held the status of a father-substitute in relation to Hal. JMI Stewart's conclusion drawn from all these cogent premises put together is that the rejection of Falstaff symbolizes not only the supplanting but killing of the father by the son in a ritualistic manner in order to have the residual perilous stuff expelled out of the body politic and thus cause fertility to be brought to the land. This piece of speculation has much to recommend itself within the frame of reference provided by the modern anthropological myth. Falstaff, no better than a scapegoat on this assumption, has to be sacrificed in conformity with the magic formula implicit in the myth so that the would-be crushing and magnificent victories of Harlfeur and Agincourt might be ensured. Henry V has also to reorganize and refurbish the apparatus of the ramshackle state and Falstaff has to be pushed aside in its larger interests though the human cost likely to be incurred in this surgical operation is tremendous. Any relaxation or show of charity or *kindliness* on the part of Henry V would be fraught with disastrous consequences and might put the state in jeopardy. The crass, blundering and self-indulgent political man, with his pathetic incomprehension, inferentially, and within the wider spectrum, must stop to follow the promptings of his instinctual self and develop, on the contrary, the habit of showing

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reverence for 'majesty'[7] which connotes the rightful observance of the principle of reciprocity, recognition of mutuality and interdependence, belief in the subordination of the private and petty good to the collective and common good, harmonization of conflicting and divergent interests in the hierarchical system or establishment of community relations, in general, according to the Medieval ethics of statecraft—a point which Stewart, despite his irrefragable logic, has failed to take into cognizance.

How does the political man behave in a world which is torn by conflicts, confusion and tensions—a murky world overcast by clouds of mistrust, suspicion and mutual fears? The main drive behind all his strivings and self-persuadings is how to grab power and use it in furtherance of his own ends and hence any failure in this drive is bound to be productive of nightmare, frustration and loss of inner strength. He is obviously entangled in the politics of corruption and men like Suffolk, Somerset, Duke of York, Richard III, Bolingbroke and Worcester are more emblematic of him than any others. The group alliances and group oppositions emanate from the sole objective of coming to the helm of affairs and achieving the crown which is the central image of this struggle for power. The political man is over-eaten by ambition, is given to making cold and calculating moves and prizes unprincipled self-interest or 'tickling commodity' (Cf. *King John*) as the highest good and must needs have a looking-glass placed before him in order that his 'shadow' (Cf *Richard II)* or distorted, mildewed image be reflected in it and he be induced thereby to some exercise of enforced self-exploration. He has scant regard for ancient pieties and decencies, true and genuine obedience, principle of interdependence and co-operation in the human commonwealth or moral scruples of any kind which may deflect him from the reckless pursuit of his ignoble ends. These scruples he treats as mere mental cobwebs or constructs of the imagination which had better be brushed aside in the interest of an efficient and effective disposal of matters. In his case 'The abuse of greatness is when it

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disjoins,/Remorse from power' (Cf. *Julius Caesar*), for neither the collective good of an organic society nor public order are envisaged as desirable targets; on the contrary, to these is counterpoised the naked and unashamed chasing of power. He is consistently and studiously pragmatic in his approach to things, weighing and sifting every minute particular and is highly suspicious of the motivations of others. The political man is a blandly short-sighted, incorrigibly self-regarding and brazenly egoistic individualist whose steely intransigence is disdainful of the dynamics of adjustment—adjustment to norms of solidarity or humane understanding beyond the narrow limits of his immediate and ponderable good and he is responsible for unleashing the forces of disruption and anarchy in this benighted world. L C Knights clinches the issue with his characteristic succinctness thus: '. . . what we are most aware of is the unending clash of self-contained egos, without any reaching out towards 'the other', or towards anything that transcends the self'.[8] We seem to be moving in an endless labyrinth because life in these plays is 'delivered over to automatism' on account of 'a radical mis-direction of energy', and monstrous perversity of the human will displayed at all levels. What Gloucester says, in his pervasively superstitious mood, about the *natural* world of man, holds true here also: 'We have seen the best of our time: machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves' (Cf. *King Lear*, I, ii, 117-20). Besides all this, one has also the irritable feeling that time plays havoc with political man's purposes and achievements in his universe and the fact of his being vulnerable to temporality is an ineluctable fact.

In this world thronged with corrupt and self-centred politicians who seem to dominate the political arena in Shakespenre's History plays one comes across just a handful of characters who may be looked upon as embodying the perfectionistic ideal. One such character is Richmond who seems to be mythically ordained to eradicate the contagion of evil which was injected into the body politic by the Duke of

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York and which attained cancerous growth at the hands of Richard III. Though an explicit juxtaposition is intended between Richard III and Richmond—polar opposites as they are—when the action of the play is nearing its climactic point, yet the latter remains (and was perhaps deliberately meant to remain) most of the time only an evocative symbol, a benign presence, and not a fully realized dramatic character explored in all its potenfialities, A further adumbration of the ideal is suggested in Faulconbridge in *King John* whose railing and reduceive cynicism and impishness—the latter born of a leaping imagination—are radically metamorphosed into their opposites. He is deeply and genuinely shocked by Arthur's death, begins to ruminate over human frailties in the midst of 'the thorns and dangers of the world' and comes to profess unflinching loyalty to the king to support him against the revolting and unruly barons and the onslaught of papal authoritarianism and the highhandedness of Pandulph. For him neither 'Commodity' which he anatomizes in all its minutiae and on which he expatiates with such gusto nor his own legal claim to his inheritance of the Faulconbridge estate but the ideal of national solidarity comes to be conceived as the prime and quintessenfial good. Inspite of being open-eyed and impersonal, intelligent and resourceful and having a firm and quick grasp over the exigencies of any situation he is confronted with he is singularly unambitious, is very well contented with playing the second fiddle and performs a loyal, though not a regal, role in administring the affairs of the state. For him King John represents the ideal instrument for the attainment of that perfection which is not to be dissociated from the concept of nationhood : it is one of its necessary modes of manifestation. It has been very perceptively pointed out that the crux of the problem in the play is not any change or process of growth that he undergoes but the cleavage which is so distinctly visible in Faulconbridge at the end of the third Act.[9] From an irresponsible, swaggering, bouncing spirit he turns almost all of a sudden into a chastened, sensitive and poised thinker and executor of things,

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thoroughly tested and purged in the fire of experience and capable of exerting a decisive influence on matters of vital, national concern and putting the indelible stamp of his personality on them. But neither Richmond nor Faulconbridge but Henry V is supposed to be presented as an epical hero, one who is a configuration of those personality traits which have been built up so steadily and with such meticulous care, an examplar of the norm of kingship and compact of the virtues of efficiency. courtesy and rigorous discipline. He is shrewd, clear-sighted and prompt in taking decisions, matching thought with action, speculation with the brute facts of living and is disdainful of wearing any blinkers. To him goes the enviable credit for subdual of the recalcitrant and malicious lords, for achieving the glories of Harfleur and Agincourt and for patching up with the French King, by the use of skilful diplomacy, to frustrate his expansionist designs without compromising with his own national prestige or putting the territorial boundaries of his country to any risk. His bluff and childish wooing of Katharine—part of his political strategy-, because of the element of tawdrines inherent in it, is rather obnoxious to the modern, sophisticated taste. His attitudes, generally speaking, are not simple but ambivalent : he is both courageous and courteous, soft-spoken and ruthless, a stickler for ceremony as well as hard-hitttng, blunt and inflexible. His arrest of rebel nobles in dubious circumstances demonstrates his fraud and duplicity, his peremptory order to his solidiers to kill the prisoners in cold blood betrayes the utmost limit of savagery and brutality and sends shivers down one's back and his loud-mouthed war-mongering provides a measure of his jingoism. He seems to have developed what may imprecisely be designated as some sort of Agincourt consciousness which is pervasive in the play, which renders him one-eyed[10] and this one-eyedness damages the kaleidoscopic vision of a rich and complex personality. He is too 'solid and flawless' to be humanly attractive, is very much of an extravert, but sequestered from the living centres of feeling and all the single jewels of personality

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are so thoroughly fused in him into a static and rigid unity as to render it jejune and inert. He is very much a made-up character, frozen and colourless, one in whom the molecules of being do not attain to the orchestration of the Dionysiac rhythm. Whether he happens to be on the battlefield or in the council chamber or engaged in a *tete-e-tete* or cringing for popular applause he is always doctrinaire and pompous, exulting in the smugness of Marvell's 'Royal Actor' (Cf. *A Horatian Ode*), an unwearied exponent of national sovereignty and integrify, having the idea of territorial expansion at the forefront of his consciousness and, while busy doing all this he always tends to get on one's nerves. He is a massive machine of practical efficiency and this efficiency, along with his assumed moralistic pose and his patriotic effervescence, are downright repelling and nauseating and set up strong waves of unsavoury reactions in the reader. Falstaff, because of his mercuriality and vitality, his sudden and disarming somersaults and his relish of clap-trap, has a greater imaginative appeal than Prince Hal and the latter, inspite of the self-righteousness involved in establishing his superiority over the moral adolescence and immaturity of Hotspur is, perhaps, a bit more engaging than when he comes to function with pontifical solemnity, takes pride in his self-complacency and in his being thumpingly platitudinous. Did Shakespeare really mean to win us over by painting the flattering picture of an ideal ruler ? One tends to be rather sceptical in answering this query because the picture which stares us in the face ultimately is like Pistol's heart 'fracted and corroborate' (Cf. *2 Henry IV*)—one which, though it apparently looks like a finished Chinese porcelain, is nevertheless undermined by the play of subtle ambiguities and latent ironies.

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Piloo Nanavaty

BLAKE AND GNOSTIC IMAGERY : A NOTE

Not only do we find gnostic technical terms, such as 'eon' and 'palisade' in Blake's poetry, but some of the outlandish names he bestows on his mythological characters echo gnostic proper names. For example, Utha, a minor personality described in the *Book of Urizen* (VIII. 3) as emerging from the waters, lamenting, is similar to the Mandaean Uthra, a generic term for angels and archangels. As Hans Jonas, in *The Gnostic Religion*, states, these beings are 'emanations from the divine fulness,' but they are also among the fallen angels.[1] It is in this latter sense that Blake's Utha is placed among Urizen's

> Sons and daughters of sorrow on mountains
> Weeping, wailing.

Margaret Ruth Lowery, in her study of Blake's *Poetical Sketches*, suggests that Utha may be derived from Uthal in Ossian's *Berrathon*.[2] Apparently, Blake read both Ossian and the Church Fathers with equal diligence.

Again, in the opening lines of *Vala*, Night the Third, we find a gnostic phrase, King of Light :

> Now sat the King of Light upon his starry throne,
> And bright Ahania bow'd herself before his splendid feet.

Hans Jonas explains the term :

> 'The first alien Life is the 'King of Light,' whose world is a world of splendour and of light without darkness, a world of mildness without rebellion, a world of eternal righteousness without turbulence, a world of eternal life without decay and death, a world of goodness without evil. . .a pure world unmixed with ill.[3]

The above passage is a perfect description, according to the Iranian Pahlavi Texts, of the static world of pure good-

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ness and beauty created by Ahura Mazda, Lord of Life and Wisdom, before Ahriman (Satan) bursts into it to despoil it. As one would expect, this streak of Iranian dualism is very pronounced in Manichaean Gnosticism as well. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Blake's Urizen following suit, seeking for 'a joy without pain,' a 'solid without fluctuation,' to the secret amusement of Blake himself.

When we turn to Ahania's lament to Urizen we find the imagery patently gnostic :

> 'Why sighs my Lord? are not the morning stars thy obedient Sons?
> Do they not bow their bright heads at thy voice? at thy command
> 'Do they not fly into their stations and return their light to thee?
> The immortal Atmospheres are thine; there thou art seen in glory
> Surrounded by the ever changing Daughters of the Light.
> Why wilt thou look upon futurity, dark'ning present joy?'
>
> *Vala*, III, 5-10

In Mandaean Gnosticism, and in some of the other systems as well, the King of Light is in control of the stars and the planets. His sons of light are scattered throughout the universe, flying to their fixed 'stations,' another gnostic phrase, while the 'immortal Atmospheres' refer to the 'veils' through which the Soul of man, and various divinities, both good and evil, have to pass before final unity is achieved.

Urizen's reply to Ahania is that he must serve 'a Boy of the dark Ocean,' namely, Orc, or Revolution, who will grow up to 'command his Prince.' Like every true Gnostic, Blake was keenly aware that in this world of perpetual flux and change, nothing can remain static, not even perfection, which is what Urizen craves.

Ahania's answer reveals the means by which Urizen can solve his dilemma :

> 'O Prince, the Eternal One hath set thee leader of his hosts,
> Raise then thy radiant eyes to him, raise thy obedient hands,

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And comforts shall descend from heaven unto thy dark'ning
clouds.
Leave all futurity to him. Resume thy fields of Light.'

Vala, III, 26-29

But Urizen cannot follow this advice, for he has already handed over 'the horses of instruction' to the 'tygers of wrath', meaning knowledge is now governed by blind passion, which, in the end, will make man realise the truth of his position in this world.

A key figure in gnostic thought is the Eternal One referred to by Ahania in the above quotation. He is also known as the Alien Man, the Eternal Man, the primal Man, the Wanderer, who is born again and again, century after century, seeking rest but finding none. He is the Redeemer who will come to enlighten those in the darkness of ignorance and lead them into the light of truth through *gnosis*, divine knowledge.

'A call rang out over the whole world, the splendour departed from every city. Manda d'Hayye (knowledge of life, personified) revealed himself to all the children of men and redeemed them from the darkness into the light.'[4]

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Not only has the original unity and perfection of the First Life sunk into matter and there been corrupted and dispersed but redemption can only be achieved by a gathering in, and an awareness of the soul's perfection in former times. As Hans Jonas comments :

'If portions of the Light or the First Life have been separated from it and mixed in with the darkness, then an original unity has been split up and given over to plurality : the splinters are the sparks dispersed throughout creation. . .Consequently, salvation involves a process of gathering in, of re-collection of what has been so dispersed, and salvation aims at the restoration of the original unity'.[5]

These ideas are expressed by Blake in the most moving poetry in a long lamentation by Ahania and Enion towards the conclusion of *Vala*, Night the Eighth. I quote the passage in full.

Listen. I will tell thee what is done in the caverns of the grave.
The Lamb of God has rent the Veil of Mystery, soon to return
In Clouds and Fires around the rock and the Mysterious tree

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And as the seed waits Eagerly watching for its flower and fruit,
Anxious its little soul looks out into the clear expanse
To see if hungry winds are abroad with their invisible array,
So Man looks out in tree and herb and fish and bird and beast
Collecting up the scatter'd portions of his immortal body
Into the Elemental forms of everything that grows.
He tries the sullen north wind, riding on its angry furrows
The sultry south when the sun rises, and the angry east
When the sun sets, when the clods harden and the cattle stand
Drooping and the birds hide in their nests, he stores his thoughts
As in a store house in his memory; he regulates the forms
Of all beneath and all above, and in the gentle West
Reposes where the Sun's heat dwells; he rises to the Sun
And to the Planets of the Night, and to the stars that gild
The Zodiac, and the stars that sullen stand to north and south.
He touches the remotest pole, and in the center weeps
That Man should Labour and sorrow and learn and forget, and return
To the dark valley whence he came, to begin his labour anew.
In pain he sighs, in pain he labours in his universe.
Sorrowing in birds over the deep, and howling in the wolf
Over the slain, and moaning in the cattle and in the winds
And weeping over Orc and Urizen in clouds and flaming fires,
And in the cries of birth and in the groans of death his voice
Is heard throughout the Universe : wherever a grass grows
Or a leaf buds, The Eternal Man is seen, is heard, is felt
And all his sorrows, till he reassumes his ancient bliss.'

