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CONTENTS

Chiramel P. Jose

BLAKE DECODING *THE BOOK OF JOB*

Unlike Blake's other works *Illustrations of the Book of Job* had been acclaimed as a masterly work during Blake's life time itself. An understanding of these twenty-two plates in the background of Blake's biographical incidents is proposed in the present study. Even though many volumes have been published about this masterpiece of Blake, the clues given by Blake's biographer, Alexander Gilchrist help us more than any other work to understand Blake's interpretation of the Job story.[1] Therefore, while not ignoring the critical heritage in this regard , special importance is given in this study to the views of Blake's biographer as they come closest to an understanding of Blake at least from the point of view of contemporaneity. Joseph Wicksteed's work is a pioneering full length study of Blake's Job, especially pointing out the similarity between Blake's Job figure and Yahweh figure and also the right-left symbolism - the right symbolizing goodness and the left symbolizing evil - and also arguing on the support of his observations that Blake interpreted the Bible story in his own way often greatly deviating from the original.[2] For any serious study of Blake's Job plates, the wonderful facsimile edition produced by Lawrence Binyon and Geoffrey Keynes in six fascicles[3] is indispensable and presumed for granted, though the absence of these prints here may be excused due to practical reasons in getting them reproduced. Though Keynes dwells on the history of the designs and brings out Blake's personal encounter of the Job experience, it was Bo Lindberg who gave the most detailed and exhaustive chronology of the

designs.[4] A less detailed, but a very compact summary of the same is made by Martin Butlin.[5] Keynes traces Blake's interest in the theme of Job and his misfortunes as dating back at least to the year 1793, and probably even to 1785.[6] Heavily depending on the conjectures made by Wicksteed, he established that

> The idea of Job in spiritual difficulties between his wife and his friends was suggested to Blake by his own troubles, first in 1785 between Catharine Blake on the one hand and his brother Robert and his friends on the other, and again in 1793 when his integrity as artist and 'prophet' was threatened by the false friends who tried to dissuade him from the course he had marked out for himself. It is also suggested that the later conception of Job answered by God out of the whirlwind was the result of his own spiritual rebirth after the Felpham period as expressed in a letter to William Hailey in October, 1804: " I am really drunk with intellectual vision whenever I take a pencil or a graver into my hand, even as I used to be in my youth, and as I have not been for twenty dark but very profitable years" [7].

In 1809 after the total failure of the exhibition of his pictures Blake was again cast down and almost utterly deserted by friends as well as fortune. In the words of Gilchrist, "even his old friend Mr. Butts, a friend of more than thirty years' standing,... grew cool."[8]

After the obscurity and misery of the years from 1810 to 1818, with the advent of Linnell and a new circle of friends came a second spiritual rebirth. The biographer notes that in

1822 Blake had to receive a donation of £25 from the funds of the Royal Academy,[9] and in 1823 Blake had to borrow the *Job* drawings from Mr. Butts to be shown to such as might seem likely to prove employers, and that from Mr. Linnell alone they drew a commission, who engaged Blake to execute and engrave a duplicate set. The biographer also notes that Blake received for the Linnell set of water colours and the engravings, the largest sum [of £150] Blake had ever received for any one series.[10]

Evidently, Blake, like Job, had passed through the pit of suffering and come at length to a new and better understanding of intellectual truths - to be symbolized as Job's state of restored prosperity:

> It may thus be seen how the idea of Job had been simmering in Blake's mind for over thirty years until about 1818 the story as a whole had assumed for him a profound significance in relation to his own personal experience.[11]

This personal touch should not be lost sight of as we try to interpret Blake's *Job* set. For the fear of being too long, the present study confines itself to the plinth summary of a close analysis of all the twenty-one plates plus the title page which was added to the engravings and of the examination of how far and exactly Blake followed the Sacred Text in interpreting or decoding this grand epic of human life.[12] Of all the *Jcb* sets listed above, the copper plate engravings are ideal for the purpose of discussion, because only they have the "pictorial by-plot of the margins" in Lindberg's terminology,[13] but which are far from being by-plots and were meant by Blake to have direct bearing on the scene illustrated. Lindberg has also

argued that plates 11 and 16 are not directly drawn from the Bible, because "there is no reference in the *Book of Job* to a dream of Satan masquerading as God, or to any vision of the Last Judgment."[14] Andrew Wright who dwells on "The Biblical Texts and Blake's Alterations" in an appendix to his book[15] has indirectly hinted that Blake found sources for all these engravings from the Bible itself. Remarkably, Blake does the Job story not merely out of the Job narrative of the Bible, he does a lot of editing and collation with texts from the whole of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in order to execute his masterpiece work of 'art' of life, as revealed by the texts inscribed on the margins of these engravings.[16]

The biographer does not discuss the plate of the title page, probably because it is not considered by him as part of the series. But even this title page is important for the present study. For Blake, since he added it to the water colours, this must be part and parcel of the whole series. About the Hebrew characters here, Binyon and Keynes have observed that the title in Hebrew characters probably symbolizes the Hebrew deity, identified by Blake with the Poetic Genius, in order to indicate that the "Scriptures should be read in their poetic rather than in their literal sense."[17] The Hebrew title, in fact, is *"Sepher 'Yiob"* which means "Book of Job". Having learnt Hebrew more than sufficiently by this time, as can be proved on the authority of his letter to his brother James on 30 January 1803 (See K[18] 821-22), Blake possibly might have retained the title of this drama as he found it in the Hebrew Bible. He underlined this main title and then added "Illustrations of the Book of Job" as if it were a subtitle. By retaining the important role of the Hebrew title, Blake suggests that the illustrations are not a haphazard collection of scenes from *Job;* rather it was intended to be the pictorial version of that great human epic.

Binyon and Keynes observed, commenting on the angels descending on the right and ascending on the left, that the direction of their flight symbolizes Experience and the process of casting out of evil.[19] C.G. Jung had suggested that Satan who instigated the whole Job drama, is presumably "one of Yahweh's eyes which runs to and fro through the whole earth."[20] Closely following Jung, Edinger observes that thus the theme of the 'eye of God' is immediately introduced: "It is Yahweh's intention, via the machinations of Satan, to scrutinize Job."[21] Foster Damon's suggestion that Blake identified these with the seven eyes of God mentioned in Zachariah 4:10 and with the seven eyes of the Lamb in Revelation 5:6,[22] comes closer to our study.

Blake refers to the angels or the holy ones forming the heavenly retinue accompanying Yahweh in the heavenly court. In the *Book of Job* this retinue of holy ones is sometimes called "Sons of Elohim" or "Sons of Elim" meaning "Sons of God," as in *Job* 1:6; 2:1 and 38:7; and sometimes called "the holy ones" as in *Job* 5:1[23] . Blake might have selected seven angels to represent this heavenly retinue, as he might have been conversant with the biblical symbolism of seven and its multiplications as signifying *'pleroma'* or fullness or totality, which is fully developed in the Apocalypse.[24] In order to understand the significance of Blake's seven angels one has to bear in mind the symbolism of seven angels in the Book of Revelation. Just as the One who has the seven stars in his right hand and the seven spirits of God, or the Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes which are seven spirits sent out to all the earth and who can open the scroll sealed with seven seals before God on the throne (Rev.5:1ff) admonishes all the Churches in the whole world, so also did Blake intend his *Sepher 'Yiob"* (*Book of Job*) to be an admonition to the whole

world. This reading is also sanctioned when considered against the prophet's warning "Mark well my words, they are words of eternal salvation" in his *Milton.* The purpose of Blake's *Job* epic is to admonish the people to remain steadfast in true relationship with God, in the midst of and in spite of all representative temptations and tribulations, which are inevitable in human life, in order to prove one's merit.

Blake's seven angels in the title page may represent the seven eyes of God, or the Seven Churches, or considering the seven eyes and seven spirits of God as being incorporated in the Person of Christ admonishing the Seven Churches through John, these seven angels may be Blake's symbol to identify Job as a type of Christ. Extending the analogy from the Revelation slightly further, the above reading becomes clearer and more relevant. In chapters 6-8 of Revelation the Lamb opens the Seven Seals one after the other. The opening of the first six seals is associated with reason for tribulation, war, judgment, death, martyrdom, earthquake *(6: 1-17)*. In chapter 7 those people who have gloriously undergone the test of tribulation, death etc., are standing before the throne of God and the Lamb, and shouting: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" *(7:10)*. Moreover, "these are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" *(7:14)*. The opening of the seventh seal by the Lamb is postponed till chapter 8:1, and when the Lamb opens the seventh seal, there is no more tribulation in the opening of the seventh scroll and there is a silence in heaven for half an hour. What follows (Rev. 8:2 - 9:21) is a repetition of the same theme.

Though the symbolism of seven is also present with reference to the accuser, the great Red-Dragon's seven heads

and seven diadems upon his head (Rev. 12:3) and to the great beast with seven heads (Rev. 13:1; and 17:13ff) who was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them ... whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain (Rev. 13:7-8), Blake could not be referring to these accusers, with his seven angels in the title page. Neither could they be the seven angels of God pouring out the seven plagues from the seven golden bowls, the wrath of God on earth as described in Revelation 15 and 16. Blake's personal feelings towards Satan are clearly expressed in one of his poems in the *MS Note-Book* written about 1810-11, the last lines of which read:

> So as I don't value such things as these,
> You must do, Mr. devil, just as God please
> (K 559).

Such a personal duel with Mr. Devil should not be obliterated in any attempt to interpret Blake's Job story. Notice that Blake who is very liberal regarding capitals does not even consider Satan, in this poem, worthy of a capital. After viewing and reading the margin-inscriptions of *Job* plates in the light of this personal poem by Blake and after considering the movements and head-on position together with the expression of adoration and worship visible in the faces of these angels, one comes to the conclusion that these angels of the *Job* title page are the heavenly retinue accompanying God and ministering to man in trouble.

The bottom margin of the first plate entitled "Thus did Job continually," quotes the opening sentence of *Book of Job:* "There was a Man in the Land of Uz whose Name was Job & that Man was perfect & upright & one that feared God &

eschewed Evil & there was born unto him seven Sons & three Daughters," which is almost a verbatim reproduction of *Job* 1:1-2 in the Authorized Version. Then, the material prosperity mentioned in *Job 1:3*, of his "having seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and very many servants," is depicted in the main picture. The sun is setting and the moon is rising. The usual early morning offering of the biblical Job is changed by Blake to a 'Christian' family prayer joining all the members of the family, and uttering the Lord's prayer as is evident from the top margin inscription, "Our Father which art in Heaven hallowed be thy Name." The sun setting behind the Gothic Cathedral and the musical instruments hanging silent on the branches of the tree and fastened to the belts of the sons indicate the waning of artistic spirit and concentrating on the letter of the law only. For Blake, even "Prayer is the study of Art and Praise is the Practice of the Art" (*The Laocoon, cf.K, 776).*

Making Job as a Christian knowing the Lord's prayer, Blake represents him as the type of humanity which all the same does not fully realize the spirit of the New Dispensation of love and forgiveness brought about by Christ. The unconscious falsehood of Job in following the ritualistic life in the shade of the institutionalized religion's cathedral restricts his creative imagination. This is also highlighted by the marginal inscriptions: "Thus did Job continually," "The letter killeth," and "The Spirit giveth life" (both the latter ones from II Cor. 3:6). Blake's Job in this plate, though he represents all men and knows by rote the laws and the Lord's prayer, has not understood the spirit of Christ. He is desperately clinging to the letter of the law to be self-righteous before Yahweh. This tragic flaw of Job is made further manifest in the following

plates.

It is amazing to note how Blake adapts biblical texts of *Job* and other Books of the Bible to elucidate the second plate entitled "When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me." This title itself is a purposeful anticipation literally transferred to here from Job's justification in *Job* 29:5 and completes it with *Job* 2:1 "There was a day when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord". Satan is pictured as an emblem of energetic experience. Apparently he is challenging God, indicating that if he is allowed to trample Job and his wife in the fire prepared by him Job will defy God. The other sons of God very much unlike Satan, defend God's compassionate attitude to Job but still hold on to their righteousness based merely on the letter of the law. God allowing Satan to test Job is depicted by drawing Job and his wife floating in the fire of Satan.

In plate 3 entitled "The Fire of God is fallen from Heaven," Blake anticipates the fourth and most gruesome attack of Satan, quoting almost literally the biblical account of the attack of Satan on Job's children. In doing so, Blake has postponed the report of the messenger of the first three attacks of Satan in *Job* 1:13-17 to the next plate. The great wind and the falling of the Fire of God are combined together to emphasize the unbearable nature of Satan's fierce attack. Yet by referring to it as the 'Fire of God' Blake highlights the misinterpretation of such unwarranted catastrophe as the punishment of God. The destruction is literally illustrated as in the Bible. Bo Lindberg has rightly observed that there are altogether fifteen persons destroyed by the sudden fire, including Job's seven sons and three daughters and "four other young women, wives, concubines or servants of the sons, and a grand-child of Job,

a young boy."[25] But the destruction is not merely by the fire alone, but also by the intensification of it by the great wind mentioned in the Bible and quoted by Blake and which is perceivable in the mode of flames, as in the tottering of the whole building, pillars, walls and roof. Satan is in full sway of the scene with an infernal smile permeating and supervising the whole arena of catastrophe.

In the reversal of the order of the catastrophe achieved in plate 4 entitled "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee," Blake intensifies the sorrow of the bereaved Job and his wife. Edinger has observed that as the messengers arrive, "Job and his wife look apprehensive. The symptoms of the activated unconscious are reaching awareness and the ego is alarmed."[26] Depending on the authority of Bulwer's language of gesture, Janet Warner has observed that Job's hands are "extended forward together in an action commodius for them who submit, invoke, doubt, speak to, accuse, or call by name, implore or attest," and that the hand position of Job's wife suggests the meaning "I weep" which is a natural expression of excessive grief.[27] Moreover, Bo Lindberg has pointed out that Job's lifted eyes and clasped hands show the pathos-formula for dismay subdued by piety.[28] Thus considering the total gestures of Job and his wife we conclude that Job's faith is not shaken and they still depend on the Lord and implore him in supplication.

Plate 5 pictures the Lord as a figure of Divine Mercy, though the central role is given to Satan and the plate is entitled "Then went Satan forth from the Presence of the Lord." In this crucial plate Blake pictures Yahweh and his angels more worried about the troubles of Job than Job himself. Long before Blake produced this plate, he had parodied the verse of *Job* 1:20-21, in order to show how he took his own personal

misfortunes. To Thomas Butts he wrote on 10 January 1802: "... Naked we came here, naked of Natural things, & naked we shall return, but while cloth'd with Divine Mercy, we are richly cloth'd in Spiritual [things] & suffer all the rest gladly" (K 813). To conceive God in such anthropomorphic terms during the time of Blake is a tribute to Blake's visionary insight into the core of the Bible.

Plate 6 is entitled " And smote Job with Sore Boils from the Sole of his foot to the crown of his head." It pictures Satan pouring out vials of flames on Job's afflicted body. From Satan's right hand he is about to send the four arrows to pierce the body of Job. Janet Warner says that plate 6 "is a picture of a man being sickened with Spiritual diseases by his spectre, resulting in the despair of his emanation."[29] But Blake's Job recovers immediately from this short fit of despair and acknowledges his faith in the providence of the Lord even after his body is smitten by Satan, as can be proved from the top most margin where *Job* 1:21 is quoted, transferring its place to here.