Compare the above with the following taken from the fragment known as the Gospel of Eve, preserved by Epiphanius:

> I am thou and thou art I, and where thou art I am, and in all things am I dispersed. And from wherever thou will'st thou gatherest me; but in gathering me thou gatherest thyself. . .He who attains to this gnosis and gathers himself from the cosmos . . . is no longer detained here but rises above the Archons . . . (The Soul speaks) I have come to know myself and have gathered myself from everywhere.[6]

Not only are the commonplaces of gnostic doctrine woven into Blake's poetry, but the feeling of being forlorn and desolate in a world of loneliness, expressed with great pathos in several gnostic texts, also finds its way in Blake's

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poems. In a Mandaean text we read:

> 'A vine am I, a lonely one, that stands in the world. I have no sublime planter, no keeper, no mild helper to come and instruct me about everything.'[7]

In almost identical words, Ahania wails :

> And the voice cried : Ah, Urizen I Love I
> Flower of morning ! I weep on the verge
> Of Non-entity; how wide the Abyss
> Between Ahania and thee . . .
> Weeping I walk over rocks,
> Over dens and thro' valleys of death.
> Why didst thou despise Ahania
> To cast me from thy bright presence
> Into the World of Loneness? *The Book of Ahania*, Chap. V. 2 and 4

Here is another revealing passage from a Mandaean text:

> 'I am a Mana (Divine Spark) of the great Life. I am a Mana of the mighty Life. Who has made me live in the Tibil (mud and slime of earth), who has thrown me into the bodystump ? . . . My eyes, which were opened from the abode of light, now belong to the stump . . . How I must obey, how endure, how must I quiet my mind ! . . . How must my mild Father's Word dwell among the creatures of the dark !'[8]

Even more moving is the agonised appeal of Pistis Sophia to the Light of Lights to deliver her from chaos:

> O light of Lights, in which I had faith from the beginning, hearken now to my repentance. Deliver me, O Light, for evil thoughts have entered into me . . . I went and found myself in the darkness which is in the chaos beneath, and I was powerless to hasten away and to return to my place, for I was afflicted by all the Emanations of the Authades (the Arrogant One) . . . And I cried for help, but my voice did not carry out of the darkness. . .And the watchmen of the gates of the Aeons sought me, and all those who stay within their Mystery mocked me . . . Now, O Light of Lights, I am afflicted in the darkness of the chaos . . . Deliver me out of the matter of this darkness, so that I shall not be submerged in it.[9]

Even so, Blake's Jerusalem, in the poem of that name, is set upon by the twelve sons of Albion, mocked and derided by Vala and Rahab, till she too appeals to Jesus for help.

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If a typical gnostic poem, like the Hymn of the Pearl, is now examined, still further resemblances will be seen between the symbols and imagery used therein and Blake's poetry.

The Hymn of the Pearl, the Hymn of the Soul, the Hymn of the Robe of Glory, as it is variously named, is found in the apocryphal Acts of Thomas where it has nothing to do with the text. There is a Syriac and a Greek version of this appealing little poem, the Syriac being the older. G R S Mead, in his *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, asserts that it is one of the Hymns of Bardaisan whose 'barbarous destruction' by the Christian Church he greatly deplores.[10] Both Mead, and M R James, in his *The Apocryphal New Testament*,[11] keep to the metrical division of the original, but Hans Jonas translates the work in vivid prose which is more dynamic and from which I shall quote.

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The original title of the poem is 'Song of the Apostle Judas Thomas in the land of the Indians,' believed to have been composed when he was imprisoned in India, Madras, to be more specific. The opening sentence reads :

> 'When I was a little child and dwelt in the kingdom of my Father's house and delighted in the wealth and splendour of those who raised me, my parents sent forth from the East, our homeland, with provisions for the journey.'

The provisions are interpreted by Hans Jonas as 'the transmundane spiritual instruction, the gnosis, which he (the Alien Man) communicates to the faithful.'[12]

From the 'riches of the treasure-house' the Soul is given a burden of five precious substances which is 'both great and light.' These five substances are linked to the five elements with which the Primal Man of Manichaean Gnosticism girds himself with in order to fight the powers of darkness.

In the Hymn of the Pearl the servants of the king now take off the Robe of Glory from the Prince, and his richly woven mantle, made to 'conform' exactly to his figure, and a 'covenant' is made with him and inscribed on his heart so

that he might not forget for what purpose he is sent forth. This is explained in the words of farewell spoken by the King :

> When thou goest down into Egypt and bringest the One Pearl which lies in the middle of the sea which is encircled by the snorting serpent, thou shalt put on again thy robe of glory and thy mantle over it and with thy brother our next in rank be heir in our kingdom.

The Prince, escorted by two royal envoys, goes through a dangerous journey till he reaches the 'walls of Sarbug' in Babylonia, and thence to Egypt when his companions leave him. The story continues :

> I went straightaway to the serpent and settled close by to his inn until he should slumber and sleep so that I might take the Pearl from him. Since I was one and kept to myself, I was a stranger to my fellow-dwellers in the inn.

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In order to avoid recognition, the Prince clothes himself in the garments of the Egyptians lest they should suspect him of coming from without to take away the Pearl, and so rouse the serpent against him. 'But,' adds the Prince, 'through some cause they marked that I was not their countryman, and they ingratiated themselves with me, and mixed me (drink) with their cunning, and gave me to taste of their meat; and I forgot that I was a king's son and served their king. I forgot the Pearl for which my parents had sent me. Through the heaviness of their nourishment I sank into deep slumber.'

The king of kings and all the nobles of the court grieve for their Prince. The king, therefore, sends him a letter which reads in part:

> 'Awake and rise up out of thy sleep. . .Remember that thou art a king's son: behold whom thou hast served in bondage. Be mindful of the Pearl, for whose sake thou hast departed into Egypt. Remember thy robe of glory, recall thy splendid mantle, that thou mayest put them on and deck thyself with them and thy name be read in the book of heroes and thou become with thy brother, our deputy, heir in our kingdom'.

The letter takes the form of an eagle and flies straight to the Prince and alights beside him, and then becomes 'wholly speech.'

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At its voice and sound I awoke and arose from my sleep, took it up, kissed it, broke its seal, and read . . . I remembered that I was a son of kings, and that my freeborn soul desired its own kind. I remembered the Pearl for which I had been sent down to Egypt, and I began to enchant the terrible and snorting serpent. I charmed it to sleep by naming over it my Father's name, the name of our next in rank, and that of my mother, the queen of the East. I seized the Pearl, and turned to repair home to my father. Their filthy and impure garment I put off, and left it behind in their land, and directed my way that I might come to the light of our homeland, thd East.

As the Prince wends his way home, clutching the precious pearl to himself, the letter he had received turns into a light that shines on his path, and a voice that encourages him, and a love that draws him still further. Half way he meets the 'treasurers' who carry his robe of glory and his begemmed mantle to deck him with. The prince is amazed: 'Its splendour I had forgotten, having left it as a child in my Father's house.' The robe becomes a 'mirror-image' of the Prince, while the imprint of the King of Kings is depicted all over it. The 'movements of the gnosis' quiver in every fold of this glorious raiment which sings as it reaches out to the prince in 'regal movements and pours itself wholly on him'. The Prince too hastens towards it.

And I stretched towards it and took it and decked myself with the beauty of its colours, And I cast the royal mantle about my entire self. Clothed therein, I ascended to the gate of salutation and adoration. I bowed my head and adored the splendour (Majesty) of my Father who had sent it to me, whose commands I had fulfilled as he too had done what he promised . . . He received me joyfully, and I was with him in his kingdom, and all his servants praised him with organ voice, that he had promised that I should journey to the court of the King of King and having brought my Pearl should appear together with him.

Thus ends this most beautiful poem, beautiful even in translation, touching hidden springs. It seems almost a sacrilege to turn from the impact of the poem to a cold dissection of symbol and image. Yet such a dissection will reveal not only the full significance of the poem itself, but also its influence on Blake's symbols and imagery.

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It is obvious that the 'Father's house' is the heavenly kingdom, the rightful home of the human soul. The Pearl is not only the Soul in man, but it is the 'lost pearl' to be retrieved from its clothing of flesh and blood even as the pearl is extracted from the oyster. The serpent, the sea and Egypt, however, need further elucidation.

Among the Ophite sects, the serpent played the role of a 'transcendental principle' which gives man the knowledge that helps him to turn away from the Demiurge, the cruel creator of the world, who would hold men in bondage for ever in ignorance. In the 'Hymn of the Pearl', however, the serpent is 'the earth-encircling dragon of the original chaos, the ruler or evil principle of this world'. In the Acts of Thomas (para 32), one of the dragon-sons of the serpent describes his origin in these words:

> I am the offspring of the serpent-nature and a corrupter's son of him who . . . sits on the throne and has dominion over the creation beneath the heavens . . . who encircles the spheres . . . who is outside (around) the ocean, whose tail lies in his mouth[13]

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Blake speaks of the 'Serpent Bulk of Nature's dross' but he also paints magnificent, jewelled, rainbow coloured serpents as in the water colour of 'Eve tempted by the Serpent,' in a private collection.[14] As a contrast, compare the voluptuous serpents coiled round the naked bodies of reclining females, the cruel daughters of Albion (*Jerusalem,* pl.75). There is also a headless worm/serpent swathed round the naked body of a woman (Vala?) who lies full length on the ground, a crescent moon and star above her feet (*Jerusalem* pl.63). On the previous plate is a terrifying drawing of the contorted head of a giant, howling in pain, his head ringed round in the tight coils of a serpent. His hands clutch the rim of a black abyss, while his large feet are shown, wide apart, issuing flames. The text takes up the entire page, but at the bottom, between the giant's feet, is the minute figure of Los exploring the darkness *(Jerusalem,* pl. 62).

The sea or waters, as Hans Jonas remarks, is 'a standing

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symbol for the world of matter or of darkness into which the divine has sunk'. One gnostic sect, the Peratae, interpreted the Red Sea (the Suf-Sea, the Sea of Death), which has to be crossed on the way to and from Egypt, as the 'water of corruption', and identified it with kronos, Time, and with 'becoming'. Blake also speaks of the 'Sea of Time and Space' while his characters, such as Tharmas, the Body, for example, are always floating in the waters of materialism.

Egypt too is a common gnostic symbol for the material world. Hans Jonas points out that not only the biblical story of the Exodus from Egypt was associated with materialism and coercion in the Jewish mind, but from very ancient times Egypt was held to be the home of the cult of the dead, and hence the kingdom of death. Its animal-headed gods and cruel sacrifices, like those to the god, Moloch, into whose cavernous mouth, fed by a furnace of fire, live children were flung, roused horror not only among the Jews, but also among the ancient Persians. They looked upon Egypt as the 'embodiment of a demonic principle'. Blake's imagination was also stirred by the Egyptian Moloch, for he has a striking water colour painting, 'Moloch's Flight', being an illustration in the series to Milton's 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity' xxiii.[15] Among the gnostics, Egypt was also used as a symbol for the human body. The Peratae and the Naassenes had a saying amongst them: 'the body is a little Egypt', (Hippol. V. 16, 5; 7.41). Blake, who read his Bible day and night as he asserts, was fully conversant with the symbol and used it with gnostic overtones.

Kathleen Raine, however, points to the Swedenborgian explanation of Egypt. She quotes Blake's list of biblical proper names, namely, 'Moab and Ammon and Amalek and Canaan and Egypt and Aram,' these being permanent psychological states of mind, and then shows the key to the symbols as found in Swedenborg's *True Christian Religion* where he says:

by Aegypt is signified what is scientific, by Ashur what is Rational,

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by Edom what is Natural, by Moab the Adulteration of Good, and by the Children of Ammon the Adulteration of Truth, by the Philistines Faith without Charity.[16]

Turning back to the Hymn of the Pearl, one is struck by the pertinence of the following passge in relation to Blake's view of life:

> They (the Egyptians) ingratiated themselves with me, and mixed me (drink) with their cunning, and gave me to taste of their meat; and I forgot that I was a King's son and served their king. I forgot the Pearl for which my parents had sent me. Through the heaviness of their nourishment I sank into deep slumber.[17]

Even so, the Four Zoas fall into a stupor, and their counterparts do not recognise them, as when Vala 'forgot' Luvah was her own true love 'in times of old'. The awakening, or the Call, to use the gnostic phrase, comes from without. In Blake, it is Jesus, the Christ, who awakens the 'sleepers of Beulah', as well as Albion, who represents humanity. The 'wine presses of Luvah' in which the 'human grapes' are trodden in a wild orgy of drunkenness, can also be paralleled in gnostic texts where the 'feasts' of the corrupters of the world are vividly described.

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Another curious symbol among the gnostics, if symbol it can be called, is the 'noise of the world.'[18] This phrase refers to the distractions and inanity of worldly pleasures which deafen the Soul in man and prevent her from remembering her former heavenly home and high estate. The cataclysmic upheavals in Blake's *Vala, Milton* and *Jerusalem*, and the din of the warring factions echo the gnostic descriptions. Note Blake's penchant for making his characters use mighty bows and arrows to dislodge huge rocks and high mountains and throw these at one another *(The Book of Ahania*, chaps. I and II *)*.

Of recent years, the Nag Hammadi Library of gnostic texts have found their way into print. Amond these is a strange poem called 'The Thunder, Perfect Mind.'[19] The editors state that the speaker is a woman, uttering paradoxes, the signifi-

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cance being that Divine Wisdom is beyond good and evil. A few quotations from the poem will reveal its characteristic tone:

> 'I was sent forth from (the) power.
> and I have come to those who reflect upon me. . .
> Do not be ignorant of me.
> For I am the first and the last.
> I am the honoured one and the scorned one.
> I am the whore and the holy one. . .
> For I am the wisdom (of the) Greeks
> And the knowledge of the Barbarians. . .
> (I) am the one whose image is great in Egypt.
> And the one who has no image among the barbarians. . .
> I am the Knowledge of my inquiry
> And the finding of those who seek after me,
> and the command of those who ask of me,
> and the power of the powers in my knowledge
> of the angels, who have been sent at my word,
> and of gods in their seasons by my counsel,
> and of spirits of every man who exists with me,
> and of women who dwell within me. . .

The concluding lines read:

> 'Give heed then, you hearers
> and you also, the angels and those who have been sent,
> and you spirits who have arisen from the dead.
> For I am the one who alone exists,
> and I have no one who will judge me.
> For many are the pleasant forms which exist in numerous sins,
> and incontinencies,
> and disgraceful passions,
> and fleeting pleasures.
> which (men) embrace until they become sober,
> and go up to their resting-place
> and they will find me there,
> and they will live,
> and they will not die again'.

Blake too indulges in paradoxes, one of his best known being these lines from *America*:

> That pale religious letchery, seeking Virginity,
> May find it in a harlot, and in coarse-clad honesty.
> The undefil'd, tho' ravish'd in her cradle night and morn.

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It is difficult to assess Blake's indebtedness to gnostic imagery, for there is no one volume of gnostic poetry, gathered from many sources, and in complete translation. This brief note is merely an indication as to the need for further research which is likely to yield fruitful results.

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[2] Margaret Ruth Lowery, *Windows of the Morning*, (Yale Universiy, Press and O.U.P.), New Haven, 1940, p.236

[3] Jonas, *op.cit*. p.57

[4] Ibid. p.75

[5] Ibid. p.59

[6] Ibid. p.60

[7] Ibid. p.66

[8] Ibid. p 67

[9] Ibid. p.68

[10] G R S Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, (The Theosophical Publishing Society) London and Banaras, 2nd ed. 1906, Reprint 1976, p.414

[11] M R James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford, 1950, pp.411-415

[12] Jonas, *op.cit*. p. 113, n.2

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[14] Darrell Figgis, *The paintings of William Blake*, (Benn), London, 1925, pl. 11

[15] Ibid. pl. 37

[16] Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, 2 Vols. (Routledge) London, 1969, Vol. I, p.5 and Notes, p. 378

[17] Jonas. *op*. cit. p. 114

[18] Ibid. p. 73

[19] *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, (Brill) Leiden, 1977, pp. 270-277

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Edward H. Strauch

THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA : AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL VIEW

It is not difficult to infer that Santiago is a Christian figure. While his story undeniably supports such an interpretation, this ethnocentric reading tends to omit those dimensions of his character and destiny which go beyond the purely Christian. For this reason, the purpose of the present paper is to use an anthropological approach which will show how Santiago represents an archetype transcending the confines of any given religion or culture.[1]

Associations with the hero's name lead one immediately to the story setting—the Caribbean Sea. Santiago city is the capital of Oriente Province in south-east Cuba. This geographical clue leads us to speculate on those inferences to the name Santiago beyond its obvious translation into Saint James.

Santiago de Cuba was formerly named Oriente, and this name is plainly cognate to the English word *Orient*. The Spanish word refers to the eastern coast of the island, and its English counterpart, in the context of the story, implies the eastern sky and the sunrise. As a matter of fact, Santiago begins his day of fishing at dawn, and he rows his skiff westward so that he must face the rising sun, which glares upon the flat sea and would blind him if he did not keep his eyes fixed on the water next to the skiff and on his lines (p. 32).[2]

Santiago's name also evokes association with the word *orientation*, which noun signifies one's awareness of personal, spacial, and temporal relations. In the Gulf Stream, Santiago orients himself according to the signs of the sea, the

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seasons, and other natural cycles. For instance, he knows the great fish come in September and October as do the hurricanes (p. 37). Is this not a figurative way of saying that in life the September and October years are fraught with danger for a man, and yet those same years, representing the time of a man's greatest skill and wisdom, enable him to find the great meaning to his destiny? Santiago is also aware of the 'homing instinct' of the seabirds, which at the same time reflects migratory patterns. Perhaps this may be regarded as a figurative allusion to Santiago's own pilgrim instinct. The deeper intimations flowing beneath the surface story of *The Old Man and the Sea*, as the currents themselves flow beneath his skiff, will confirm the hypothesis that Santiago's destiny is that of a pilgrim.

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The designation *Orient* suggests a further meaning to the word *orientation*. Architecturally speaking, it means the alignment of a church upon the east-west axis, so that the altar (where the Eucharist takes place) is at the eastern end.[8] On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that at the west end of the church, on the facade which faces the setting sun, the tympanum over the main entrance traditionally portrays a Last Judgment scene. In this context, Santiago's rowing westward seems to be in the direction of death or the eschatological end of man and the world, although Santiago faces the east in the direction of life. One can even draw an age-old inference from this simple act. The impossibility of looking directly into the sunlight is like the ancient mystical notion that one cannot look directly into the face of god without being blinded by His magnificence and splendor. God's speaking to Moses through the intermediary of the burning bush is a Biblical example of this belief. Perhaps for this spiritual reason, Santiago cannot look into the glare of the real sun in the morning.

On the other hand, in the evening Santiago, rowing eastward, faces the sun, now 'dying' over the western horizon, and at that time he can look into it without getting the

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blackness (p.33). Beyond the literal fact, does this mean that once he has faced death squarely in his battle with the great fish, he can bear the limits of this life or can endure the awesome Presence of God in the after world? Such an interpretation would not at all be uncommon in mystic translations of the significance of pilgrimages.

Beyond the immediate Judaic-Christian connotations to the geography of the story, the infinitive *to orient* means to determine one's position on the earth and to adjust onself to recognize facts or truths. In a larger sense, Santiago's story is precisely such a recognition, for daily the facts of life and death force him to come to terms with his own meaning in existence.

Furthermore, the old man's name clearly suggests a renowned place of pilgrimage in Northwest Spain, Santiago de Compostela. That he feels he was born to be a fisher man (p. 50) and that he senses his destiny is linked with seeking out the remote sanctuary of the great fish lends his life the aura of an actual pilgrimage.

Proof that this assertion is not merely a lapse into pseudo-religious rhetoric comes from the evidence provided by seasoned anthropologists.[4] Their description of the traditional traits of pilgrimages brings considerable weight to the claim that Santiago's way of life has distinct pilgrim characteristics.

As far back as anthropology can go, there have always been cults of nature and sanctuaries which have been the object of arduous journeys. Ancient religions revered sacred places as forests, caves, rivers, bodies of water, and even fissures in the earth. Natural phenomena gave rise to religious practices in which divination had an important role. Prophecies were made upon observing the flight of birds, flashes of lightning, or the entrails of sacrificed victims. Corporeal relics were venerated such as the head, heart and even sexual organs. In the Christian era, as is well known, the bones of a saint were sent to the four corners of Christendom to become the saintly relic upon which to build a church.

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A moment's reflection shows how such anthropological facts help clarify that Santiago's story may be regarded as a pilgrimage. First of all, fishing takes place in nature, that is, on the sea, the source of life. He himself divines the meaning of the flights of birds, much as a naturalist would do, but also with a mystic's compassion. The novel ends with the fish as a victim, a carcass of bones, whose sacrifice to the sharks takes on a darkly ironic meaning when the tourists (who represent a travesty on true pilgrims) misidentify the marlin as a shark. To be sure, such ignorance is a bitter commentary on modern civilization at the same time that it points to the authenticity of Santiago's natural and ritualistic way of life. The other fishermen, the initiated, recognize what Santiago has done. If Santiago performed no overt religious act that might ordinarily be associated with a pilgrimage, the fight with the fish and its great size imply he has taken part in a supernatural event.

There are other characteristics of pilgrimages which seem to provide further evidence that Santiago's experience at sea is such an act or undertaking. The pagans of Greco-Latin antiquity had cults in the woods, by sources, rivers, and fountains. Brahmans go to rivers, Buddhists to mountains (cf. Hemingway's 'snows of Kilimanjaro'). Christians went to grottos, islands, and lakes. Such places often are associated with depths, the feminine, and the source of life just as is the ocean in *The Old Man and the Sea*. Furthermore, centres of devotion are usually remote from civilization and far from the main routes of communication. Distances traveled to these holy places confirm the idea that a pilgrimage often obliges the pilgrim to undergo physical discomfort or pain to arrive there. Certainly the place Santiago has chosen meets these qualifications for a real pilgrimage.

Very often a physical trial is associated with the difficulty of the road, which trial enhances the merit attained by the voyage, the *Peregrinatio religionis ergo* of Erasmus. The distance traveled for a holy purpose is entwined with a certain

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stoicism, which typifies Christian and Moslem pilgrims alike. Indeed, the true pilgrim departs heroically alone on his voyage to the sanctuary and endures much in order to be worthy of the experience of the Holy Presence. Obviously Santiago's voyage out into the remoteness of the sea, where the great currents crossed and where the greatest depths were reached, in order to seek out his great fish, strongly indicates that he is a lone pilgrim in search of the great truth for his soul to live by. Like other pilgrims, Santiago is exposed to death, to physical privations, hazardous routes and the difficulty of the way chosen.

If the pilgrimage has its pains, it also has its rewards. For the Moslems who reach the Mecca, are absolved of their sins. Back in his village, the Moslem acquires *hadji* or nobility. For Brahmans. the ritual bath in the sacred river opens paradise to them. For most pilgrims, heavenly benedictions descend upon their lives. Santiago experiences a similar reward in capturing the fish and beginning his return to the port until the sharks attack.

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The ironic twist of fate in this attack is not the only factor which separates Santiago's experience from that of other pilgrims. Unlike pilgrimages undertaken to expiate some mortal sin, Santiago is not required to endure humiliation or to flagellate himself publicly, as is the case even today in some Moslem countries. Nor as with Buddhists, Brahmans, or Mohammedans, is it necessary for Santiago to live in misery or to beg for a living, although like them he willingly exposes himself to the cruelty of nature. Nor does Santiago practise any kind of masochism or self-mortification. (In humility and hope, Christians in the Middle Ages went great distances on their knees to pray at a sacred place. Or again Buddists measured the distance to a sanctuary *with their bodies* by lying down, getting up and lying down over and over again. Nor does Santiago employ some easy device as the famous prayer mill used by the Tibetan Lamas to spin prayers up to heaven.) On the other hand, Santiago's prayer 'Hail Mary'

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and his solemn promise to go on a pilgrimage to the Virgin of Cobre (p. 65) echoes the ritualistic phrasing of pilgrims of other religions.

Ancient animistic custom often made tree, such as a mighty oak, the object of pilgrimages. Worship is associated with the tree under which Gautama Buddha meditated for five years, and Western scholars do not hesitate to identify the Cross as the 'Tree of life' on which Christ achieved his apotheosis. In rural Europe the custom of hammering nails into trees still persists, and this act has transparant symbolic associations with the crucifixion of Christ. Similarly Manolin recalls when Santiago killed a fish in the boat, the old man's clubbing it was 'like chopping a tree down and the sweet blood smell all over me' (p. 12). Or again when the sharks attack Santiago's catch, he utters the expression 'Ay' for which there is no translation but which 'perhaps is just a noise such as a man might make, involuntartly, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood' (p. 107). Such associations provide at least peripheral evidence that Santiago's life is a pilgrimage, whether conscious or not.

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Obviously the ancient veneration of water and the associations of many saints with water (as Saint James, the fisherman) apply to the old man's story. Furthermore, pilgrims bathe in life-giving waters and Santiago's dipping his wounded hand into the sea to be healed is a practical, curative and spiritual gesture.

Another ritual associated with the pilgrimage is that of circumambulation. In many religions, turning a number of times, usually three, around a sanctuary or even the object of veneration is performed. The ancient Celts did it in the direction of the sun; the Brahmans consider circular ways around sanctuaries to be purifying; the Buddhists require pilgrims to circle around lakes and mountains; and Moslems use circumambulation in the pilgrimage to the Mecca. Can one see in Santiago's drawing the fish to him in ever-tightening circles more than a practical necessity ? Perhaps not, and

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yet since Santiago's way of life has many other acts kindred to other pilgrimage rituals, the similarity is striking.

Anthropologists believe circumambulation is in homage to the sun. Santiago too is aware of the cyclical patterns of the sun, of the seasons, of the cycle of life and death as evinced in the struggle for survival. Santiago's mystical encounter with the majestic marlin in the dying part of the year seems to bear witness to a similar, if higher, form of reverence.

The pilgrim often makes a deeply felt promise like Santiago's vow to catch the great fish. The object of a pilgrimage is spiritual communion. Often a sacrifice is made (as the lambs, cows, goats, and camels at Mecca) and the flesh is given to the poor. If Santiago's killing the fish may be regarded as such a sacrifice, it is to the beauty and power of life in the marlin, and his act is clearly a re-enactment of the Eucharist. Ironically, in the story, the sharks get the meat, not the meek and the poor.

A Christian can undertake a pilgrimage, as can the faithful of other religions, if he has undergone spiritual purification. Sexual abstinence is a frequent practice so that the experience may be moral. Not only is Santiago's iife clean in this respect, but his calling the man-of-war a whore implies a pure attitude on his part. Without stain of any kind Santiago is worthy of the holy voyage he has undertaken.

If pilgrimages are sustained acts of faith by men and women who seek to give their lives a spiritual meaning, Santiago's soul must surely find salvation from the meaninglessness of other men's lives. The mystic love he bears the creatures of nature, his readiness to endure suffering and to risk his life prepare him for the encounter with the great marlin. He is worthy of communion with the mystery of life and death, and such worthiness promises the true pilgrim a deathless destiny.

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[1] The *Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass : G and C Merriam Co. 1965), gives the following definition of anthropology : 'teaching about the origin, nature and destiny of man esp. from the perspective of his relation to God.'. p. 38

[2] All pagination in parentheses indicates the 1952 New York Scribner Library publication of Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*.

[3] It is a curious fact that *to orient* also means to bury a body with the feet pointing eastward.

[4] A number of basic characteristics described on pilgrimages are derived from Romain Roussel's *Les Pelerinages.* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1972, the *Que-Sais-Je ?* series, No. 666. On pp. 126-127 he furnishes an excellent bibliography of related works.

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Erika Gotlieb

POLITICAL ALLEGORY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM IN ORWELL'S 1984

Critical assessments of the climactic scene in Room 101 spring from two basically irreconcilable schools of opinion. By and large, those concentrating on the socio-political parable tend to skip over this scene either by questioning its importance, or by admitting to a slight distaste for what they call elements of melodrama, the theatricality of the Grand Guignol[1], which, to some, even verges on the ridiculous[2].

On the other hand, critics who examine the scene in terms of its psychological dimension usually follow the assumptions and conclusions of Freudian depth psychology. Although these may find the scene crucial, they find its value in the revelation of the particular nature of Winston's neurosis—paranoia, latent homo-sexuality, sado-masochistic tendencies[3]—all attributed to the Oedipus situation. Marcus Smith, for example, considers Winston's phobia of the rats the conclusion of a deep-seated fixation on the mother. Since Winston also feels that he had offended against his mother, he seeks his punishment through the rats as a condition to be allowed to return to the womb[4]. Gerald Fiderer identifies another pattern of neurotic personality. He claims that Winston feels guilty of homosexual attraction to O' Brien and, as a masochist, seeks pleasure in his own humiliation and torture at the hand of his beloved. Fiderer even suggests that Winston deliberately provokes his own punishment, which is to say that what happens to him in the Ministry of Love is what he had been subconsciously craving for all along[5].

Marcus Smith makes an attempt to reconcile Winston's

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pathological personality with what he sees as Orwell's humanistic message in the novel. Although Mr Smith describes Winston as a neurotic in search of the mother, he argues that precisely because of this neurosis, at the end Winston manages to foil the Party in its attempt at his transformation. According to Mr Smith, 'the scene in Room 101 is merely a penultimate step in Winston's long and agonized mother quest'[6] and he concludes that 'having been always in search of a surrogate mother . . .[Winston finally] finds her in Big Brother'[7].

Although psychological scrutiny of this scene is crucial to our understanding of the dramatic climax in the novel, Freudian interpretations tend to have difficulty reconciling their emphasis on Winston's (and ultimately on Orwell's) neurotic tendencies with the humanistic message behind the political allegory. They fail to see that although the ordeal Winston faces in Room 101 unmistakably follows from his personal past and inner life, at the same time, it is also the ordeal of our common humanity in confrontation against the powerful dehumanizing forces of totalitarianism.

On the other hand, should the critic of *1984* decide to act as political analyst only, he would miss the complexity and power of this scene as it brings to focus the ethical significance of the inner man's struggles, struggles mapped out by Winston's memories, his dream world, the world of his subconscious.

When acknowledging the far-reaching significance of the sub-conscious, Orwell seems to echo much of the terminology of the Freudian critic:

> . . . the waking mind is not so different from the dreaming mind as it appears—or as we like to pretend that it appears. . . . The disordered, unverbal world belonging to dreams is never quite absent from our minds, and if any calculation were possible I dare say it would be found that quite a half the volume of our waking thoughts were of this order. Certainly the dream-thoughts take a hand even when we are trying to think verbally, they influence the verbal thou-

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ghts, and it is largely they that make our inner life valuable. . . . In a way this unverbal part of your mind is even the most important part, for it is the source of nearly all motives.[8]

Orwell's obvious interest in the 'dreaming', 'disordered' 'unverbal' mind does not mean, however,that he is in agreement with Freud's assumptions or conclusions about personality. Orwell may use many of Freud's insights in Winston's portrayal, and, indeed, the novel would be incomprehensible without Winston's complex inner life, yet we must realize that for Orwell self, personality, and guilt assume a moral and ethical dimension even if his initial approach is through psychology. In effect, in examining Orwell's method of characterization, one often gets a feeling that he must have regarded even the subconscious as somehow morally accountable. In Winston's case, for example, the 'dreaming mind' acts as a handmaiden to the 'waking mind'. It performs much of the probing, the search for Truth in the past. As such, the dream-mind becomes an active agent in Winston's articulation of 'nearly all [of his] motives', Since it is through articulating his fears and hopes that Winston is led to understanding and regeneration, it is indeed the 'dreaming mind which makes the inner life 'valuable' : it leads the personality towards assuming its moral and ethical dimensions.

There is no doubt that Winston had carried the psychic burden of guilt for almost thirty years and his recurring nightmares are clearly expressions of a guilty conscience. Somehow for the past thirty years he had been thinking that he was responsible for his mother's and sister's death. His guilt springs from an extremely shameful memory he had buried in his subconscious, the events immediately preceding his mother's disappearance.

The first entry in Winston's diary is a record of irresistible excitement and, at the same time, of his resistance, as the hidden memory gradually comes to the surface. What he is trying to describe is a scene from a warfilm he had just seen, in which a Jewish mother holds a child, 'screaming with

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fright', in her arm. In the face of inevitable disaster, she is shielding the child 'as if she thought her arms could keep the bullets off him' (11)

In describing this scene, Winston becomes so agitated that he is unable to express himself coherently: punctuation, sentence structure disappear—he is breathless, eager to blurt it out. Still, as the description approaches the forbidden, repressed memory, he is unable to handle his mounting excitement :

> . . . little boy screaming with fright and hiding his head between her breasts as if he was trying to burrow right into her and the woman putting her arms around him and comforting him although she was blue with fright herself . . . then a helicopter planted a 20 kilo bomb in among them terrific flash and the boat went all to matchwood, then there was a wonderful shot of a child's arm going up up up right into the air . . . and there was a lot of applause from the party seats but a woman down in the prole part of the house suddenly started kicking up a fuss, until the police turned her out I dont suppose anything happened to her nobody cares what the proles say typical prole reaction they never—(11)

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The entry is interrupted in midsentence because at this point Winston is still born between the Party's sniggering, inhuman attitude to personal love and loyalty, and an emotional reaction he cannot yet articulate.

The interrupted scene, however, will complete itself in Winston's subconscious mind, as if the dreaming mind had a will of its own, ready to 'take a hand' in the process already started. It is quite obvious that it was the protecting, shielding gesture of the mother's arm in the film which triggered Winston's excited reaction, and which now works its way further in the dreammind, in the form of a guiltdream, a nightmare.

Winston was dreaming of his mother.