Job's answer to the foolish remark of Job's wife, which is only to the point and implies no reproach: "What! Shall we receive good at the hand of God & shall we not also receive Evil," is literally quoted from *Job* 2:10b to form the title of plate 7. Even in this picture Job understands God's purposes and takes this only as a temporary crisis, a trial in the providential plan of the Lord. The role of Satan is now taken up by the friends. Forgetting their mission of condoling with Job and consoling him, they immediately judge that Job must have sinned. Where Satan with his ingenious tricks failed to make a sinner out of Job, he apparently deploys Job's friends. G.Keynes observes quoting Blake: "Corporeal Friends are Spiritual Enemies, and sympathy may be harder to endure than

adversity."[30] In fact, the institutionalized, and moralistic reproaches of the friends provoked Job to a sort of rebellion against the Lord. This is shown in plate 8 entitled "Let the Day perish wherein I was Born." Job who can withstand the attack of Satan, cannot stand the "silent reproach of the friends". As in the Bible, so also here, immediately after the silent sitting of the friends for seven days, uttering not a single word of comfort, Job bursts out and utters a series of curses. "Job now succumbs to the *nigredo,* the dark night of the soul. He falls into blackness and suicidal despair."[31]

Plate 9 entitled "Then a Spirit passed before my face, the hair of my flesh stood up," is Blake's interpretation of *Job 4-5.* Eliphaz's rebuke is literally quoted. The so-called comforters deign to open their mouth only when the 'undesirable' has happened; namely when Job has cursed his birth and thus insulted his creator's work. The night vision of Eliphaz is seen reappearing, and he is encircled in a belt of clouds. In a wonderfully ingenuous economy of lines and letters - painting and poetry - Blake compresses *Job* chapters 6 to 31 into a single plate, plate 10 entitled "The Just Upright Man is laughed to scorn." In the debate between Job on the one side and his friends on the other, Job's attitude is: "He Knoweth the way that I take, when he hath tried me I shall come forth like gold," and "though he slay me yet will I trust in him." Introducing a famous Burial Service text which goes back to *Job* 14: 1-3, Job's awareness of man's subordination to the Lord and of the evanescence of man's physical life is highlighted by Blake. The scene of "The Just Upright Man is laughed to scorn," is a typological prefigurement of Christ being mocked at. Bindman rightly observes that in this rejection by his friends and his isolation lie the seeds of his redemption which begins with his imminent recognition that the true God

is not the author of his torments, but the Satanic element within him, which he has mistaken for the true God.[32]

Plate 11 is a pictorial exemplification of Job's statement: "With Dreams upon my bed thou Scarest me & affrightest me with Visions." Bo Lindberg places this plate at the centre as "Job's conversion," the important junction in between being plate 6: "Job defeated" and plate 16: "Satan defeated."[33] This plate is the turning point, because here Job recognizes the true origin of his suffering. "It marks the depth of Job's despair, but also his recognition that it is Satan masquerading as God who threatens him with the Tables of the Law. This leads him to recognize the possibility of spiritual salvation, embodied in the words from *Job* 19:25 inscribed in the margin of the engraved version of this design. 'I know that my Redeemer liveth."[34] Even Blake's biographer seems to have fumbled over this design in describing it as the embodiment of "the accusation of torment which Job brings against his Maker; a theme hard to dwell upon, and which needs to be viewed in the awful spirit in which Blake conceived it."[35] For this however, one should concentrate on the marginal inscriptions. Interestingly, only in plate 17 where Job's vision of the true God is described, Blake quotes more biblical verses on the margin than on plate 11, although all the three plates in the centre, namely plates 10, 11 and 12, have considerably more biblical margins than other plates in general. Blake who was keen on the importance of each word and each line, must have surely wanted to clarify his interpretation as plainly as possible by combining words and picture.

The depiction of Satan masquerading as God is most original of Blake. To bring this effect of Satan disguised as God, Blake draws the figure of Satan as a development from the Lord's figure in plate 2. In spite of the semblance to the

Lord's face, that he is not the Lord is shown by the entwinement by a serpent and by the cloven feet or at least one cloven foot, the right foot. The left foot of Satan figure also may be cloven, but is invisible because it is on the other side and encircled by the serpent's body.[36] Although this depiction of Blake is most original, he bases this interpretation on 2 Cor. 11:14-15 where Satan is spoken of as disguising himself as an angel of light. Such a realization has been earlier expressed by Blake in one of his poems in the *Note-Book:*

> This is the Throne of Mammon grey,
> Said I, "this sure is very odd.
> "I took it to be the Throne of God,"

Similarly, Blake's Job realizes his error and conceives that his Redeemer liveth. Rejecting Satan and his false religion, he now turns to the Redeemer.

The instruction of Elihu in plate 12 entitled "I am Young & Ye are very Old wherefore I was afraid," prepares Job for the revelation of the true God from the whirlwind. For the first time, since Job's curse banished light completely, both from day and night in the designs, in this design we find twelve bright stars in the sky, and a great number of stars are introduced again also in the margins. This signifies the possibility of Job's regeneration and resurrection and partaking in God's glory in the last judgment. Elihu assumes the role of the interpreter emphasizing that Redemption is God's grace. Job gains so much at the emotional level that he finds an equal and a real friend in Elihu.

It is significant that in spite of his professed economy of words in poetry and of lines in drawing Blake devotes the following five full plates to his description of Job's encounter

with the true God whereas he could compress the four biblical chapters of *Job* constituting the friends' and Elihu's lengthy arguments into two plates. Plate 13 depicting the scene of "Then the Lord answered Job out of the Whirlwind," grants Job an answer for his problems raised in plate 10. The Lord answering from the whirlwind dispels Job's doubts and erroneous self-confidence based on self-righteousness. Job realizes the mystery of God's greatness and sublimity and is ashamed of his own folly in daring to question God's ways. The authenticity of Job's personality in wrestling with God and thus educing an answer is highlighted.

Blake's own questioning attitude and the revelation from the true God during the etching of *Job* engravings can be clearly noticed here. Probably owing to this personal or biographical motive Blake grants this vision of the Supreme Being to Job's wife too. Of all the *Job* plates by Blake, this is the most significant deviation from the biblical account. Blake places Job's wife almost throughout this epic, close by his side, especially after Job had answered and reprimanded her in plate 7. The Bible, for that matter, never mentions further about Job's wife after her foolish remark and Job's reply in *Job* 2. When we consider the personal motive of Blake, he is completely justified in restoring this omission. Howsoever much liberalist and progressive Blake might have been about sexual freedom in his writings, the conjugal fidelity between him and his wife was most exemplary and edifying and Blake's wife Catharine stood with him in all his tribulations as his true emanation. One could think of his Job epic, the epic done in his composite art of poetry and painting, as Blake's autobiography itself. Rightly then Blake's Job and his wife together share the vision of the true God, whereas it is pictured being denied to the friends. Both Warner and Lindberg affirm that the hovering figure

of the Lord in this plate is the Creative Energy in its benevolent aspect, both sustaining and blessing the Creation. [37]

Plate 14 depicts the epiphany: "When the Morning stars sang together, & all the Sons of God shouted for joy." Rightly avers Gilchrist that "this is a design which never has been supposed in the whole range of Christian Art."[38] The Lord at the centre of the design is no more in the whirlwind form. With his outstretched hands protecting, blessing and sustaining the whole Creation, the Lord is seated in the sitting cruciform position. In the profound view of Lindberg, "the outstretched arms of God do not only create and sustain the universe: they also express its contraries: the spiritual world of angels, and the material world of men; the freedom above and the imprisonment below."[39] A great difference made by Blake in this plate from its corresponding water colour painting by himself is noted by Warner: in the water colour, the Lord's hands droop. But in the engraved plate 14, Blake gave "the right hand 'creative' fingers and opened the fingers of the left hand as well. This change more graphically suggests the awakened vision of God."[40] The margin shows the creative work of the Lord both of the material and the spiritual world.

As Lindberg has observed viewing plates 14, 15 and 16 as a 'series in series' of the Lord's Revelation to Job, plate 14 may be considered as "the first of the three visions in which God reveals the Creation, Organization, and annihilation of the natural world to Job, his wife and his friends."[41] But already in this picture which concentrates on the good aspects of creation, the Leviathan of the next plate is introduced at the bottom-most margin as writhing in a burning sea.