> . . . At this moment his mother was sitting in some place deep down beneath him with his young sister in her arms. He did not remember his sister at all, except as a tiny, feeble baby, always silent, with large, watchful eyes. . . . He was out in the light and air while they were

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> being sucked down to death, and they were down there because he was up here. He knew it and they knew it, and he could see the knowledge in their faces. . . . the knowledge that they must die in order that he might remain alive, and that this was part of the unavoidable order of things. (26-27)

As the dreammind probes deeper and deeper into the submerged memory of the past, Winston comes to understand something about his guilt, and about the emotional and moral significance of the mother's protective gesture that he could not have articulated earlier :

> The thing that now suddenly struck Winston was that his mother's death nearly thirty years ago, had been tragic and sorrowful in a way that was no longer possible. Tragedy, he perceived, belonged to the ancient times. . .when there was still privacy, love and friendship. (27)

It is quite clear, then, that effort of articulating his thoughts in the diary leads to more and more profound levels of mental activity in the dreammind, which, in turn, leads to increasingly higher levels of conscious understanding, pointing to the liberation of the suppressed memory (and ultimately to its acceptance and moral regeneration.)

The subconscious wish for the liberation of the self is carried out simultaneously with the second of Winston's recurring dreams, the wishdream of the Golden Country. The significance of the wishdream following the nigntmare has so far gone unnoticed :

> All this he seemed to see in the large eyes of his mother and sister, looking at him through the green waters hundreds of fathoms down and still sinking.
>
> Suddenly he was standing on short springy turf on a summer evening when the slanting rays of the sun guilded the ground. . . . In his waking thoughts he called it the Golden Country. (28)

There is no gradual awakening, no transition. The fact that the wish dream follows in the wake of the nightmare and is in sharp contrast to it in terms of kinetic, colour and light images, seems to me an unmistakable sign of the dreamer's wish to escape, of what Orwell describes earlier in the book as 'the violent effort with which one wrenches one's head

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away from the pillow in a nightmare'(16)

This 'violent effort', this deliberate 'wrenching away' is quite consistently demonstrated throughout the novel as an expression of the dreamer's wish for liberation. Whenever the Golden Country appears, it makes its appearance immediately after, and in sharp contrast to, a nightmare, as an almost voluntary act on the dreamer's part to make a violent attempt to escape.

As a matter of fact, the same sharp contrast between pain and the effort to escape it is also there when the dreamworld turns into the world of reality, as if to illustrate that 'the waking mind is not so different from the dreaming mind as it appears'. When Julia and Winston agree to become lovers, they meet on a crowded public square to discuss the way to their secret meeting place. They can talk to each other only by pretending that they are watching the prisoners of war being led away to execution :

> With hands locked together, invisible among the press of bodies, they stared steadily in front of them, and instead of the eyes of the girl, the eyes of the aged prisoner gazed mournfully at Winston out of nests of hair.
>
> Winston picked his way up the lane through the dappled light and shade, stepping into pools of gold where the boughs parted. (96)

As the drab, ominous urban scene in the middle of Victory Square is all of a sudden juxtaposed with the golden-green pastoral landscape of the lovers' meeting place, we experience another sharp contrast, the same effect of a violent 'wrenching away': Winston is trying to tear himself away from the nightmare world created by Big Brother.

Then, with a slow 'shock of recognition' (101) Winston realizes that the scene is the fulfilment of his wishdream, as though it were the dreammind that had prepared him to search for the Golden Country in reality.

Julia's role in the real scene is coming quite close to the fulfilment of Winston's dream in which 'With what seemed a single movement she tore off her clothes and flung them

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disdainfully aside' (28)

> And yes: It was almost as in his dream. Almost as swiftly as he had imagined it, she had torn her clothes off, and when she flung them aside it was with the same magnificent gesture by which a whole civilization seemed to be annihilated. (103)

However, Orwell also shows the subtle difference between dream and reality. Although Julia and Winston's sexual encounter is a step in the direction of their liberation and humanization, at the moment of their first embrace they are still full of negative and primarily political emotions. 'Their embrace had been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party' (104). Only through the repeated meeting in their room over the antique shop will their sexual-political conspiracy become a truly human commitment of personal love and loyalty. At this stage of their growth the glass paperweight will temporarily absorb the Golden Country, becoming the emblem of their union, of their hope for a self-contained world together. Yet, once it becomes the centre of the lovers' world in miniature, the glass paperweight suddenly expands to contain their whole cosmos (what John Donne would have described as making 'the lovers' world an everywhere') Appropriately, Winston comes to solve the puzzle of his personal existence after a dream in which he experiences a breakthrough, in and through the glass paperweight :

> It was a vast luminous dream in which his whole life seemed to stretch out before him like a landscape on a summer evening after rain. It had all occurred inside the glass paperweight, but the surface of the glass was the dome of the sky, and inside the dome everything was flooded with a clear soft light in which he could see into interminable distances. (131)

The searching, probing work of the unverbal mind has been successful in bringing the suppressed memory to the surface :

> The dream had also been comprehended by, indeed in some sense it had consisted in—a gesture of the arm made by his mother, and made

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again thirty years later by the Jewish woman he had seen on the news film, trying to shelter the small boy from the bullets, before the helicopters blew them both to pieces. (131)

In Julia's healing, liberating presence Winston no longer resists the shameful, painful scene he had repressed for over thirty years: 'Do you know', he said, 'that until this moment I believed I had murdered my mother?' (131)

He recalls the last time he saw his mother and sister before they disappeared after the starving family had been issued a small chocolate ration for the three of them. In his hunger and selfishness the child Winston takes all the chocolate, fleeing for the door. Looking back he sees them for the last time, fixing their image in his mind :

> His sister, conscious of having been robbed of something, set up a feeble wail. His mother drew her arm around the child and pressed its face against her breast
>
> . . . .
>
> He never saw his mother again. . . .When he came back his mother had disappeared. This was already becoming normal at that time. (133)

This dream and the discussion of its significance with Julia marks the climactic moment in Winston's development, in his liberation of the self. What liberates him from his previous nightmares is the recognition that he had not, in effect, murdered his mother, although he accepts that he had acted selfishly and betrayed her love for him. He also recognizes that through his feeeling for Julia he has an opportunity to redeem himself. The understanding of the guilt of the past leads to moral determination for the future, to remain faithful to the love of Julia at whatever cost, 'the object was not to stay alive but to stay human (136).

As long as he could hold on to his love for Julia, he is able to stay human, believe in the Golden Country, and in the possibility of some kind of escape, even after his arrest and torture in the Ministry of Love.

There is a point in the novel when, having been confined to his cell for a long time and with several significant steps in his 'cure' having been accomplished, Winston feels defeated

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in his search for Truth and sanity; intellectually he has already been rendered harmless. At this point Winston has a nightmare vision of being swallowed up by the big eyes—of becoming part of the brainbomb behind Big Brother's hypnotic eyes: 'Suddenly he floated out of his seat, dived into the eyes and was swallowed up. . .The man in the white coat was looking at the dials' (195)

Yet, without waking out of the nightmare, the dreammind wrests itself away from being swallowed up. Winston escapes to the Golden Country, and with a hysterical sense of relief.

> He was rolling down a mighty corridor, a kilometre wide, full of glorious, golden light, roaring with laughter and shouting out confessions at the top of his voice. . . .With him were the guards, the other questioners, the men in white coats, O' Brien, Julia, Mr Charrington, all rolling down the corridor together and shouting with laughter. (195)

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But the dream of liberation and escape has undergone a significant change. The original Golden Country was Paradise because it was two lovers' world in nature, apart from society. In the recent version of the dream Julia is still present, but so are the guards, O' Brien and Mr Charrington—Winston's torturers. Just as significant, the free, rolling countryside of the external ladscape has shrunk, turned into a corridor, albeit still a 'kilometre wide.' The golden-green world of Nature has changed into the golden-white light of the interior, the dream landscape turned into the corridor within the Ministry of Love: By now Winston is a captive of Oceania even in his dreams.

And yet, Winston feels more than a sense of elation, he is in a state of euphoria, hysterical relief, 'Some dreadful thing which had lain embedded in the future had somehow been skipped over and had not happened. Everything was all right. . .' (195)

The dream of the Golden Country, in progressively diminishing fragments, will recur several more times before Winston's final transformation, 'he is among enormous,

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glorious sunlit ruins with his mother, with Julia, with O' Brien (221), and then in a 'flat desert *drenched with sunlight*' (229). There is no doubt that the dream is waning, flickering, fading away. But even the very last reminder of the Golden Country signifies that Winston still has a shelter, has retained a shred of emotional security, integrity, and selfhood. In spite of his loss of intellectual integrity and hope for action (represented by the lassitude of the sunlit ruins and the barrenness of the sunlit desert) he has managed to preserve his humanity.

This is where Winston experiences a feeling of victory over his torturers. He conjures up the image of Julia and she becomes a part of him, becomes the focus of his inner self. This feeling of oneness, caring, loyalty is now the only proof that his inner heart is still inviolate. It is at this very moment that O'Brien chooses to take him into Room 101, where Winston is forced to go beyond 'the wall of darkness' to reach 'the place where there is no darkness anymore' ( ): The heart of darkness leads ultimately to a new light of recognition, a horrible one.

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Why in room 101 does the Party require from Winston that he offer up Julia as human sacrifice to be devoured by the starved rats in their cage ? And why are the rats the appropriate choice for Winston's final humiliation and annihilation ?

The answer to these questions springs from the fact that the scene in Room 101 is, in effect, the re-enactment of a previous crisis. We must return to the 'memory [Winston] must have deliberately pushed out of his mind over many years' (131)

After his breakthrough dream in the glass paperweight, as Winston comes to relive this scene in detail, we see a child between ten and twelve acting out Orwell's version of the fall, betrayal of one's bond to a loved one.

In the end his mother broke off three quarters of the chocolate and gave it to Winston, giving the other quarter to his sister . . . Winston stood watching her for a moment. Then with a sudden swift spring he

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had snatched the piece of chocolate out of his sister's hand and was fleeing for the door. . . .Even now as he was thinking about the thing, he did not know what it was that was on the point of happening. . . . His mother drew her arm round the child and pressed its face against her breast. Something in the gesture told him that his sister was dying. He turned and fled down the stairs, with the chocolate growing sticky in his hand.

He never saw his mother again. . . .After he had devoured the chocolate. . .(133)

We see why Winston had been haunted by the mother's protecting, shielding gesture for so many years: she is offering the warmth, the solidity of her body to the baby girl as her only means to keep the disaster away from her.

If you loved someone, you loved him, and when you had nothing else to give, you still gave him love. When the last chocolate was gone, his mother clasped the child in her arms. (134)

She also offers her own share of the chocolate to Winston—another form of offering up her own body to fend off her son's unbearable pangs of hunger. It is this gesture of sacrificial love that Winston had not been able to forget, because he feels that he had betrayed it. And as the mother had actually disappeared after this critical scene, the child Winston developed what we would today call the 'survivor's guilt', making him feel, incorrectly, responsible for her death.

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Neither the reader nor Julia has any difficulty finding an acceptable reason for Winston's behaviour. He was unbearably hungry, and who could blame a ten-year old boy for being unable to control his hunger ?

Yet, deep down Winston feels that in his childhood crisis something about his deepest self was revealed, something he cannot quite articulate to Julia ('Yes, but the real point of the story—' (p. 134) and dreads to articulate even to himself.

Winston's recurring nightmares reveal that his horror of the dreadful thing beyond the 'wall of darkness' relates to something he finds 'unendurable, something too dreadful to be faced' about himself. The horror is related to his own deepest self, since 'in the dream his deepest feeling was always one of self-deception, because he did in fact know what was

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behind the wall of darkness.' He feels that if he had all the courage, 'with a deadly effort, like wrenching a piece out of his own brain, he could even have dragged the thing into the open' (118). In other words, the solution to the mysterious horror—no doubt a dreadful solution—is within him, and his repression of this knowledge is just as significant as was the repression of the shameful memory for a period of thirty years. (It is interesting that Orwell uses the self-same words for yet another subconscious activity, the violent effort of 'wrenching' the head from the pillow in a nightmare is paralleled here to the 'deadly effort' of 'wrenching a piece out of his own brain' to solve the mystery).

In his omniscience, Big Brother (that is, the Inner Party) is aware of the breaking point of the protective walls of the self, the specific kind of weakness or shame the particular individual can no longer tolerate. Since the defenses of each self are destroyed through different means, there is a different Room 101 for everyone. O'Brien knows Winston intimately and chooses the instrument of his torture with diabolic precision. Room 101 is the final test of Winston's deepest sense of self; it is the evident summing up of his life, loyalties, dreams and nightmares.

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Consequently, O'Brien will shed light on the undescribable 'horror which altered nothing . . . [yet] had to be embedded in future time' (86), and doing so, he will also solve the puzzle posed by Winston's recurring nightmares. When O'Brien completes Winston's thoughts it is as if he were dragging to light the 'dreadful thing' Winston had been unable to face : 'It was the rats that were on the other side of the wall' (218). O'Brien has good reason for assuming that there is something in the hungry murderous beast crouching beyond the walls of darkness that Winston does find 'unendurable.'

'The rat . . . although a rodent, is carnivorous' (229), O'Brien reminds us, when it is starved it changes its nature, devouring, destroying anything.

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The humiliation of hunger is a strong *motif* throughout the novel, Like the rat which turns carnivorous when made to starve, the child Winston and his companions behave in a way alien from their intended nature as hunger reduces them to the level of scavenging beasts :

> He remembered. . .above all, the fact that there was never enough to eat. He remembered long afternoons spent with other boys in scroung-ing round dustbins and rubbish heaps, picking out the ribs of cabbage leaves, potato peelings, even scraps of stale breadcrust from which they carefully scraped away the cinders. (131)

Hunger as a device for breaking down the personality is well known to the Inner Party. As Winston enters the Minis-try of Love, he gets a hint about the kind of fate Room 101 holds for different individuals by seeing two victims being dragged in there: a man with a 'tormented skull-like face' who in full view of the other prisoners 'was dying of starva-tion' (188) and a 'chinless man' who offers his own last crust of bread to the starving one. To punish this act of rebellion, the guard 'let free a frightful blow, with all the weight of his body behind it, full in the chinless man's mouth' (189)—the area of his face already shattered and therefore the most conspicuously vulnerable part of his whole being. One can assume that in Room 101 the man with the skull-like face will confront the most intolerable suffering relative to his own particular vulnerability: his gnawing and unbearable hunger.

Both the chinless man and the one with the skull-like face are appropriate characters in the naturalistic descrip-tion of the torture chambers in the Ministry of Love and they also give a hint of the individual horrors of Room 101. Just as important, however, is the fact that these two characters represent aspects of Winston's own personality: they are externalizations of his own intolerable hunger, the 'chinless' weakness of his own broken will, and the resulting loss of face. (In a similar way, when, in his cell, he feels the 'wrenching' sensation in his body, the sensation of a

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broken 'backbone, (196), this image of physical destruction is also the externalization of the mental process used by the Party to break his backbone, his strength of character, his moral will.)

The scene between the chinless man and the starving man is significant in yet another way: it foreshadows the kind of supreme sacrifice expected of Winston in the end. The starved man whose 'eyes seemd filled with murderous, unappeasable hatred of somebody or something'(188) is willing to betray anyone, beginning with the chinless man who offered his own bread to him. He is also willing to denounce every member of his own family, including his young children, choosing for them the most cruel forms of death imaginable.

The unnatural ferocity, 'the murderous, unappeasable hatred' induced by starvation is hinted at again when in Room 101 Winston sees that in the ratcage 'the rats were fighting; they were trying to get at each other through the partition'(229). Although this hint is not developed directly any further, it seems that lacking other prey, the rats in their insane hunger are ready to turn on anyone, even on each other, destroying their own species.

The reasons of Winston's personal phobia to the rats is revealed in his response to Julia when she describes how the rats 'attack children. . . .In some of the streets a woman daren't leave a baby alone for two minutes. And the nasty thing is that the brute always. .(118). Winston would find the conclusion to the story unbearable, for he begs her not to finish the sentence. Once more, the sentence will be completed for Winston by O'Brien in the Ministry of Love, bringing to light the reason for Winston's agonized response: 'In some streets a woman dare not leave her baby alone in the house. . . they also attack sick or dying people. . . they show astonishing intelligence in knowing where the human being is helpless'(229)

Through the repeated flashbacks we already know that when the child Winston 'snatched' away that last piece of

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chocolate, his baby sister was dying ['Something in the gesture told him that his sister was dying' (133)] and that his mother was also sick and helpless ['she seemed to have become completely spiritless'(131)]

As demonstrated by the episode he repressed in his memory for thirty years, these are all characteristics that apply to Winston himself. His childhood crisis haunts him because he senses that in the ultimate trial the walls of personality melt away and he will turn into a rat.

Various psychological interpretations have related Winston's phobia of rats to Freud's study of the Schreber case.[9] In this famous case study the source of the grown man's phobia is traced back to the child's Oedipal hatred of the father, and to his ensuing fear that he will be castrated by the rats as a punishment.