In plate 15 exemplifying the Lord's statement, "Behold now Behemoth which I made with thee," the Behemoth and the Leviathan conform literally to the description given in the

Bible. The Lord with his left hand points out to the natural world divided into dry land and waters gathered together as in Genesis 1:9. Both Behemoth and Leviathan are symbols of unapproachable power. In *Job* 40:15-24 the Lord questions Job whether he can understand the mystery of creation, pointing out the paradox in Behemoth's nature. How terrible, unshakeable and unconquerable the beast may be, at the same time it "eats grass like an ox" (*Job* 40:15) Similarly, there is not anything upon the earth like the Leviathan, "a creature without fear" (*Job* 41:33).

Job understands in this design that the Lord who is the Master of the Universe with all His Creation including even apparently monstrous forms which man cannot comprehend or conquer, organizes everything in its proper order. He probably notes down or records this new knowledge about the Creative activity and the organization of the material world. This is shown at the top edge of the main figure, where Job is almost raised to the status of the angels who have been occupying that position in the previous plates. Now he is one of the morning stars or one of the Sons of God in the previous design and he can sing together with them. For Blake, who had exclaimed seeing the fearful symmetry of the tiger, "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" the answer might have been more than clear, as he pictures both Behemoth and the Leviathan to the letter of the biblical description.

Plate 16 illustrates the statement: "Thou hast fulfilled the Judgment of the Wicked." Down the years the critics have considered this plate as having no direct reference to the *Book of Job.* As far as I know, only Martin Butlin has apparently found connection between this plate and *Job* 42 together with *Job* 36:17 which is used by Blake as the main title of this plate. But he too seems to concur to the viewpoint that this is a

prefiguration of the Last Judgment and the defeat of Satan.[42] Even Bo Lindberg considered this plate as totally extra-Jobian. Yet a closer look shows that Blake's "condemnation and judgment of the wicked, the erroneous Satan" is directly drawn from the Judgment of the Lord spelt on Eliphaz and other friends mentioned in *Job* 42:7 and on Satan and the erroneous self of Job and his wife under the sway of Satan. Once we accept this primarily, we may extend it to symbolically represent the Last Judgment, especially so because for the Lord there is only the Eternal Present. But Blake who had produced an exquisite tempera painting on the *Vision of the Judgment* with its minute details and descriptions did not intend this plate primarily to indicate the Universal Last Judgment.

Job and Blake realize that the Judgment of the wicked will be complete only when Satan, the father of all the wicked, is judged and cast out from heaven. So Job and his wife partake in this vision of the fall of Satan, symbolically representing the fall of all the wicked. The satanic selves of the former Job and the former wife who were taken into the fire of Satan in plate 2, are now shown as falling head down, with Satan to the burning pit leading to the *Gehenna*, eternal fire. The redeemed Job and his wife are sitting at the right side of the Lord, the biblical place for the Just, and the three friends are at the left, the side for the wicked. Blake does not consider Job merely as an Old Testament story, but as one ever anew in the human history. Blake's Job understands that this fall of the wicked, this judgment on Satan and his work is really the work of Christ the Son. Therefore, in this plate the Lord is shown as seated on the Throne as Christ with the Book of Life (Rev. 20:12). Lindberg has rightly pointed out that Blake was following the tradition of Origen and Gregory, the Church Fathers, in showing the Father in the role of Christ, since "the Father and the Son are One."[43]

Plate 17 exemplifies the declaration: "I have heard thee with the hearing of the Ear but now my Eye seeth thee." The Lord, now completely resembling Christ, stands on the same ground where Job and his wife are kneeling. The heavenly clouds surrounding the feet of Christ suggest heaven brought down to earth by Christ. The merging together of Heaven and Earth which is to be awaited till the *Parousia* (the Second Coming of the Lord) is interpreted by Blake in terms of realized eschatology, here and now. Maximum number of words are quoted from the Bible in this plate. Christ's teaching about oneness of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and the importance of love are quoted by Blake as instructions to humanity as a whole. Blake's Job has imbibed the spirit of Christ's love based on the Trinitarian Indwelling and Human Divinity. He also grasps the secret of forgiveness which is made more evident in the next plate.

Plate 18 illustrates God's statement: "And my Servant Job shall pray for you." This design is drawn following *Job* 42:8-10. Blake here identifies the Lord's advice to Eliphaz to ask for the prayers of Job with Christ's teaching of forgiveness of sins and love of enemies. That Job's sacrifice and forgiveness of his friends are prefigurements of Christ's Sacrifice, is emphasized by Blake in picturing Job with cruciform arm position. Once Job grants forgiveness, he is restored. He becomes a true Christian, a True Artist. This is symbolized by the three arts pictured in the margin. The book and scrolls represent the Scripture, 'the Great Code of Art' in general, and in particular Poetry. The palette, brushes and burins and the engraver's chisel represent painting and the angels singing and playing flute and harp represent the music. Job and his family becoming true artists will be made more manifest in the last plate.

Plate 19 illustrates *Job* 42:11: "Every one also gave him a piece of Money." Job's restoration and his communion with friends and relatives and even his dependence on them are pictured here. Job's house is still in dilapidation. Yet his wheat field is almost ripe and ready for harvest. Of all the marginal inscriptions here one deserves special attention. The affirmation - "Who remembered us in our low estate/ For his Mercy endureth for ever" (Ps. 136:23) - is quoted conclusively at the lowest margin.

In plate 20 entitled, "There were not found Women fair as the Daughters of Job in all the Land", Job describes in a chamber to his daughters the scenes from his autobiography which is depicted on the apse behind his seat. Just as the previous two plates stressed Job's story as the written and spoken Word inspired by the Lord, this is his story in the 'Painted Word' from Divine Inspiration. Even though Bo Lindberg has suggested that Blake drew this plate from the apocryphal *Testament of Job*[44] , he does not explain why Blake depends on the *Testament of Job* for this design, and by so doing why Blake omits Job's sons and his wife. I think unless some of Blake's references to this which have somehow been lost, are recovered, this point will remain obscure forever. Suggesting Job's restoration as true Christian, true artist, apart from the written or painted word, musical instruments are again introduced in the margin.

Plate 21 illustrating the Lord's Benediction - "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning" - presents Blake's Job as fully restored. The present life of Job's family as regenerated Christians is pictured as if in a window frame arising from the altar on which it is written: "In burnt offerings for sin thou hast had no Pleasure," quoted from the Letter to the Hebrews 10:6, omitting the word Sacrifice. It

appears that Job and his family are partaking in the worship of the Father in the Spirit which Jesus explained to the Samaritan Women at the well (Jn.. 4:21-24). With the divine spark he has got from the whirl-wind, now Job deems life itself as Art. Meaningful existence for Job becomes the attitude of an artist, a creator, symbolized in the Poet or the Painter or the Musician, partaking in Imagination and Invention in the Work of the Creator and making the world a better place to live in. He realizes that Prayer is the study of Art and that Praise is the practice of Art.

Having examined the 22 engravings one feels certain that what the editors reproducing *Jerusalem* in facsimile for the William Blake Trust, noted in the introduction about it, becomes applicable to Blake's *Job* plates: "For nearly forty years Blake had been making his illuminated books, and the culmination of his genius as artist, prophet and poet was the single coloured copy of his greatest poem here reproduced. ... Blake was not making a picture book to amuse an idle hour. He was embodying in these pages his final attempt to present in poetic form [in *Job* in painterly form] the message which he hoped would help others to resolve the mental conflicts he himself had suffered - and so to pass on to others the spiritual freedom he had won."[45] Blake was a living embodiment of his own conception of the artist as creator, partaking in the Work as well as the Word of the Creative Consciousness and Energy of the entire Universe.

In his preoccupation with poetry and painting throughout his life Blake found himself engaged in creative activity which for him was the nearest approximation to the Divine contemplation . It is particularly so when the object of contemplation is the Creator himself. That is the reason why Blake did not believe that God existed apart from Man and his Imagination: "Man is All Imagination. God is Man and exists in

us and we in Him ... Imagination of the Human Eternal Body is Every Man. ... Imagination is the Divine Body in Every Man." In other words, for Blake God and the Imagination are One. In the Blakean Universe, God is the creative and spiritual power in Man and apart from Man the idea of God has no meaning. Blake as a poet-painter is a hybrid being: he has one foot in the Spiritual World but the other remains firmly rooted in earth. This truth is fully borne out by the close kinship between his poetry and paintings. In the process Blake's Creative Imagination so suffused with Bible themes, experiences and images communicating them through the harmony of line and colour, and, word and rhythm. During these endeavours of Art revealing the Biblical Vision Blake finds that the enchanted portals of Heaven open wide and his Creative Imagination can travel effortlessly to the far Seat of Bliss. His achievement as a poet-painter is a tribute to the integrity of the Creative Artist with His capacity for prying among the stars and for striving to imagine divinely and for feeling uplifted from the world.

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33. Bo Lindberg, op. cit., p.73.
34. Martin Butlin, op. cit., (Text), p.414.
35. A. Gilchrist, op. cit., p.290.
36. Even though scholars tend to describe the visible cloven foot as 'left-foot' (See for example: S.F. Damon, *Blake's Job*, Plate 11), probably in their

preoccupation with the 'left-symbolism' one cannot find the left foot of Satan here.

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38. A. Gilchrist, op. cit., p.291.
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Post Graduate Dept. of English,
St. Thomas' College, Trichur,
Kerala, India.

Syed Asim Ali

GOD AND RELIGION IN SHELLEY'S *QUEEN MAB*

In this all-time-spectacle, experienced spiritually by the soul of Ianthe accompanied by Queen Mab, serious attention has been paid to the problem of God, a concept which structured, shaped and perpetuated the unjust social and political system of his day, the subject of Shelley's criticism. It is necessary to have an evaluation of this concept, as it is germane to every facet of the thought-structure in *Queen Mab*. It has a powerful bearing on his entire social and political criticism, since more than being a matter of faith alone it is a matter of inevitable political strategy for Shelley, the social and political reformer as he was.

From the very early age, Shelley's philosophical inferences inclined him to a non-conformist attitude towards popular Christianity and to atheism. He started identifying God with tyranny and oppression in whose name justification for such evils is sought. But, during those formative years he had not reached a clear concept of the ultimate reality as he had not repudiated yet either materialism or the "shocking absurdities of the popular philosophy of mind and matter,"[1] both of which he rejected by 1816, when he wrote *Mont Blanc*. Shelley had rejected the concept of a transcendent authority of the universe and substituted it by an immanent intellect, the world soul, animating the material universe. He defined God as "the Soul of the Universe, the intelligent and necessarily beneficent actuating principle", some 'vast intellect' that "animates Infinity."[2] He conceived the Christian God to be

arbitrarily beneficent and, therefore, denying the concept of a divine Creator, he explains that God is to the Universe

> as the soul of man to his body, as the vegetative power to vegetables, the stony powers to stones.... In this sense I acknowledge a God, but merely as a synonime [sic.] for the existing power of existence. I do not in this recognise a Being which has created that to which it is confessedly annexed as an essence, as that without which the universe wd. not be what it is, it is therefore the essence of the universe, the universe is the essence of it, it is another word for the essence of the universe.[3]

So, the term God designated for Shelley, in the formative years, the 'animative intellect' of the whole 'mass of infinite intelligence' of which "I, you, and he are constituent parts."[4] And, in the Note to *Queen Mab*, he observes that God is "a pervading Spirit co-eternal with the universe."

This is the basis from which Shelley's subsequent thought evolves, repeatedly redesigned and modified later. Owing to such a concept of God, Shelley demonstrates bitter hatred for Christ whom he depicts in *Queen Mab* as a hypocrite who professed meekness and love while inciting his followers to intolerance and cruelty. The strong disgust he developed for institutional religion pervades throughout his poetry. Since superstitious theologies are founded on the concept of an anthropomorphic God assuming power as an attribute of his being, Shelley considers it a source of mischief which indirectly allows human-gods to cross all limits of tyranny. He writes in the note to *Queen Mab*:

> It is probable that the word God was only an expression denoting the unknown cause of the known events which men perceive in the universe. By the vulgar

> mistake of a metaphor for a real being, of a word for a thing, it became a man, endowed with human qualities and governing the universe as an earthly monarch governs his kingdom.[5]

The poem presents us with the echoes of the same ideas. Fairy traces the cause of all forms of misery such as "Earthquakes and wars, and poisons and disease" to 'an abstract point' before whom "...thou didst bend and called it God" (VI.100-103). Fairy launches an acrimonious attack on the prevalent concept of God, whom man visualises in his own image and often attributes to him most of his own attitudes, particularly arbitrary ones, so that in turn these may enjoy divine sanction. The 'avenging God' that they bow to is not more than a 'prototype of human misrule'. Under the same concept, a microscopic minority has always been seeking assurances to tyrannise, oppress and exploit vast majorities in utter disregard of any sense of justice. God is shrouded in the appearance of a cruel worldly monarch who is extremely jealous, proud and vindictive and hastens to kill others at the slightest provocation or excuse. He sits high in his 'golden throne' and casts an amusing look at the suffering humanity around, created by him as if just for the sake of fun. The fall and suffering of humanity amuses God and brings him immense satisfaction.[6] God's 'dread work',

> Hell, gapes for ever for the unhappy slaves
> Of fate, whom He created, in his sport,
> To triumph in their torments when they fall!
> Earth heard the name; Earth trembled, as the smoke
> Of his revenge ascended up to Heaven,
> Blotting the constellations; and the cries
> Of millions, butchered in sweet confidence
> (VI. 108-14)

God is therefore perceived by Shelley as an embodiment of indifference, cruelty and callousness; *one* who rejoices in the misery of *his* own creation. So great is *his* fury that the earth trembles hearing his name. The smoke rising from the rage of God blurs all beauty of the universe and its darkness overshadows everything. It blots the constellation of the stars and suppresses the shrieks and groans of millions of people slaughtered in his name. They were given to understand that God, their Lord, is their protector, omnipotent and omnipresent. But, in *his* very name the blood of *his* sincere slaves was shed unhesitatingly in "sweet confidence" and "unsuspecting peace". They were clamped upon unawares in such an ironical condition that the "bonds/of safety - — confirmed by wordy oaths / Sworn in His dreadful name", still resounding throughout the country:[7]

> Whilst innocent babes writhed on thy stubborn spear,
> And thou didst laugh to hear the mother's shriek
> Of maniac gladness, as the sacred steel
> Felt cold in her torn entrails. (VI. 118-21)

Such is the concept of God, Shelley believes, from which results an entirely unjust system of religion projecting on the social and political plane the same callous trends as mentioned above. During the early stages of the human civilisation, the concept of one God prevailed as a name applied to the unknown cause of creation. During the later stages of the 'struggle for existence', the advancement of civilisation, along the principles of competition rather than co-operation, required many more deities to suffice for 'senile puerility'. It was in keeping with the need to supervise ever-increasing murder, rapine, violence and crime and to "glut / thy misery-thirsting soul". In the course of the spread of religion and increase in the number of gods the social and political evils also multiplied.[8] Shelley here seems to share the old belief that

evil is self-destructive, because he thinks that the destructive role of religion would prove self-destructive for religion, and the final extinction of religion is therefore not far off. Shelley envisages that the pyre built by religion for burning innocent men, women and children will ultimately consume religion itself along with all its apostles.[9] The time will come when religion will have to pay for its misdeeds committed in its folly of old age. Shelley does not hold any high opinion of the religious authorities either. It is the guardians of religion whom he holds more than anyone else responsible for disseminating the social evils like hypocrisy and callousness and promoting fraud and deceit instead of discouraging such evils. These hypocrites are corrupt to the core and invent ever-new methods of corruption. They put on deceptive appearances of respectability as they look hoary-headed and grave. Despite preaching all the time the morality and honesty to others they do not possess any goodness or positive quality themselves. Being entirely devoid of hope or passion or love, they make perfect embodiments of complacency. Their sole objective in life, strongly marked by luxury and falsehood, is to amass wealth and gain power. Not that they merit these things for their intelligence and wisdom, which they do not possess, but they reach through "flattery to the seats of power". Utterly concerned with their own prosperity and material well being, they "support the system whence their honours flow" (IV. 207), irrespective of its being a just or unjust system and whether or not it is capable of fulfilling the needs of society and maintain peace and prosperity.[10]

Shelley's criticism of the guardians of religion and clergy instantly reminds us of Langland's and Chaucer's criticism of the same class. Langland in particular has been much bitter in upbraiding priests and clergymen. Chaucer has also touched upon the same issue but in a milder way. Another difference is that the two poets of the yore did condemn corrupt ecclesiastical practices

but did not show any sign of irreverence to God, whereas Shelley targets God in no ambiguous terms for his condemnation of religion with a view to hitting at the roots of religion. This seems to be rather a political strategy aimed at achieving his reformist objectives than a matter of faith or real metaphysical concern. It seems much more so since the atheist Shelley of his poetry was a superstitious person in his personal life.