These interpretations, however, overlook the fundamental differences between Freud's and Orwell's handling of this phobia. It should be recognized that Freud describes the child's original offense to have taken place in the Oedipal situation, at the subconscious level, that is, in early childhood, before the awakening of moral awareness. Winston's offense, on the other hand, is not related to the Oedipal drama. Also, it takes place when he is between ten and twelve, and contrary to Freud's interpretation, the original incident is already a moral drama for Winston. The young boy is tested through his feelings of love and loyalty to the only people who love him. He has been acting selfishly and destructively for a long time: 'He knew that he was starving the other two, but he could not help it; he felt even that he had a right to do it. The clamorous hunger in his belly seemed to justify him'(132)

It is also significant that his mother had already given him most of the chocolate willingly, that is, she had offered him her own portion unquestioningly. 'Snatching away' and later 'devouring' the rest of the chocolate, Winston allows his unendurable hunger, like uncontrollable fear or pain, to over-

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power the self until he becomes nothing but the living need to satisfy his hunger. When attacking his sister and mother to 'snatch' away their piece of chocolate, he is in effect saying, 'I don't care whether you live or die; my hunger is unendurable, it is stronger than my love for you'. Going even further, by devouring the food of the starving, he symbolically devours them alive. This symbolic act destroys something in Winston, and his sense of guilt literally 'gnaws' at him for nearly thirty years.

Was Winston to feel guilty about this episode? Was he really guilty? When talking to Julia he recognizes that he could not have actually been responsible for his mother's death: it was the Party that vaporized her.

Yet there is a moral and psychological paradox here essential to the understanding of the characteristically Orwellian definition of guilt, moral will, subconscious, and self: Winston feels guilty because he *did* have a concept of love, loyalty and self-sacrifice which he was forced to deny in the moment of crisis. As he describes the scene to Julia, he realizes that although he could not have caused his mother's death, he was nonetheless guilty; in the moment of crisis he willed her death.

Just as important, he also realizes that with Julia he has a new chance to build another emotional and spiritual relationship based on loyalty, devotion, and the mutual willingness for sacrifice. In other words, he can liberate himself from the past and expiate the guilt. It is his second chance. Should he be able to enter and maintain the new world of adult love, he can redeem his childhood fall. Hence the first nightmare (his guilt dream in which his mother and sister sink to their death so that he may survive) is followed immediately by the dream of escape, the dream of liberation. The lost Paradise of childhood can be redeemed only through Paradise with Julia in the Golden Country.

Julia, then, allows Winston to return to the love of the past but in a new form, with a new hope. The glass paper-

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weight, emblem of their life together, enforces this almost magical connection between past and future. Archetypally, the crystal globe is a symbol of eternal harmony. Shaped like a hemisphere, the glass paperweight is like a half world waiting for its completion. At one point Winston feels that his whole life with Julia is contracted into this hemisphere, enshrining the beauty of the past and the vitality of their future. Because the mysterious pink coral, the memento of the past, is also like a rose bud, an embrio of the future, a small but distinct hope that their two loves my have a chance for futurity. 'How small it always was' (177) announces Winston regretfully when the Thought Police shatters the glass paperweight 'on the hearthstone' of what could have been their home, and 'the fragment of coral, a tiny crinkle of pink like a sugar rosebud from a cake, rolled across on the mat' (177). And, instead of heralding the birth of their child, Julia's convulsions of pain (she was 'doubling up like a pocket ruler' (177) and was 'thrashing about on the floor' (178) anticipate Winston's grotesque birth trauma in the Ministry of Love.

There is no doubt that Julia shows some of the characteristics of the nurturing, sheltering mother. Not only does she bring coffee, sugar, and chocolate to their meetings, she also covers Winston with her limbs when he is frightened by the rats in their room. Yet Julia acts out the mother's characteristic gesture in a different pattern. Julia's repeatedly 'magnificent gesture by which a whole civilization seemed to be annihilated' (103) bespeaks liberation rather than protection. In its 'carelessness' the' splendid movement of the arm' (28) offers Winston liberation from sexual and political anxiety; in its 'grace' (28) it offers Winston a chance for his liberation of the self, for acting out the original test again, for standing up for his inner core, for his newly found emotional centre. In spite of all his humiliations in the Ministry, as long as he is able to stay loyal to her, Winston feels that he is still human, he is still himself, 'the dreadful thing which had lain embed-

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ded in the future had somehow been skipped over' (195). Should he, however, fail in his second chance, he would no longer have the excuse of the child's immaturity or insufficient control over himself, the 'dreadful thing' he is forced to face in Room 101 is his final and irreversible spiritual destruction.

Murray Sperber is right in pointing out that Winston's phobia of the rats takes the form of a 'body destruction phantasy'[10], but I strongly believe that this fantasy here is quite independent of Freud's concept of the fear of castration. Winston's deep fear of the mutilation by the rats refers to the 'wrenching a piece out of his own brain'(118), an image more characteristic of lobotomy than sexual mutilation. Thus, ultimately, the body destruction phantasy points to the fear of mental, moral and spiritual destruction.

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It is also important that in his fear of mutilation Winston sees this act as ultimately his own doing. It is he who will be wrenching out his own brain. His fear and disgust of the rats represents his fear and disgust of recognizing and releasing the beast within himself once more. When he catches sight of the rats in the room over the junkshop, he murmurs, 'Rats'. In this room.' (118), as if he were stunned to see rats turn up in his new life, threatening his fresh start with Julia.

What is at stake in Room 101 is not Winston's potency or manhood. It is loss of face. The rats are housed in a mask-like cage, and it is his face they will be devouring from within. It is not the Oedipal, sexual offense against the mother that he is guilty of. It is the denying of the most fundamental values of the private self. In his selfish and uncontrollable hunger he came to deny his mother and tore himself away from the most primary bond of belonging, loyalty and love. When O'Brien tests him again, it is once more his uniqueness and his identity that is at risk. To remain human he should stand up for Julia and prove that he can live up to a sense of loyalty, to the exclusive bond of love. In his uncontrollable fear of the rats, he re-enacts his first act of betrayal by offering the

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body of the only person he loves, as a surrogate for his own. When he screams, 'Do it to Julia.', he offers her as a human sacrifice to the rats. Once again, symbolically, he devours the one he loves.

In Room 101 he can no longer stay 'in front of' the wall of darkness; he is forced to get over 'to the other side'(118) Forced to face what had been too dreadful in himself, the walls of the private self are being destroyed and he feels that he is falling 'through the floor, through the walls of the building, through the earth, through the ocean, through the atmosphere, into outer space, into the gulfs between the stars-always away, away away from the rats' (230). The irony is, of course, that having broken through the walls of darkness, he can no longer get away from the rats. By allowing himself to be degraded to the level of the starved brutes, he has become what he had been most afraid of.

Orwell hints at the presence of the beast in man several times in the novel. Some of the characters are 'beetle-like' (92), others are like 'ants'(18). At one point, when surprised, Winston does actually keep 'still as a mouse' (19). There is no doubt that the animal imagery is degrading, ominous. Julia describes the selfishness of children as that of beastly little swine' (134), while calling the rats in their room 'filthy brutes' (119). Exposed to the cage of 'starving brutes' (229), in Room 101, Winston hears himself become 'insane, a screaming animal' (230). The experiment conducted by the Inner Party has come to an end. O'Brien did successfully prove his lesson that the inner heart of loyalty and self-sacrifice is only a sentimental illusion. Ultimately loyalty and self-sacrifice is only a sentimental illusion. Ultimately man is nothing but a beast, and like a beast, he can be reduced and degraded until he is deprived of his will and becomes an instrument in the hands of the Party.

At this point we should realize that Orwell's strategies lead to conclusions fundamentally different from those of the Freudian critic. The starved rats, just like the child Win-

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ston, were themselves the victims of the Party's brutality. Both were deliberately reduced to become instruments in the hands of a superior, ruthlessly brutal power, which turns the victim into victimizer.

Ultimately the real face behind the mask-like cage of the rats is the face of Big Brother himself. He turns his subjects into ferocious, hate-filled beings like himself, forcing them to act out the ritual of his own prime betrayal as human sacrifice. Winston's own final and crucial betrayal is some kind of a horrible 'imitatio dei.' In the moment he betrays his loved one, he becomes one with the godhead, acting out the the inevitable yet horrible mystery, the loving union between victim and victimizer.

In effect, all the citizens of Oceania are kept in their cage, systematically starved, deprived of food, love, sexual and emotional satisfaction, so that the Party may channel all their pent-up energy into the hysterical quest for new victims among their own kind, leading to the hysterical worship of the leader. To prevent or postpone their own persecution, the people of Oceania become instruments in the hands of the Party, ready to denounce and sacrifice one another. The tragic irony of this process is that when the last bond of personal loyalty is broken, the victim becomes the agent of his own enslavement, and ultimately that of his own extermination.

Room No. 101 is the dramatic centre of the novel because it both repeats and reverses the previous climax. The scene in Room 101 is a reenactment of the childhood crisis.' It is also the reversal of the breakthrough scene in which he liberates himself from the long-repressed guilt, is finally ready to act and make a move towards redemption. At last, in his feelings he follows his private loyalty to Julia, 'only feelings matter. If they could make me stop loving you—that would be the real betrayal' (136).

Forced to revisit the childhood crisis in Room 101, he fails again. The failure destroys his hard-won liberation, the

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maturity of his selfhood, and pushes him into another, far more terrifying infancy. In the brain-womb of the Ministry of Love he is reborn as a new person. The private self is enslaved, wiped off by the collective self. He becomes the image of his Maker, the child returning to the 'loving breast' (239) of mother Oceania.

Politically Winston's capitulation was preordained by the dynamic of totalitarianism. Thus a sense of personal responsibility, guilt, or shame would be quite out of order. Yet, the moral paradox here puts Orwell in a category quite distinct from both the Freudian critic and the critic studying the novel only in terms of the political spectrum. For thirty years Winston's sense of guilt has been a burden, but it also served as a reminder that he still had a sense of personal loyalty and could feel shame. In fact, it was this mysterious sense of guilt or shame that made him start his search for Truth in the past, the search which led ultimately to moral regeneration.

Significantly, once he repeats his act of betrayal, he no longer has any sense of guilt or shame. As a newfangled model citizen of Oceania, he no longer carries the burden of guilt. Of course, he is also free of his sense of humanity, of the basic moral attitudes defining the private self. Once reborn, united with the collective self of Oceania, he is no longer capable of regret or guilt because he has no further claim to a private conscience.

Room 101 is a climactic scene in the novel, bringing together all the betrayals in a series of symbolic reversals. Visually, '101' suggests two parts of the self face-to-face through zero—reduced to nothingness through fear and shame, Winston faces the rats in himself.

The number '101' also suggests repetition after a reversal, repeating the childhood trial, Winston reverts to another state of childhood.

In yet another appropriate visiual allusion, '101' also suggests the links of a chain that is, not only one, but a whole series of continuous and repeated reversals. Room 101

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is at the heart not only of Winston's personal drama, it is the centre of the mythical and political drama of betrayal. It is here that each victim is turned into victimizer. There is a tragic irony in this self-perpetuating process. After the final betrayal of his beloved, the victim has seemingly turned into the victimizer of another human being. Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely because he had turned victimizer that he will be 'chained,' to be a victim, stay willingly in the cage forever.

It is a tribute to Orwell's mastery of form and structure that in the climactic scene in Room 101 all the meanings of betrayal converge on to a series of concentric circles to demonstrate both the effects and the inevitability of Winston's self-betrayal.

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To understand the effect of the changes in Winston's personality (that is, the changes between private and collective self), we should return to his inner world after his release from the Ministry of Love. What happened to his dreams after his conversion ?

In the last scene of the novel we see Winston, a husk of his former self, but a physically sturdier, more complacent husk, sitting in the Chestnut Cafe, the haunt of released traitors and thought criminals.

> He had grown fatter since they released him, and had regained his colour, indeed more than regained it. His features had thickened, the skin on nose and cheekbones was coarsely red, even the bald scalp was too deep a pink. (232)

We see him guzzle his Victory gin, belching occasionally, with the pink face and thick, expressionless features of a new-born infant (or a well-fed rat).

Suddenly: 'uncalled a memory floated into his mind. He saw a candle-lit room. . .' and we recognise the 'white counterpaned bed', the 'cramped bedroom' (237), the world of his childhood before the crisis. In his reverie now he remembers the last happy moments with his mother and baby sister before they had disappeared, the last memories of his mother's personal love and companionship. But according to

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Party directives there could have been no happiness in the past: according to these directives it would be futile to look for happiness in the private bond between parent and child. As a result, the new Winston who has no shred of personal loyalty, no human bond any more, has to dismiss this scene from his past as a 'false memory' (238). By now he has internalized the Party directives, such a scene could be nothing but a nightmarish reminder of his former self.

Finally, as he wrenches himself away from the happy memory of his private life, the loudspeaker announces Big Brother's newest victory over the Eurasian hordes. Winston now undergoes the communal experience of the hysterical hatred of the enemy of the moment, followed by the ecstatic worship of the leader (his own enactment of the two-minute hate). The 'Victory' he had seen in its true light at the beginning of the novel now assumes Big Brother's meaning. Celebrating this 'Victory' is tantamount to accepting Big Brother as the loving parent of the newborn self. It is a celebration and worship of a world born out of hatred. By giving up the sanity of the private self, of the 'minority of one', Winston has 'won the victory over himself, he loved big brother' (239).

Yet, even in the midst of the communal extasy experienced by the new collective self, we catch a last glimpse of Winston's dream so familiar to us from his past. In his final reverie we see him

> walking down the white-tiled corridor, with the feeling of walking in sunshine, and the armed guards at his back. The long hoped-for bullet was entering his brain. (239)

The earlier change from the golden-green landscape to the golden-white interior should remind us that in the sun-flooded, white-tiled corridor we caught yet another glimpse of the diminishing Golden Country. But what happened to the originally wide and free landscape ? Once it had been swallowed up by the corridor in the Ministry of Love (195) it had just kept on shrinking and shrinking. There is something unexpected, though, in the form of the dream. The wish dream,

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the dream of escape, has undergone a total reversal. Originally it was an expression of Winston's violent effort to break away from the nightmare of Oceania, at first to find his freedom, then only to rescue whatever there was left of the inner self. At the end of the novel, Winston is totally enslaved, nothing remains of his former self to compel him to get away or seek shelter. Instead of wishing himself in his original Golden Country, he wants to return to the torture chamber in the Ministry of Love.

Accepting the 'smile. . .hidden beneath the dark moustache' of Big Brother with a feeling of love, Winston has conformed to the collective insanity of all the others. Not only does he accept, he actually anticipates and celebrates the bullet in the back. He has come to accept the nightmare reality to be his dream of paradise.

It is characteristic of Orwell's definition of the self that Winston is subjected to a series of tests leading towards his destruction. It is as if Orwell had set a series of rigorous examinations to define the indispensable ingredients, the last boundaries of our humanity. Are these fundamental ingredients to be found in the definition of the man of reason, 'I think, therefore I am' ? But Winston remains human after his intelligence has surrendered to the Party. Is it then, the romantic definition of 'I feel, therefore I am' ? But Winston is still human after his inner world is reduced to the barrenness of a desert.—Winston's breakdown becomes total only when he loses the ability to dream: In *1984* Orwell's final definition of our humanity seems to be 'I dream therefore I am'. Ultimately, therefore, the last defense of humanity is the ability to dream, to generate the illusion of an escape within.

The structure of the dreams also reflects the overall structure of the novel. Compare the line of ascent in Part I and Part II, with the descent in Part III. In an effort to liberate himself from the nightmare, the dreamer reaches out to the dream of the Golden Country. After dreaming about it, he is

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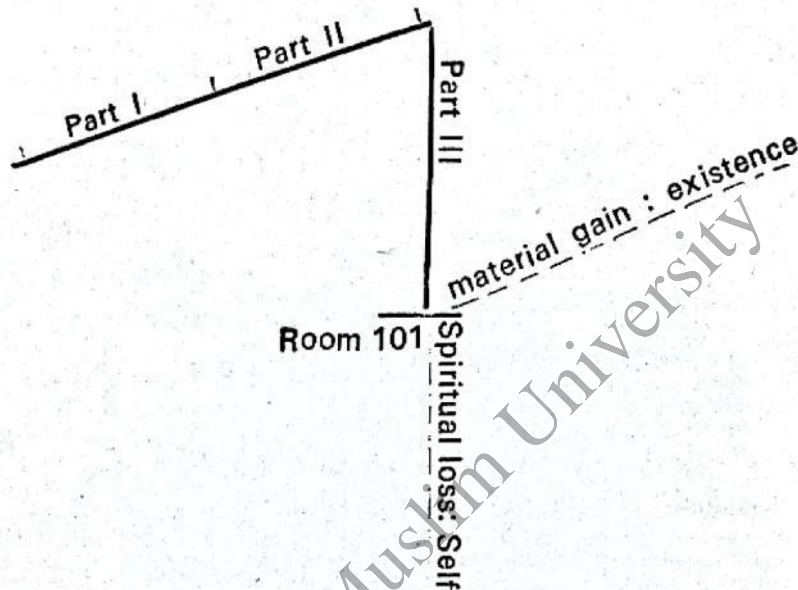
able to translate the dream into reality and eventually to rid himself of the nightmare (Parts I and II). In Part III, that is, in the Ministry of Love, the dream of the Golden Country becomes gradually diminished. Then, after the climactic scene in Room 101, the dream emerges once more, but now in a form, having achieved a total reversal.