With a view to exploiting the people, the ecclesiastics terrorise them with the help of three concepts, the use of which is also known to tyrants and pays them back lavishly with 'usury/ Torn from a bleeding world'. The three concepts are 'God, Hell, and Heaven'. God is only an euphemistic substitute for "Avengeful, pitiless, and almighty fiend."[11] It is another name for mercilessness and oppression:

> Whose mercy is a nickname for the rage
> Of tameless tigers hungering for blood.
> (IV. 212-13)

The Fairy dwells at length at the ills of the falsehood of superstition and the evils engendered thereby. Religion enslaves man to the petty objects of nature by either attributing reverence and power to them or by instilling fear into man's heart. All those natural objects which nourish or support human life in any way were taken to be the objects of deification and worship, and thus compelled man to humble himself before the things which are otherwise subservient to him:

> ...the trees,
> The grass, the clouds, the mountains, and the sea,
> All living things that walk, swim, creep, or fly,
> Were gods: the sun had homage, and the moon
> Her worshipper. (VI.75-79)

Such an attitude developed by religion has a severely adverse effect on the progress of culture and civilisation. It is simply because a thing cannot be an object of reverence and worship as much as a subject of exploration and investigation at one and the same time. The tendency of attaching reverence and sanctity to the objects of nature prevents human beings from cultivating a spirit of enquiry and inquisitiveness. Their curiosity is dampened by the tranquilliser of dogma. They cannot even imagine to think in terms of carrying out experiments on objects sacred to them, lest they should be profaned and desecrated. The same tendency, Shelley thinks, has always kept the masses ignorant and completely sunk in superstition and dogmatism. Every monstrous, vast, or beautifully wild shape, the 'spirits of the air', the 'shuddering ghost', or the powers of nature were supposed to be having "life and place in the corrupt belief / Of thy blind heart"[12] (VI. 86-7). The effect of religion left everything impure and unnatural:

> 'Thou taintest all thou look'st upon' (VI. 72).

Although, in Shelley's opinion, in the earlier stages of its development, religion kept itself 'pure of human blood,' gradually it developed into a source of all miseries and in particular of bloodshed. It became the curse of human society as it filled it with all forms of social and political evils. The sole duty it took upon itself was to drag human beings down to the level of slaves and then condemn them to hell. It is in this context that Shelley calls religion a 'prolific fiend':

> Who peoplest earth with demons, Hell with men,
> And heaven with slaves!
> (VI. 70-71)

Religion ends up thus only because it evolves from the concept of such a God who is seen in human image. All the inherent shortcomings of the divine model manifest themselves in its social and political application. At the peak of its development it evolves into an embodiment of all the evils and devastation found in the phenomenal world as well as in human nature:[13]

> Earthquakes and wars, and poisons and disease,
> And all their causes, to an abstract point
> Converging, thou didst bend and called it God!
> (VI. 100-102)

Under the pretext of being the spokesman of liberty, equality and justice, it countenanced the decapitation of innocent babes in front of their mothers. Such heinous crimes flourished under the very nose of religion, unnoticed and uncondemned.[14]

The use of violence becomes all the more abominable insofar as its religious dimensions are concerned. The vindictiveness of the faithful is but the sword of God with which he reaps the crops of heads to seek the pleasure of his Lord. Religion, instead of discouraging and condemning such beastly attitudes, sanctifies their bloodthirstiness and confirms "all unnatural impulses" and "their desolating deeds" (VI. 230).

> ...and all crime
> Made stingless by the spirits of the Lord,
> And blood-red rainbows canopied to land.
> (VII. 231-33)

Religion has also been a major source of causing wars and fanning destruction. The grand spectacle in *Queen Mab* presents a world torn by war and the humanity groaning under the crushing

wheels of the very system supported and strengthened by religion. But, the chieftains of religion are busy chanting hymns. Shelley's tone becomes extremely bitter and highly acrimonious while he mentions the Brahmins who keep themselves busy raising the sacred hymns even while the groans of the victims of oppression and tyranny are echoing in the atmosphere. At the height of callousness, all that they do is to harmonise their hymns with their groans, which is reflective of God's tyranny shared by his lieutenants, Brahmins, on earth. God wishes his name to be honoured at the expense of human pleasure;

> Unarmed old age, and youth and infancy,
> Horribly massacred, ascend to Heaven
> In honour of His name;
> (VII. 39-42)

The remark carries considerable weight of irony that the so-called peace-lovers have themselves been the chief cause of the spread of evil and the upholders of truth or religion have been the greatest obstacle to truth:

> Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,
> And priests dare babble of a God of peace,
> Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless blood,
> Murdering the while, uprooting every germ
> Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,
> Making the earth a slaughter-house!
> (VII. 43-48)

The very scheme of genesis seems to Shelley to be based on jealousy, sadism and cruelty. Intentionally, the tree of evil was planted in the middle of the paradise so that man eats of it and becomes a permanent target of divine malice and animosity. It is

a radical departure in Shelley from the Christian God who is believed to be an embodiment of love. The purpose of rendering God here a hateful being is the same as above; that is to hit hard at the very basis of religion, the root of all evil, so as to make it non-functional in society. Shelley puts the above intention in the mouth of God thus:

> I placed him in a Paradise, and there
> Planted the tree of evil, so that he
> Might eat and perish, and My soul procure
> Wherewith to sate its malice,
> (VII. 109-12)

Mankind has thus been made a target of an 'ever-burning flame' and a 'ceaseless woe', which is "the doom of their eternal souls" (VII. 122). Consequently, every human being is bound to suffer and perish "to fulfil the blind revenge" (VII. 125). Ironically, human beings name this vindictiveness the divine justice, which in fact is nothing but maliciousness of the upholders of religion that they exercise in the name of God.[15] In his early youth, Shelley detested the name of Christ and expressed bitter hatred for him. The entire idea of the incarnation of God in the form of his son, Christ, appears to him to be ridiculous and full of absurdity.[16] It is another fantastic story for him invented by some cunning minds so as to seek justification for their misdeeds under the pretext of eliminating the universal crime:

> Who never shall call upon their saviour's name.
> But, unredeemed, go to the gaping grave.
> Thousands shall deem it an old woman's tale,
> (VII. 193-96)

Shelley feels that belief in God and religion entails personal

abdication of all knowledge, wisdom, creativity, dynamism etc. and calls for man's surrender of all his talents and human characteristics to his will. It is all in keeping with the divine injunctions as arbitrarily interpreted by the priests, who claim to be his spokesmen and on behalf of their Lord want to hear from extremely horrified humans only these words: " 'O almighty One,/ I tremble and obey!'" (VII. 159-60). Shelley's grudge against religion was so strong that not only he repudiates the concept of the reincarnation of God but also prefers 'Hell's freedom to the servitude of Heaven' (VII. 193-94). He was driven to this conclusion by the abominable excesses of tyranny which flourished mostly in the name of religion and God. He has taken up arms against the greatest tyrant, God, only with a view to ridding the world of tyranny perpetuated in his name and on the strength of his supposed sanctions.