After tbe climactic scene in Room 101 the structural movement spells out a line reminiscent of the double action of tragedy. Yet, there is a significant difference here. In tragedy the descending movement of material loss is often simultaneous with the ascending movement of spiritual gain, a new light, a new insight being born out of the loss.

In *1984* the relationship between ascending and descending movements is in the reverse. The material gain of survival, the undeniable gain of life, is equivalent to the loss of the human spirit which would make life worthwhile (originally, 'the object was not to stay alive but to stay human' (136). The 'last man of Europe' has survived, but he is no longer himself—he is mutilated, lobotomized, dehumanized.

Ironically, it is by adjusting to the norm of the majority that Winston becomes insane. Having joined in the collective insanity imposed on the population by Big Brother's irresistible power, he joins the other rats in the cage. It is precisely this

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'gain' of survival after the walls of the private self have melted away that we must recognize as that unspeakable 'horror' that had lain embedded in the future all along, a future inevitable and irreversible for any free human being once Big Brother assumes his control over the world and over the psyche.

The psychological dimension of the novel does not contradict, but gives vital support to the political allegory and is indispensable to the humanistic warning. Since totalitarianism is built on a series of self-perpetuating lies and on the unstoppable chain-reaction of betrayals, it leads to the irreversible disintegration of the inner self, to the irrecoverable loss of our humanity.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] George Woodcock, *The Crystal Spirit*, p. 218

[2] Edward M Thomas, *Orwell*, p. 94

[3] Murray Sperber, for example, focuses on Winston's paranoia (*'Gazing into the Glass Paperweight'*, p. 22), while Gerald Fiderer concentrates on Winston's masochism and his 'homosexual resolution of the Oedipus triangle' (*'Masochism as Literary Strategy'*, p. 20)

[4] Marcus Smith, 'The Wall of Blackness', *Modern Fiction Studies*, XIV (1968-1969), pp. 423-433

[5] Gerald Fiderer, *'Masochism as Literary Strategy'*, p. 20

[6] Marcus Smith, *'The Wall of Blackness'*, p. 421

[7] Ibid., p. 430

[8] George Orwell, 'New Words', *My Country Right or Left : 1940-1943*, vol. 2 of *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, ed. by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (4 vols.; London : Secker and Warburg, 1968), p. 4

[9] Murray Sperber, *'Gazing into the Glass Paperweight,'* p. 222; Marcus Smith, *'The Wall of Blackness'*, p. 426

[10] Murray Sperber, Ibid, p. 226

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THE ESSAYS OF GEORGE ORWELL

Though George Orwell could, in an epicurian vein, defend English cooking, or suggest an eleven point ritual for making 'a nice cup of tea', or sing the praises of an imaginary public house, the essay, which can be traced back to Montaigne, was not his forte. He was, on his own declaration, a writer with a definite social purpose:

> Every line of serious work, that I have written since 1936, has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism as I understand it:[1]

Despite his own admission that his 'starting point was always a feeling of partisanship', Orwell was not exactly a partisan writer, not, at least, in a narrow sense of the phrase, and was most unsparing in his attacks on all the 'smelly little orthodoxies'—left as well as right. His chief aim was to expose falsehood but he was not content with that alone. He was capable of taking an ironic view of things, yet his attitude to life was not ironical, for he deemed it a must to commit himself on the side of what he considered the lesser evil in a given situation. He distrusted the burlesque manner and what he called the 'Curse of English Writers—a sense of homour'. He was almost puritanical in his avoidance of frivolity, and his dread of irresponsibility turned him into nearly a prisoner of time and physical reality. Not that Orwell, all the time, felt any crippling discomfort in his narrow confines, for he had neither a faith in nor a desire for anything beyond the earthly existence. He was barely interested in the past except for using history as a means of discovering 'new meanings' in the present; but by the very nature of his commitment to the ideal of a more tolerable life, he could not be

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oblivious of the future. Yet Orwell's entire atttention was mostly focused on the present moment and his here and now attitude is at once his strength and his limitation.

Even in those of Orwell's few essays which can be described as a brief escape from the horrors of the then political reality, historical time makes itself felt in a mysterious way, for instance, in the following simile in a passage from *Some Thoughts on the Common Toad,* which is Orwell's ode to spring:

> It (Spring) comes seeping in everywhere, like one of those poison gases which pass through all filters.[2]

Orwell is certainly disgusted with the prevalent anti-aesthetic and grossly materialistic tendency of his highly politicized age as he observes in the same essay: 'I Know by experience that a favourable reference to Nature is liable to bring me abusive letters. . . . .' And in another essay,[3] he actually mentions that in response to one of his articles in The Tribune, a reader wrote to tell him that roses were 'bourgeois'. All this may appear somewhat funny to us in 1984. (Orwell thought that such things would not at all be funny in 1984), but one should not overlook the peculiarities of Orwell's time in any appraisal of his work. Though, he must, at times, have felt bored, even exasperated, he tenaciously clung to his little block of time and space as his overwhelming sense of realism told him that he had no other choice, and, if at all, he wanted his work to be meaningful and effective, he should root himself firmly into his period. He is the kind of writer who just cannot ignore his audience. He must be assured of an audience, otherwise he will, in his own view, cease to be useful (one of the reasons for Orwell's giving up his B. B. C. job of broadcasting to India during the second World War was the feeling that his effort largely went wasted because of an uncertain audience). Does it mean that Orwell was, above all, a propagandist? A propagandist he was and he had no embarrassment in declaring that all art is propaganda. What distinguishes him from the common run of polemical

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writers is, first of all, his care for prose as he wanted 'to make political writing into an art'. He held insincerity to be the enemy of good prose. His first and foremost loyalty was to truth (as he understood it); and this loyalty often makes the job of a political writer difficult, if not altogether impossible. One may disagree with Orwell but his views are entirely his own and he never willfully suppressed truth for fear of unpopularity. If at all, he wanted to be accepted on his own terms. In fact a writer, who could be so brutally frank, as the following passage would show, can hardly ever hope to be really popular (*Animal Farm* and *1984* are popular for obviously political reasons):

> It is not in Hitler's power, for instance, to make a penny an hour a normal industrial wage; it is perfectly normal in India, and we are at great pains to keep it so. One gets some idea of the real relationship of England and India when one reflects that the per capita annual income in England is something over £ 80, and in India about £ 7. It is quite common for an Indian Coolie's leg to be thinner than the average Englishman's arm. And there is nothing racial in this, for well fed members of the same race are of normal physique; It is due to simple starvation. This is the system which we all live on and which we denounce when there seems to be no danger of its being altered. Of late, however, it has become the first duty of a 'good anti-fascist' to lie about it and to keep it in being.[4]

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Orwell's anti-fascism was a legend; yet he was not ready to condone the sins of any individuals or nations simply because they were on his side in opposing fascism. What he said of Dickens, that there were no fixed underdogs for him, is equally true of himself. If on one occasion he gave a thrashing to the British Colonialists, on another he would come to their rescue if he felt that they were being driven to the wall for wrong reasons, as he has done, though for argument's sake, in his review of Lionel Fielden's book on India, *Beggar My Neighbour*.[5] He found Kipling's attitude to the Raj more realistic than that of E. M. Forster. There could, understandably, be some ambivalence in Orwell's view of Indo-British relations as he had served as an Imperial police

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officer in Burma for five years, but, on the whole, his obsession with fairplay and justice did not let him accept or reject any myth (imperial, Catholic, communist or any other), unless he had made a thread-bare analysis of it. The level of objectivity that he achieved without being ironical or non-commital is seldom found in political writing,

Orwell was nothing if not a rationalist but he knew the limitations of rationalism and did not discard intuition. He would, however, not have much to do with the metaphysical aspect of existence. The intuitive quality of his perception is more evident in his earlier essays, especially *A Hanging* (1931) and *Shooting an Elephant* (1936). In both these essays Orwell has related his personal experience in such a way that it has acquired a universal meaning with a bearing upon some of the basic problems of life like death and freedom. *A Hanging* reads almost like a short story. This essay contains a graphic account of the hanging of a condemned Hindu prisoner in a Burmese jail. Some of the details, like the following, are so significant and telling that they hardly need any elaboration. Here the condemned man is being taken to the gallows:

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> At each step his muscles slid neatly into place, the lock of hair on his scalp danced up and down, his feet printed themselves on the wet gravel. And once, inspite of the men who gripped him by each shoulder, he stepped slightly aside to avoid a puddle on the path.[6]

However Orwell goes on to add by way of comment: 'When I saw the person step aside to avoid the puddle, I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness of cutting a life short when it is in full tide.' Needless to say that the comment spoils the effect of the above passage and even sounds a little sentimental. Apart from this minor flaw, the atmosphere of the essay has a mysterious quality which lends an inexplicable meaning to the whole event. This quality is discernible also in *Shooting an Elephant,* though, in this essay, the problem faced by the police officer (Orwell himself who is compelled to shoot a dangerous elephant against his will)

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acquires its especial importance in the context of Burma's historical situation at that time. Yet somehow, the pclice officer's experience seems to transcend time as he says:

> I perceived in this moment that when the whiteman turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys.[7]

Besides, the level of psychological insight in this essay, as in *A Hanging*, is also remarkable:

> And my whole life, every whiteman's iife in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.

After his early phase, Orwell rarely showed this kind of multi-dimensional apprehension of reality, not even in those of his essays which directly deal with his personal experience; and if at all, this mode of perception returned to him in his later novels, especially in *1984*.

As time passed and the political situation of Europe grew worse with the rise of Hitler, the Spanish Civil War (in which Orwell participated) and finally the outbreak of World War II, Orwell developed a certain dread of totalitarianism and felt it to be just around the corner. From 1936 onwards, he used the essay, the review, the newspaper article and the novel mainly as a weapon in his war against fascism. He came to the conclusion that of all the classes the most endangered one was that of intellectuals and creative artists, particularly writers, and among them too, the writer of prose, not so much the poet. Perhaps, in view of the ambiguity of poetry, Orwell thought, though with little justification, that poets could go on writing even in a totalitarian set-up. He was, however, absolutely sure that no honest prose writer could remain meaningfully active in a fascist regime. And this is quite in keeping with Orwell's view that good prose is like a window pane. His fear was, no doubt, somewhat exaggrated; nevertheless, it inspired him to write some of his most valuable essays in defence of literature and intellectual liberty. It is mainly on the strength of these essays that Orwell will survice as a great crusader for freedom of expression, creativity and common decency.

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Orwell begins with the warning that in Europe the era of free speech was coming to a close and that even the illusion of the 'autonomous individual' was about to vanish. He puts the basic assumption of the European literature of the last four hundred years in the words of Shakespeare as : 'To thine own self be true'.[8] And with the growing influence of totalitarianism (in a broader sense any powerful orthodoxy), the writer will find it more and more difficult to be true to himself as he will, consciously or unconsciously, have to swallow a number of lies either under coercion or due to party loyalty as many left wing writers had been doing in the thirties. Here Orwell draws an important distinction between old and modern orthodoxies on the ground that the shifts in the orthodox positions of today are too frequent to be psychologically plausible. So either the writer goes on falsifying his feelings or he stops writing. Orwell is not hopeful about the emergence of a new kind of literature under totalitarianism, strikingly different from the literature of post-Renaissance Europe. He thinks that there would hardly be any literature worth the name, for such themes as 'tyranny' and 'inquisition' 'cannot be celebrated in words'.[9] One wonders what makes Orwell think that poetry can be 'written to order', or 'composed communally', 'without necessarily lacking artistic value'.[10] Again it is difficult to see what kind of poetry, besides folk songs, he has in mind when he says in the same essay :

> But above all, good verse, unlike good prose, is not necessarily an individual product.[11]

May be Orwell is referring to the universal sharing of some simple emotions to which poetry appeals. Anyway his distinction between prose and verse is wholly arbitrary, and, perhaps, can be traced to his disgust with some of the contemporary poets. Yet this kind of flaw does not invalidate the force of Orwell's general argument.

Orwell is of the firm belief that there cannot be any such thing as genuinely non-political literature. Literary attitudes

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are bound to be affected by external events and literature has to become political in order to remain honest. But the trouble is that there can scarcely be any true equation between writers and politicians of any kind. The writer should realize that totalitarians, monopolists and bureaucrats are all ganged up against intellectual liberty. And there is even greater danger from within as some of the writers who take pride in being rebels against the existing order are also rebelling against the idea of individual integrity in the name of discipline. The level of intolerance is so high that neither communists nor Catholicists can take an opponent to be both 'honest and intelligent'. The question is what a sincere writer should do in a situation like this. Orwell rules out the writer's going back into his shell. Any pretention of detachment is no better than an illusion. Art for art's sake flourishes in a period of material comfort and security; and a critic like George Sainstsbury, whom Orwell describes as 'a real old crusted Tory and High Churchman,[12] would be wholly out of place to day. Writing in 1940, Orwell observes that during the past ten years, propaganda had not only marred the aesthetic quality of English literature, it had also made any real literary criticism impossible. He is, however, happy that the myth of 'pure aestheticism' had been destroyed, for it just could not be sustained. What he is worried about is the tendency, especially noticeable in the left wing writers and critics, towards a certain mental dishonesty in the name of loyalty. And Orwell does not blame them in particular as it is a general malady: 'To accept an orthodoxy is always to inherit unresolved contradictions'.[13] He is also conscious of some of the basic limitations of literary criticism :

> I often have a feeling that even at the best of times literary criticism is fraudulent, since the absence of any accepted standards whatever —any external reference which can give meaning to the statement that such and such book is 'good' or 'bad'—every literary judgment consists in trumping up a set of rules to justify an instinctive preference.[14]

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What Orwell wishes to point out here is that literary criticism is not a science nor it can ever be one. He is not against subjective preference in literature as he says that 'I like this book' is not a non-literary response. But if one tries to discover merit in a book because it happens to be in conformity with his views—one is guilty of a non-literary judgment. Orwell is dissatisfied with Marxist criticism not for its insistence upon the subject matter but for its habit of making literary judgments for 'political ends'. His differences with the progressives notwithstanding, he has no hesitation in declaring that in his view the left orthodoxy was, in certain ways, better than the right orthodoxy that prevailed in England in the twenties. It is something which only a free writer could say.

Coming back to the writer's dilemma at a time when his liberty is under attack from various sides, Orwell suggests that a writer should not engage in politics as a writer but as a human being and a citizen. Refraining from writing about politics is no solution to his problem. If needs be he should accept the contradiction between his writings and his political activities as a necesary evil. If he detests this compromise, he would better put down his pen than write something which he knows to be untrue. Obviously this is the weakest point of Orwell's argument as the way out suggested to the writer would not only create practical difficulties for him but also split his personality. Not that Orwell was unaware of these hazards, yet his was too positive a mind to accept defeat.

Orwell's interest in popular art and literature led him to make indepth studies of picture post-cards[15] and boys' weeklies.[16] His long essay on those of British weakly papers for boys that run serial stories is quite a piece of detailed research and though some of its inaccuracies were pointed out by Frank Richards;[17] Orwell's general conclusion that these weeklies are harmful escapist literature as they transport the reader into a snobbish world of make-believe where nothing ever changes and the foreigners are infinitely funny, is still

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valid and relevant as it may well apply to the popular television and cinema of today.