> Therefore, I rose, and dauntlessly began
> My lonely and unending pilgrimage,
> Resolved to wage unweariable war
> With my almighty Tyrant and to hurl
> Defiance at His Omnipotence to harm
> Beyond the curse I bore.
> (VII. 196-201)

Such a concept of God together with his paraphernalia is totally out of place for the social and political reform proposed by him in the poem, *Queen Mab*. His sincerest concern was to replace injustice with justice and misery with joy. The achievement of this objective necessitated in the first place the replacement of the metaphysical foundation of the corrupt social and political structure so as to effect the desirable changes in it and set the order of priorities right. Speaking of *Queen Mab* , J. P. Guinn remarks:

> It would seem that the radicals found in the poem not an echo but an intensification of their own enthusiasm for attack upon the twin objects of reform, church and state.... The poem is the essence of youthful rebellion against outmoded religious and political doctrine and practice.[17]

In this perspective, Shelley's vision is inclusive of the fading away of the concept of God along with the decline of religion, as both are inter-dependent. Soon the days will be over when people drew pleasure from the death of one who was mercilessly burnt only because he said " 'there is no God' " (VII. 13). The increasing wisdom and scientific insight will let man realise that there is no supervisory God who sustains and sways this universe, but that there is an inbuilt power of *Necessity* which controls all the creations of the universe and lets them be what they are. It is an invisible link that inter-connects all things and man to them. This 'exterminable spirit' contained within all objects of nature is 'nature's only God', which has been variously interpreted by the cunning human pride, which is 'skilful to invent most serious names / To hide its ignorance'. This was just a stage in the mental development of Shelley when he substituted God with *Necessity* and considered it to be the sole all-pervasive, animating power of the material universe; a concept which undergoes several modifications and qualifications until he wrote *Prometheus Unbound*. The attributes he ascribes to *Necessity* will be finally applicable to Demogorgon, the mysterious Cause containing infinite potentialities. and *Necessity* ultimately will be seen as that fixed law through which the potentialities become functional in time and space, and which sets the sequentiality of events in time-space context. This power of *Necessity* suits well the social and political scheme of Shelley, as it is conceived to work without emotion, evaluation, purpose or choice:

all that the wide world contains
Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
Regard'st them all with an impartial eye,
Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
Because thou hast not human sense,
Because thou art not human mind.
(VI. 214-19)

Necessity is 'A spirit of activity and life', which 'knows no term, cessation or decay' (VI.148-49). This 'active, steadfast, and eternal' force 'Rolls round the eternal universe' and moves it (VII. 156,161). This force is a judge

Beneath whose nod
Man's brief and final authority
Is powerless as the wind
That passeth idly by.
(III. 219-22)

Shelley believes that all animate and inanimate objects pulsate with an inborn consciousness and 'think, feel and live like men' (II. 234). They are controlled by the power of *Necessity*, and each and every occurrence is a consequence of a preceding event. Even the

slightest, faintest motion,
Is fixed and indispensable
As the majestic laws
That rule yon rolling orbs. (II. 240-43)

Shelley sees no chaos in the universe controlled by the principle of *Necessity* as:

> No atom of this turbulence fulfils
> A vague and unnecessitated task,
> Or acts but as it must and ought to act.
> (VI. 171-73)

Such is *Necessity*, 'mother of the world', and 'Spirit of Nature! All sufficing Power' (VI. 197), which replaces the concept of God in early Shelley, in which he visualises the long awaited redress of the social and political ills. It is because 'unlike the God of human error', it 'Requir'st no prayers or praises' (VI. 199-200), and it is also fully impartial:

> No love, no hate thou cherishest; revenge
> And favouritism, and worst desire of fame
> Thou knowest not.
> (VI. 212-14)

Therefore, more than a philosophic compulsion, Shelley's metaphysical thought in the earlier stages seems to have resulted from his social and political responses. *Necessity* and denial of God for him was a kind of strategy to seal the source of tyranny and seek a lasting solution to the social and political injustice.

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Department of English
Aligarh Muslim University
Aligarh

Seemin Hasan

THE MYTHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF JOHN KEATS'S *ODE TO PSYCHE*

In the landscape of his poetry, the odes of Keats mark the highest point. The poems are meditative, combining a variety of moods and also the Pindaric and Horatian elements.[1] They are not results of any concrete programme but are linked together by a certain philosophy that manifests itself in each of the odes. Quest for this philosophy leads the poet to mythology. Within it he discovers the highest manifestations of 'beauty' and ultimately of 'truth'.

In ancient times, the ode was a choral form, providing a dramatic musical setting for the ritual or heroic theatre. The divisions of the chorus answered each other in strophe, anti-strophe and epode as they provided a commentary to some action being carried out simultaneously at the altar or on the stage. We may observe that the ode incorporates the inherent cantatory character and magical intent of the primordial rituals and thus provides Keats with the perfect means of developing his mythic vision in poetry.

The poets of the Romantic Revival exhibited a firm belief in individuality, subjectivity and the ego. Contrary to this prevailing mood, Keats possessed a universal vision. He rejected the myth of the god-like 'I' and the resulting self-assertive poetry. He put forward his doctrine of Negative Capability. Influenced in this capacity by Shakespeare, he claimed that the self and the prejudices of a poet should be annihilated and he should be

capable of entering into and expressing the thoughts of other men and beings. Armed with this vision Keats could fully understand and appreciate the constant and continuous rhythms of human behaviour that are recorded in mythology. This understanding inspired a profound, sympathetic vision of Man and the Universe.

Ode to Psyche is the only one of the major odes that is based on a myth. Keats first encountered the myth in Mrs. Tighe's allegoric romance *Psyche*. He also read William Adlington's translation of Apuleius's *Golden Ass* which contained the ancient form of the myth.[2] Psyche greatly attracted Keats. She embodied beauty, struggle, suffering and also achievement. Referring to the ode, Keats wrote to George in the journal letter of 14th February - 3rd May 1819.

> You must recollect that Psyche was not embodied as a goddess before the time of Apulieus (*sic*) the Platonist who lived afteir (*sic*) the Agustan (*sic*) age, and consequently the Goddess was never worshipped or sacrificed to with any of the ancient fervour -- and perhaps never thought of in the old religion -- I am more orthodox that (*sic*) to let a hethen (*sic*) Goddess be so neglected.[3]

The story of Psyche was the perfect means of communication of his ideas. The suffering, and heroism of Psyche could meet the demands of his philosophy. So much so, that in order to show his appreciation, he decided to reward her. By now, he had realized that the evil in human nature was inherent and necessary and was the contribution of the egotistic instincts. The range of his Negative Capability had to be extended. Earlier he had opted for total disinterestedness as against the egotistic 'I'. Now, however, he realized that the instinct of man included both. And he could see beauty in all instinctive phenomena and impulses. He could bear the truths of life even when confronted

by greatly painful experiences. Also he could locate beauty within them. By discovering a similar archetype of this philosophy in the myth of Cupid and Psyche he achieved a wholeness brought about by the fusion of the two domains -- the mythological and the intellectual.

The myth describes Psyche as the most beautiful of the three daughters of a certain king. Venus, jealous of her, sent Cupid to punish her by causing her to fall in love with some ugly monster. However, she was so ravishingly beautiful that Cupid himself fell in love with her and with the help of Apollo and the West Wind, he took her away to an enchanted palace where he visited her secretly and made her promise never to see his face. Psyche's wicked sisters came to visit her and persuaded her that her lover was a cannibal monster. Terrified, Psyche broke her promise that night by lighting a lamp to see his face. A hot drop of oil fell on him and waking up, he left her in anger. Psyche, too, left home in search of him. Venus set her to many impossible tasks. She asked her, first of all, to sort out a large heap of various grains before nightfall. The ants took pity on her and completed the task for her. Another task was to fetch water from an inaccessible fountain. A friendly eagle completed this task for her. Finally, she had to go down to Hades to bring a casket of beauty from Persephone. She had almost completed this when curiosity got the better of her and she opened the casket. It did not contain beauty but a deadly sleep which overcame her. This is where Cupid found her. With the permission of Zeus, he revived her and married her. Cupid represents the fusion of the good and the bad instincts. He carried off Psyche. Apollo's Delphic Oracle had advised Psyche's father to dress her as a bride and leave her on a lonely hill-top. The promise was marriage. However, Cupid did not marry her. Later on, he rescued her from the revengeful clutches of Venus and

married her. Venus represents the egotist whose vision is limited by subjectivity. Finally, Psyche represents struggle, patience and the ability to confront greatly painful experiences. She also represents the evaluation of the human soul. At this point, the poet enters the myth and through the agency of 'Ode to Psyche' strives to deify her and thus reward her.