Another aspect of Orwell's preoccupation with mass culture is revealed through his care for what he calls 'good-bad' literature—a literature which is not of a very high order, yet it has a peculiar appeal and somehow manages to survive, especially in public memory,as for example Kipling's verses or a poem like Tennyson's. . . . *Light Brigade*. Orwell's advocacy of this kind of litetature is essentially a reflection of his desire that if a vast majority of readers cannot appreciate the best in literature, it should, at least, go in for the middle stratum of fiction and poetry rather than feed itself upon trash. He has actually suggested ways and means of making poetry popular over the radio,[18] and has gone to the extent of saying that a novelist is essentially a story teller and as such should not be expected to be an intellectual in a narrow sense. His most scathing attack on literary highbrows comes in the context of what he suspects to be a contempt for the novel :

> But the novel is a popular form of art, and it is no use to approach it with the Criterion-Scrutiny assumption that literature is a game of back-scratching (claws in or claws out according to circumstances) between tiny cliques of high brows.[19]

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A little harsh but quite in character with Orwell, the Eton educated admirer of *Ulysses*, who had, for a time, deliberately declassed himself in order to experience how the poor live and die; and understandable in relation to Orwell's keenness for using literature as a civilizing influence and a means of preserving the humanity of the common man in the face of a vast array of dehumanizing forces. Again it would be wrong to conclude that Orwell was always anti-highbrow, for he went great lengths in defending the highbrows if he saw them unjustly under fire.

Before turning to Orwell's literary criticism proper, it will not be out of place to consider Orwell's appraisal of the written English of his time. His approach, in this regard, is not that of a scientific linguist. Most of his criticism of the

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current English usage is directed against its ugliness, inexactitude and pomposity. Though he has put across his sense of dissatisfaction with the written English of his day with great clarity, force and conviction, his point of view in *Politics and the English Language* is essentially subjective and aesthetic. This is not to detract from the merit of the essay's arguments or the validjty of its conclusions. Apart from Orwell's oft-repeated observation that in our age language is used not for enlarging the area of consciousness but for narrowing it down, the essay contains the following startlingly true revelation :

> It (the English language) becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts.[20]

Orwell has analysed, in detail, quite a few specimens of what he considers bad English (including a passage from Harold Laski), but none of them represents creative prose. Thus Orwell's observations are confined to the functional prose of newspapers, sociological tracts, political pamphlets and literary criticism; and he seems convincing in pointing out that the movement of modern prose is away from concretness. However one is a little surprised when Orwell says that the sole aim of a metaphor is to call up a visual image. The essay also puts forward six practical suggestions for writing better English, the last of which is characteristically Orwellian: 'Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous'.[21]

Besides *Politics and the English Language*, a lesser known essay, New Words, brings to light Orwell's feeling of the inadequacy of the English Language, or, for that matter, of language itself, in a more fundamental sense. He begins with the lament: 'our language is practically useless for describing anything that goes on inside the brain,;[22] and adds that not only a dream cannot be described in English, it is also of not much help in describing even half of our waking mind. Our actual feelings are too subtle for words. We do

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not say what we really mean and this falsification multiplies as the listener or the reader too makes his contribution to it. Words in their primary meanings are almost useless, and 'the art of writing is in fact the perversion of words and . . . the less obvious this perversion is, the more thoroughly it has been done.'[23] About English Orwell says that from the stand point of 'exactitude and expressiveness', it 'has remained in the stone age'. Orwell knows that the problem he has raised cannot yield to any ready solution, yet in his usual optimistic vein he sees hope in the invention of new words. He is right in suggesting that the film can convey mental states in a more effective manner but he has obviously overlooked the difficulties of communication that no less beset the visual media than they do the printed page.

If Orwell's essays dealing with the peculiar problems of literary creation in his time, especially since 1930, are a kind of warning signals, a considerable part of his literary criticism is in the nature of case studies in which individual authors, books and movements appear as symptoms of certain tendencies of the human spirit. As a reviewer he had to write about new books as well as the reprints of the old ones. Very well read in literature and allied subjects, with a thorough training in the classics, a sensitive ear for poetry and a native instinct for good prose, Orwell could well become a first rate literary critic but he would not devote much of his energy to a pursuit, which was, in any case, confined to a small number of educated people. His strong sense of social responsibility and his obsession with his own time, that largely determined the character of his novels as well as of his social and literary criticism, would not allow him the luxury of indulging in anything like art for art's sake or a purely aesthetic appreciation of literature. When he declares: 'the pamphlet ought to be the literary form of an age like our own';[24] he may, for a while, produce the wrong impression that he was not interested in the finer graces of literature. The truth is that he never overlooked the

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aesthetic aspect of literature though his primary emphasis was on its relevance as a meaningful and responsible document of authentic human experience. His critical ideas with their strong moral and sociological bias can broadly be summed up thus:

(a) There is no escape from meaning in literature.

(b) A writer cannot fully transcend his time and social milieu.

(c) The beliefs of a writer have a strong bearing on his writing.

(d) A half held belief can seriously impair the quality of a writer's work (example : T. S. Eliot).

(e) What overcomes the reservations of a hostile reader (who is not in agreement with the author's view of things) is the power of the writer's talent (=conviction), example : Swift.

(f) One can appreciate literature with a detestable anti-human tendency but one cannot really enjoy it.

(g) An artist can be a 'detestable human being' and yet a good artist. The two facts do not invalidate each other (example : Dali).

(h) Creative writers can be divided into two broad categories : those who concentrate on the process of life and celebrate it (example : Shakespeare), and those who deny life by moving away from its process (example : Swift or later Tolstoy). The first group is infinitely preferable to the second.

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Like all critical approaches Orwell's too is rife with problems. For instance in his outstanding analysis of Hopkins's poem, *Felix Randal*[25] (Orwell's best piece of concrete criticism), he has accepted the Catholic poet and his 'Christian' poem on their own terms without any reserveations, but he has not shown the same open - minded magnanimity to Eliot and Yeats. He admits that Yeats is sincere in his fantastic and to some extent abominable beliefs but it is clear that Orwell is not able to really overcome his dislike of Yeats's outlook. He himself concedes that it is difficult to determine the exact relationship between a writer's style and his dominant 'tendency'. The concept of the writer's talent or conviction breaking down the reader's resistance has some validity but it is a vague concept as a hostile reader can always find some alibi for undervaluing even a highly talented writer. Similarly

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Orwell is very arbitrary in declaring in his review of Eliot's *Burnt Norton, East Coker, The Dry Salvages*[26] that the poet's Anglo-Catholic faith, which has given rise to the attitude of resignation in his later poems, is not a truly felt belief. Orwell, a self-confessed admirer of Eliot's earlier poems, finds Eliot's religious tendency to be more disagreeable than what he calls the 'reactionary' trend of the poet's early phase in which he wrote about the man who was too civilized to act. Here the word 'reactionary' should not produce the impression that Orwell's attack on Eliot is of the conventional left wing brand. Anyway Orwell's doubts about Eliot's faith have only led him to an unconvincing denunciation of three of Eliot's major poems.

Too much preoccupation with the author's 'tendency' has not helped Orwell much in his evaluation of literature. In his zeal for hunting down the 'tendency' of a book he often crossed into the frontiers of the writer's personal life and saw Mark Twain as a shallow public celebrity, Swift a frustrated man, Dali a pervert and Tolstoy closely resembling King Lear. From Orwell's point of view, there is a justification for occasionally referring to a writer's personal life in the context of his art, because for him a man's life, his times and work formed a unit. It's all very well so far as one tries to understand a piece of literature in its totality but what is the guarantee that even an honest unfavourable statement about the man will not prejudice one's mind against his work. Orwell's own assessment of Mark Twain, though founded upon a clear cut principle (not stated in *Mark Twain--The Licensed Jester*)[27] that 'no comic writer of any stature has ever suggested that society is good'[28], has considerably been influenced by his general disapproval of Mark Twain, the man. Similarly he seems to have slightly undervalued the paintings of Dali[29] partially because Dali was, in his view, 'as anti-social as a flea' and 'a symptom of the world's illness'. On the other hand, Orwell has shown extraordinary sympathy for Kipling[30] whom he credited with a certain realism, responsibility and

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dignity despite his jingoism. Not that Orwell did not want to judge a work of art independent of its' creator's personality but he, at the same time, was not ready to altogether overlook the artist's 'tendency', and this naturally created problems.

Another weakness of Orwell's literary criticism is its relative inability to positively state and concretely demonstrate what is really good in a writer or a book. Perhaps it is asking too much of a sociological critic as Orwell has himself said that the goodness of a book cannot be conclusively proved. Even then it is noticeable that Orwell fares better at defining the piece under review in negative terms. In his long essay on Dickens,[31] he mainly succeeds in showing what Dickens was not or what he lacked. Not that this mode of appraisal is useless, but when it comes to tracing down the sources of Dickens's strength, Orwell can only feebly point out that his gift for the uncanny detail made his descriptions memorable or that the fertility of the inventive powers of Dickens is not so much in evidence in his presentation of situations and characters as in the unusual turns of phrase. His apprehension of Swift's powers is even more vague as it is shrunk into one word, 'talent'. Orwell's answer to Tolstoy's attack on Shakespeare[32] is mainly an examination of what he thought to be the Russian novelist's anti-humanistic tendency in his last phase and not really a defence of Shakespeare. Orwell is, of course, fully entitled to his controversial view that Shakespeare does not belong to the Christian tradition as his attitude to life is humanistic, but it is to be noted that his hazy notion of Shakespeare's greatness is chiefly confined to the magic of his verse.

Two of Orwell's critical essays *Politics Vs Literature*[33] and *Arthur Koestler*[34] are of especial interest as they can be helpful in understanding Orwell's own work, particularly *Animal Farm* and 1984. A number of critics have found a resemblance between Orwell and Swift, and, perhaps, Orwell was himself conscious of it, for in his study of *Gulliver's*

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Travels in *Politics Vs Lirerature* he takes great pains in demonstrating the negative and anti-humanistic tendency of Swift and the reader is left in no doubt that Orwell would not identify himself with a writer like Swift. Orwell's last two books are often compared with Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*. In writing about Koestler, he has, in a way, discussed the dilemma of revolution which puzzled him no less than it did Koestler. He, however, feels that Koestler has not squarely faced the question of revolution in *Darkness at Noon*.

Apart from his long essays on Dickens, *Guliver's Travels* and his elaborate reply to Tolstoy's charges against Shakespeare, Orwell's most ambitions critical work is his detailed diagnostic survey of the English literature of the first four decades of the present century, significantly titled : *Inside the Whale*. Orwell has made use of two Biblical images in choosing this and another title *Writers and Leviathan* for two of his essays which deal with contemporary literature and its problems in order to give some idea of the magnitude of the issues involved. Orwell starts his investigation of contemporary literature in *Inside the Whale* with reference to Henry Miller's novel *Tropic of Cancer* which he hails as a kind of book that moves away from the attitude of treating man as a 'political animal'. Miller knows that the world process is outside his control and he shows no desire to control it. Yet he does not ignore the process, and is, therefore, more acceptable to Orwell than the sentimental Georgians, the pessimists of the twenties or the progressives of the thirties. Orwell, in a way, admires D. H. Lawrence but he feels that Lawrence's ideal life—'a life centring round the simple mysteries—sex, earth, fire, water, blood—is merely a lost cause'.[35] Joyce is, according to Orwell, a purer artist than many, yet he has a definite vision:

> What Joyce is saying is 'Here is life without God. Just look at it!' and his technical innovations, important though they are, are there primarily to serve this purpose.[36]

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Orwell's severest strictness is reserved for the orthodox English leftwing writers. He is of the view that Marxist literature has moved no nearer to the masses and a writer like Henry Miller is closer to the common man than the progressives who mistake their 'ego projections' for the future. Referring to Auden's phrase 'necessary murder' Orwell remarks that it 'could only be written by a person to whom murder is at most a word'.[37] The English Marxists can swallow totalitarianism because they have no other experience except that of liberalism. *Inside the Whale* is also important in the sense that it can help in removing the wrong impression of a non-aesthetic outlook that Orwell, sometimes, produces in his over-enthusiastic advocacy of the social relevance of literature. One gets a new idea of the imaginative sympathies of Orwell when he declares that 'emotional sincerity' is more important for a creative writer than his possession of 'the truth', or that an 'untrue belief' may be held with greater sincerity than a 'true' one. What Orwell detested was orthodoxy and coercion and not immorality in a narrow ethical sense. He could be perfectly at home in the tospy-turvy world of an eighteenth century novelist like Smollett and even say :

> . . . by simply ruling out 'good' motives and showing no respect wnatever for human dignity, Smollett often attains a truthfulness that more serious novelists have missedl.[38]

For a writer like Orwell it is but unavoidable to be a little dated, and yet he cannot be completely out of date, for he was chiefly preoccupied with the theme of freedom and freedom is a problem which can neither be resolved nor forgotten. All significant writing has a way of reviving and keeping itself relevant and the best of Orwell's essays undoubtedly belong to this class of writing.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Hamlet and other Shakespearean Essays, By L. C. KNIGHTS, Cambridge University Press, 1979, 308 pp.

The book under review is an admirable collection of selected essays contributed, as he himself takes care to point out in the Preface, by Professor L C Knights in his career of distinctively fruitful activity spread over a fairly long span of forty-five years. It consists of nineteen essays, some of which are concerned with the elucidation of theoretical issues like the nature of tragic experience, the historical approach to Shakespeare—its hypotheses and challenges—History and Politics in his plays, their framework of tradition and inquiry into the mode of operation of 'ideas' or 'thought' in masterpieces of literary artifice. Other essays, pertaining to an evaluation of the greatest tragedies—*Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth* (and incidentally, *Othello,* too), two of the last plays, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* as well as *Julius Caesar* and *Timon of Athens*, are conspicuous in respect of critical perspective and depth and subtlety of discrimination. The collection opens with the epoch-making *An Approach to Hamlet,* marked with penetrating insight, width of reference and inborn critical finesse—all these having a bearing on the play which has been cluttered with a formidable mass of exegesis and whose profound mystery still eludes full comprehension. L C Knights lays emphasis upon Hamlet's failure to know (which may be regarded as the play's 'epistemological centre), his obsession with the environing corruption, his attitudes of denial, rejection and loathing, his attempts to recoil and lapse back from the level of adult awareness and what he succintly designates as Hamlet's death-trapped consciousness'. The Denmark of the play is virtually an 'unweeded garden'

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and a man of Hamlet's refined sensibility finds it enormously difficult to come to terms with it. Knights is firmly persuaded of the fact that what has been primarily focused on in the play and holds the key for unlocking the secret of the protagonist's malady is not just an acute sense of evil which permeates the play and generatas nausea but a peculiar variety of hypersensitiveness which has impeded and clogged his spontaneous responsiveness to undercurrents of genuine feelings and emotions. Essentially, *Hamlet* is a play about 'Knowing' and 'being', reflection and consciousness, their interconnections and their interpenetration. Drawing upon the grammar of Blake's mythological symbolism Knights conceives Hamlet as being in the power of his 'Spectre'—a state of morbid and sterile involvement in intellectuality, unillumined by an intuitive and imaginative grasp of things and implying, therefore, the fact of deprivation of that plenitude and opulence of being which is the exclusive privilege of a fully integrated personality alone. Problems like dubiety about the authenticity of the ghost, the delayed action, the ethics of revenge (which is contrary to the known Christian injunction against it), obscenities hurled in the face of Ophelia, the brutal torturing of Gertrude—both these emanating from an abhorrence of sex perversion—, paying Rosencrantz and Guildenstern back in their own coin, rewarding Polonius for his eavesdropping and 'catching the conscience' of Claudius—all these, according to Knights, are only of pheripheral interest and/or are subordinate to the process of corruption and putrefying initiated early and which renders Hamlet's sensibility blunted. Equally celebrated *How many Children had Lady Macbeth?*—parodic and deflating in intention—begins with a lethal and sustained attack on Bradleian assumptions about verisimilitude: stressed conformity of dramatic action with events in work-a-day world, isolating characters from the total structure of the play and a wilful blindness to 'themes' or *leitmotifs* or what Knights very judiciously designates as 'attitudes-in-action'. Having brushed aside as sheer

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nonsense what began with Richardson and culminated in the critical naivety of Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) Knights provides us with his own critique of *Macbeth*. Following the lead given by Wilson Knight (and he acknowledges his indebtedness to Knight unequivocally) he thinks that a Shakespeare play had best be approached as a dramatic poem—a complex unity of a magical web of images, network of the tentacular roots of words, verse rhythm, and symbolic patterning of emotional drives and conflicts and a sort of intermeshing of units of perception with all these from which 'plot' and 'character' need not be abstracted as discrete categories. This integral whole into which the dramatist's vision of life is projected has its own validity, its own autonomy and its own resonance and in it also lie embedded the criteria of judgment to be brought to bear on it. *Macbeth* has two presiding themes : 'reversal of values' and 'unnatural disorder', linked up with a succession of deceitful appearances in coping with which the protagonist is assailed by doubts, uncertainties and confusion. It is, Knights maintains, 'a study in tyranny : dominative power seeking to establish and support itself by violence, is traced as never before or since as a progress towards meaninglessness and chaos' (p. 184). *Macbeth* is a 'statement of evil' or to be more precise, a dramatic enactment of the journey of fear in the obscurer regions of the psyche in the course of which the protagonist experiences conflicting and tumultuous swirls of passion and compunctious visitings of a guilty conscience and the sense of weariness and *ennui* descends upon him ultimately. Knights has significantly insisted on the opposition between the self-destructive potentiality of evil in Macbeth and the life-affirming, positive and energizing forces set in motion towards the end of the play in Malcolm's speech, for instance, and even glimmered in the 'temple-haunting martlet' passage at the beginning. Similarly in *King Lear as Metaphor*, Knights distinctly emphasizes the symbolic and ritualistic elements whose co-presence is insinuated at the very outset and also

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the fact that the dramatic action helps define and concretize the inner psychological drama of the soul. A sort of correspondence between the outer and the inner realities—psychic events mediated through dramatic-poetic structure of linguistic vitality—is an essential constituent of Shakespeare's dramatic art and the economics of his artistic strategy. He upholds that the basic point of distinction between Hamlet and Lear is that whereas the emotional blockage in the case of the former is not broken or broken only partially, Lear, having been engaged in continuous gropings after self-knowledge, does attain at long last to some sort of integration or maturity in the widest connotation of the term. But inspite of admitting that 'the vision of horror is built up to a climax' Knights is, nonetheless, pretty emphatic that this play insinuates a beneficent order of things towards the end. These two positions seem to me to be incongruous and irreconcilable and involve a contrariety of approach and Knight's contention is perhaps not fully borne out by contextual evidence. The moral centre of *Othello* lies in the failure to love and the protagonist's ambiguity derives from the fact of his being entangled in illusions—the product of his own fantasy—and his own struttings and self-dramatizations as a desperate measure to extricate himself out of them. The confiict between Iago and Othello, it has been perceptively pointed out by Knights, is reflected not only in their divergent life-styles but also in their differing idioms of speech and their address to the world as well.

Among the four other essays, characterized by a close and minute structural analysis, *Julius Caesar* essay makes us see the essential point made by Knights that Brutus's abstractionist mind, toying with the notion of the general good (Blake's 'cry of the scoundrel and the hypocrite') did not take the complexities of the actual fully into account and thus he fell a victim to his own misconceived and misconstrued idealism. 'But men may construe things after their own fashion,/Clean from the purpose of things themselves' seems

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to Knights 'an anticipatory summing-up of Brutus's whole political career' (p. 100). A deliberate contrast is perhaps intended between the public and private postures of Brutus about whom Coleridge's verdict to the effect that Brutus is 'a study in the politics of pure—or abstract—reason' is quoted with explicit approval. *Timon of Athens* has many points of contact with *King Lear* and Knights may well be correct in his guess that when the former play was drafted, the latter was already on the anvil or in the process of gestation. The suggestion that 'Apemantus is what Timon becomes' sounds quite plausible and Timon's much-publicized generosity is aimed at buying his adherents (or sycophants) just as Lear was irritatingly anxious to strike a bargain with his daughters by treating love as a negotiable commodity and not as a sacred determinant of human relationships. The loyal and steady Stewart is very much like Kent in *King Lear* but *Timon of Athens*, as maintained by Knights, does not contain a Cordelia who enabled Lear to achieve a sort of apotheosis though this apotheosis and the consequent lucidity of soul, it may be added, was only a very short-lived and transitory affair. Knights's judgment seems to be sound when he avers that 'Timon's misanthropy is in no essential way an approach to reality; it is primitive rage at the destruction of an ego-ideal' (p.113). Timon ends up as a distracted and tortured soul, tugging with a deep-rooted and gnawing conflict and self-contempt and he is denied both true self-knowledge and spiritual regeneration. Knights sums it up by saying that 'You can disengage from *Timon of Athens*, for all its power; you have to live with *King Lear* (p.117).

At the very outset in *The Winter's Tale* essay L C Knights rejects, generally speaking, both psychoanalysis and psychiatry as means of explication of the plays with some sort of psychological motivation, for they do not yield any results of much critical relevance. He then proceeds to refute convincingly J I M Stewart's ingenious and attractive speculation about the genesis of Leontes's spasm of jealousy: projection of

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his own repressd and then reactivated homosexuality, because of the presence of Polixenes, on to Harmoine. For Knights the central contrast embodied in the play is the 'one between neurosis bred by or within civilization and a purely natural spontaneity and directness of living' (p. 131). What seems to lie at the heart of the play is not the moral obtuseness and psychological involutions of Leontes but the integration which is achieved through the incorporation of what Coleridge calls 'the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood' across the abysm of time and through the self-renewing potential of the cycle of seasons. The creative unfolding of Nature's potencies and the functioning of grace in the human soul are somehow coalesced and thus the process of integration is set going. *The Tempest* essay is a study of the symbolic pattern dramatized in the form of a fable, with a sense of the mysterious and a good deal of the supernatural in it, in which Prospero, Ariel and Caliban play conspicuous and pivotal roles—the latter two being the inalienable adjuncts of the former. Ariel may be regarded as an equivalent of Prospero's intuitive self and Caliban is the potentiality of evil contained deep down in Prospero's subliminal self and hence his subdual is emblematic of the conquering of evil by assimilation of it within Prospero and subjecting it to a radical transformation. Knights agrees with F R Leavis in his view that 'Caliban . . . leads the modern commentator, quite appropriately, to discuss Shakespeare's interest in the world of new discovery and in the impact of civilization on the native' (p. 141). But to call these plays 'romances', as is sometimes done inadvertently, perhaps, is, I should think, a misnomer, for romance lies only at the fringes; they are, on the contrary; deeply concerned with vital issues of will and choice and hypnosis which have been treated in a symbolic way and through concrete patterning of events and the dialectic of complex human living.

L C Knights firmly believes, along with Arthur Sewell, that 'plot' and 'character', as ordinarily understood, are not

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mere 'precipitates from the memory', they are in fact inseparable and cannot be dissociated from the dramatic whole in which they are entrenched and from which they derive their congruence. The character belongs to the play and 'the play is an art form, not a slice of life' (p. 214)—a fact which Bradley, with his mimetic point of view so tenaciously held, blatantly tends to ignore and which leads to all kinds of simplifications and pseudo judgments,—and the work of art is a 'continuously creative existence, for it exists by continuously creating experience' (p. 228). Further, some sort of moral judgment is inevitably involved in our reading and evaluation of Tragedy, yet this has got to be transcended and turned into something other than itself.

Shakespeare' Politics and *Shakespeare and History* are concerned exclusively, and *The Thought of Shakespeare* only tangentially, with bringing out the major themes of the English History plays: seizure of power and its arbitrary and even tyrannical exercise and the threat of chaos and anarchy which loomed large in contemporary England and to which the entire social fabric was exposed. It is 'the exploration and assessment' of the political man's experience in the perspective of his historical milieu which forms the substance of the two tetrologies and of *King John* and the question which is ultimately posed is: what kind of dyke or bulwark be erected for stemming the swelling tide of corruption and thus save the crumbling edifice of the body-politic from utter annihilation ? The positives which have been suggested, as a counterbalancing force, seem to derive from the Medieval thinkers, Boethius, in particular: belief that evil is a mere negation and does not enjoy any existential reality, that goodness and naturalness are almost identical and co-extensive, that the principle of mutuality and interdependence is the necessary datum for ensuring political stability and that the primacy and sanctity of community relations must in any way be maintained and given the highest priority. Knights's reading of the History plays strikes the correct note when he says 'Shakes-

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peare saw the good ruler as not merely set over, the people whom he rules (though rule is necessary), but linked with and in some sense expressive of the society for whose sake he performs his office' (p. 159). To him 'the principle of cooperation and mutuality' may be seen 'not as a vague ideal of universal benevolence but as the neccessary condition, intimately felt, of individual development in its diversity' (p.165). Knights shrewdly suggests that thought in Shakespeare is equivalent neither to discursive thinking nor to a body of formulable abstractions but to the controlling vision which is externalized in the linguistic structure. It is 'generated not only by a pattern of incidents, but what may be called a pattern of attitudes embodied in different characters' (p.175). Further, this thought is 'not something which can be paraphrased and summarized: it is something we imaginatively apprehend and assimilate to our own most personal life in a life-time of discovery' (p. 177). And the morality of a play is, in D H Lawrence's impregnated phrase, 'passionate' and not didactic and is any way both latent and reticent. He also rightly upholds that whereas the Comedies of Shakespeare betray his preoccupation with problems and themes of social relevance, dramatic poetry, as mediated through the Tragedies, transcends this limited and narrow frame of reference and rests on moral and metaphysical postulates or intuitions. Knights is not only suspicious but positively disdainful of any kind of false pattern being superimposed upon dramatic experience from outside and of insistence on any exact correspondence discoverable or sought to discover itself between formalized experience and events in actualify. A literary artifact, created by a genius like Shakespeare, is vibrantly alive, with its own timbre and resonance, animated by its inner imaginative logic—a self-subsistent monad—, is inexhaustible in its implications, a sort of crystal, refracting light from many of its angles, and need not be reduced to a schematized version of raw experience. It elicits from a sensitive and perceptive reader subtle and discriminating reactions, generates life-

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enhancing energy and sharpens and quickens one's sensitivity.

This collection of essays reflects not only 'the distillation of (the critic's) personality into style' but also the distillation of a life-time of experience of living excitedly and lovingly with masterpieces of imaginative art. Like Wilson Knight before him, L C Knights also believes that all major Shakespeare plays are cumulative stages in one progressively broad and bold sweep of the intuitive apprehension of Reality and constitute one dramatic poem of multiple and stupendous dimensions. His treatment of Shakespeare's plays is suffused with the quality of his own imagination, a civilized intelligence, a gentleness of touch and a sort of quiet wisdom.

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The Shakespeare Play as Poem by S. VISWANATHAN
Cambridge University Press. 1980. pp. 236

In this book Dr Viswanathan attempts a critique and a history of the dominant trend of Shakespeare criticism since the late 1920s, that is, the trend of seeing a Shakespeare play as a poem. He does well to place this critical trend in its historical context—in the context of developments in Shakespeare criticism, and also in the overall context of cultural developments—for in this way we can see it in the proper perspective and realize that there is more to it than a mere 'reaction' against Bradley. Indeed, critical trends are not born in a vacuum. They are part of the cultural activity of an age, and it is good that Dr. Viswanathan's book reminds us of it.

In Chapter I he shows how developments in other schools of Shakespeare criticism prepared the ground for the emergence of the poetic school or what is sometimes called 'the school of Knight and Knights'. The relation of this school to the historical and the theatrical school, is 'not one of simple

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rivalry or opposition but rather one of unconscious collaboration'. The historical school should not be called a 'reaction' against Bradley for the simple reason that it offered a new, non-naturalistic view not only of character but of the whole play. It has not been duly recognized that by offering this view the historical school itself paved the way for the advent of the poetic school. Witness the later writings of Stoll in which he draws attention to the function of poetry in creating a convincing dramatic illusion. The work of the poetic school was also confirmed and promoted by the commentaries of the theatrical school which spoke of the non-naturalistic and stylized modes of the Elizabethan theatre and of the theatrical function of poetry. Dr Viswanathan observes that there has been so much of intercommunication and cross-fertilisation among the various approaches that exclusive adherence to one approach only is inappropriate.

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The growth of the poetic approach to Shakespeare was also fostered by developments in the intellectual and cultural climate of the age. This is the subject of Chapter 2. In this connexion Dr Viswanathan takes note of: the advent of the new poetic in the wake of the 'poetic revolution' brought about by Eliot, Yeats and Pound; the whole new set of literary values brought into currency by the fiction of Joyce, Lawrence and Virginia Woolf; the revival of poetic drama: the introduction of new critical concepts by Eliot, Richards, Empson and Leavis; the birth and the flourishing of the 'new criticism': the impact of the new sciences and philosophies of the twentieth century such as psychology, social and cultural anthropology, logical positivism and later the philosophy of 'symbolic forms'; the new demands on and expectations about literature in view of the modern cultural crisis; and the formulation of theories about the origin and evolution of drama, and the relation of drama with ritual, myth, symbol and archetype.

Through the perspective gained in the first two chapters Dr Viswanthan proceeds to consider the work of the critics

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of the poetic school. Two chapters are devoted to the 'spatial interpretation of Wilson Knight by virtue of the revolutionizing significance of his work. It is pointed out that Wilson Knight's is not a pure and simple revolt against Bradley inasmuch as Bradley himself indicated that a play could be approached through its 'atmosphere'. Dr Viswannathan fully appreciates the achievement of Wilson Knight in showing us new and important ways of looking at Shakespeare. At the same time he expresses proper regret for his eccentricities and whimsicalities.

Chapter 5 deals with the 'thematics' of L C Knights who has been, in the words of Dr Viswanathan, 'far the most persuasive and reasonable of the poetic interpreters of Shakespeare'. Unlike Wilson Knight, L C Knights makes use of historical Knowledge but because of his aesthetic-moral bias he makes use of it in a highly qualified and somewhat partial manner. For example, he recognizes that character is an Elizabethan dramatic convention but does not recognize that this convention is shaped and expressed by other conventions, the convention of rhetoric, poetry and stage-practice. Consequently, he attributes to the tragic heroes the tendency of self-dramatisation, denies them their due of imaginative sympathy and evokes a distorted response to them. L C Knights's calling the characters of drama dramatic is no less absurd than Bradley's calling the characters of drama poetic. Similarly, L C Knights's confusion of the moral world of the play with the moral world of real life is as deplorable as Bradley's confusion of the characters of drama with personages of real life.

Chapter 6 deals with the work of the imagistic critics. After considering the term 'image' in a broad sense, which implies not only words but also the dramatic situation, the interplay of characters, stage-effects and the place of the image in a time-sequence, Dr Viswanathan charts the various problems of interpreting imagery in drama and proceeds to determine whether the commentators recognize them, and

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how efficiently they deal with them. The discussion that follows is illuminating. It brings out the full significance of the pioneer work of Caroline Spurgeon. The author pleads for a due recognition of her fruitful insights and valuable findings, and suggests a historical explanation for her 'faults of omission and commission,' in the hope that an understanding of her approach will lead to the sympathetic reading of her critical intention and achievement, which her commentary badly needs. Along with the work of Spurgeon the works of other commentators like Armstrong, Clemen and Heilman are also discussed. Dr Viswanathan takes care to underscore the inter-communication that obtains between imagistic analysis and historical scholarship. He observes that it is in the field of imagistic criticism that the need for the application of historical knowledge is most strongly felt. In a way his book makes a case for the indispensability of historical scholarship to the business of not only literary criticism but also of criticism of criticism. But we may remind ourselves that historical scholarship by itself is no substitute for taste, sensitivity and intuitive insight.

The conclusion stresses the need for a proper balance of emphasis between the literalist and allegorist interpretations of Shakespeare and for eclecticism in the matter of critical approaches. Dr Viswanathan recognizes that 'no one approach—and that includes the poetic approach—can be regarded as self-sufficient, still less infallible'. He seys: 'I suggest that it is desirable and necessary to use several valid approaches in suitable combination so that they may act as reflectors and illuminate the plays to the utmost'.

One need not question Dr Viswanathan's authority for making this snggestion without having offered any fresh discussion in critical theory because there is nothing original about the suggestion itself; it reiterates something which every student of M. A. or M Phil in this country knows. But on such occasions we have to remind ourselves that Dr Viswanathan's book is not an original book on critical theory

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(or on Shakespeare's plays) it is a book on the history-cum critique of the poetic trend in Shakespeare criticism, and it is also a reference work for scholars and students of Shakespeare, and of twentieth-century literary criticism at the most. In all these respects it is quite a useful book. Even an impressive book. It impresses the reader because of the author's scholarship, and because of his awareness of the problems of Shakespeare studies. And it impresses him because of its thorough documentation, foot-notes and all, and because of its Select Bibliography of Shakespeare critics—in which the author has included himself. I wish the author had not made mistakes in usage like the following: '. . . and the relation between drama, ritual, myth and archetype' (p. 42); 'Knights's habit of making the play-world appear as though it is little different from the moral world as we apprehend it in real life . . . .' (p.)

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THE ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

(BI-ANNUAL)

(DECLARATION FORM IV, RULE 8)

1. Place of Publication	Aligarh
2. Periodicity of Publication	Bi-annual
3. Printer's Name	K. C. Mital
Nationality	Indian
Address	Printwell Printers Shiv Bhawan Lekh Raj Nagar, Aligarh
4. Publisher's Name	A. A. Ansari
Nationality	Indian
Address	Professor Department of English Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh
5. Editor's Name	A. A. Ansari
Nationality	Indian
Address	Professor Department of English Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh
6. Owner's Name	Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh

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