Keats consulted Lempriere's *Classical Dictionary* where the meaning of Psyche is explained in the following words:

> The word signifies 'the soul' and this personification of Psyche, first mentioned by Apuleius, is consequently posterior to the Augustan age, though it is connected with ancient mythology.[4]

Keats, however, visualizes her as a beautiful love-goddess and wants to celebrate her union with the love-god Cupid.

The ode begins with the poet's vision of the lovers at a moment rich in experience. The moment is significant because it captures the beauty and the depth of true love and also the peace of fulfilment. The trauma and the trials are over and the two lovers have been united. A future full of happiness and promise lies before them. The opening salutation 'O, Goddess' lays the foundation of a mythological scene. The poet is in his characteristic trance-like state --

> Surely I dreamt today,
> or did I see
> The winged Psyche with
> awakened eyes?[5]
> (ll.5-6)

This in-between state excludes all his personal prejudices, feelings and emotions, and makes his presence unobtrusive. It also gives

the vision a dream-like quality that gives him the licence to add to existing mythology. It also allows the poet to transcend the limits of Time and trespass into the land of the gods. He is now walking in a forest, which like every other Keatsian recess, is rich in the lushness of foliage and blossoms --

> In deepest grass, beneath
> the whispering roof
> Of leaves and trembled
> blossoms, where there ran
> A brooklet, scarce espied
> Mid hushed, cool-rooted flowers,
> fragrant-eyed,
> Blue, silver white and budded
> Tyrian,
> They lay calm-breathing on the
> bedded grass;
> (ll.10-15)

Nature, love, poetry and myth integrate to create a picture of freshness, beauty, ripeness and fertility. The green recess represents the archetypal seed-bed. Here Keats, as Psyche's poet-priest, will administer the fertility rituals. He takes on the heroic role with sincerity.

The vision of this true love proves to be a vision of truth itself for Keats. True love rated high with him --

> I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of the imagination - What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth - whether it existed before or not.... The imagination may be compared to Adam's dream - he awoke and found it truth.[6]

Through this imaginative recreation of mythology, he discovers a vision of purity and truth.

The vision is analysed further when he recognizes 'the winged boy' as Cupid. He is now enraptured by the beauty of Cupid's companion 'But who was thou, O happy, happy dove?' The dove is one of the birds beloved of Aphrodite. Psyche seems to him to be the 'loveliest vision far/ Of all Olympius's hierarchy'. Like Apollo, the young god, defeated the older generation of gods with his matchless beauty, so Psyche leaves behind the beautiful Phoebe and Vesper with hers. Psyche's beauty is the coherent fusion of struggle, experience, wisdom and purity. The pain and trouble of life has given her a unique identity.

Now, Psyche has passed the test of the 'Vale of Soul Making', and has achieved a 'schooled' identity or in mythological terms the potential of divinities. She has led Keats onto expanded consciousness regarding human intellect. Thus mythology has created within Keats a kind of renaissance or a reawakening of consciousness about values that had with time faded and diminished. Not only does he experience this consciousness with her but he also tries to act in accordance with this experience. Armed with this illumination, he laments the fact that such an exceptional goddess is bereft of the worship and adoration of the pious men of ancient years --

... temple thou hast none,
No altar heaped with flowers;
Nor virgin-choir to make
delicious moan...
No shrine, no grove, no
oracle, no heat
Of pale-mouthed prophet
dreaming.
(II.28-35).

He once again yearns for the Golden Age when 'holy were the haunted forest boughs/ Holy the air, the water, the fire.'

It is too late now for those 'antique vows' but with his new, deepened understanding, he is in a position to ---

... see, and sing, by my
own eyes inspired.
So let me be thy choir
and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours --
(ll 43-45)

So intense and so sincere is his devotion to this pagan maid, that he is ready to be ---

Thy voice, thy lute, thy
pipe, thy incense sweet
From swinged censer teeming;
Thy shrine, thy grove,
thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouthed prophet
dreaming.
(ll.46-49)

The process of deification has begun. He is determined that there shall be no lapses. The poet now behaves like an ancient bard freely exploiting the privilege of adding to mythology. Psyche is now placed in modern context. The poet realizes that the world is degenerate and corrupt. There is no holy and pious place on Earth at all. The early Greek religion laid great emphasis on sanctity and purity. Everything offered to a god was to be strictly clean and pure. Any suggestion of impurity was likely to rouse the wrath of the divinity and then he would bring terrible disasters upon those

who were responsible. Extremely conscious of these factors, the poet decides that the only holy place, worthy of a goddess like Psyche is within his mind --

> Yes, I will be thy priest,
> and build a fane,
> In some untrodden region
> of my mind,...
> (ll.50-51)

To compensate for the ancient neglect, he strives to build this imaginary temple to felicitate the goddess. His thoughts are 'new grown with pleasant pain' of new understanding and they branch out around the temple. This new intensity of thought contrasts with the earlier 'thoughtless' state. Along with Psyche, Keats, too, has evolved.

He visualizes a thicket of dark trees fringed by ranges of high mountains. The valley is filled with Zephyrs, birds and bees. The picture recollects the Golden Age with its realm of Flora and Pan. In the midst of this vegetative richness which gathers together the beneficence of Gaia and all her Earth-goddesses, he plans to build a temple for Psyche. The sanctuary will be 'rosy'. The rose is the flower of Aphrodite. The sanctuary will be decorated 'With the wreathed trellis of a working brain'. Her gardener will be 'Fancy' or the imagination which will breed flowers that will seem ever-new.

The sensuous natural setting of the first stanza now synchronizes with the mind and the imagination to produce a place of adoration and devotion for the goddess. It is a place where 'all the soft delight that shadowy thought can win' will be available. The thought must be shadowed by sensuous, physical

appreciation to reach the ideal state. His actual gift to Psyche is 'warm love' accompanied by the sharpened faculties to appreciate it.

The 'bright touch' at the open window allows that all secrecy is over and now Cupid can be properly welcomed. Keats's sensuous nature wishes to preserve, along with all her spiritual goodness, the sheer physical beauty of the goddess and offer her as a source of inspiration and as an example to all true lovers.

Another significance of the lighted window is that it serves as an emblem of hope. Like the song of the nightingale and the Grecian urn, this temple, too, is a permanent, refreshing ideal in a changing transient world. The whole world is dark and only the altar of Psyche is flooded with bright light. She is the only one who has, through perserverence and purity, passed the test of sanctity.

Keats's use of mythology in the odes does not suggest a deliberate contrivance for the sake of poetic effect. On the other hand he recognizes and recreates mental principles which had been present in the mind of the early man and which have been unhistorically documented in mythology. Thus he instinctively perceives the communicative relevance of certain ancient divinities to his artistic purpose, and through their fictionalised experiences he seeks deliverence from the oppressive forces that limit his own creative potential. Mythology leads him on to awareness and self-discovery. It has become so integral a part of his critical and creative faculties that he cannot dissociate himself from it. Since man has come many stages away from the ancient innocence, the principles have to be reformed, recast and at times even added to. The poet successfully accomplishes this by adding to the existing mythology and even creating new myths.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Pindar, a Greek poet, established the form. Its salient features include elevated thought, bold metaphor and free use of mythology. Horace, a Latin poet, used Pindar as a model. However, his odes are more meditative and personal. Keats's odes are Horatian in form and feeling but contain some modified Pindaric elements.
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4. K. Allott, *op. cit.* p.208.
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Department of English
Aligarh Muslim University
Aligarh

Zahida Zaidi

HELL IN SHAW AND SARTRE: A STUDY OF "DON JUAN IN HELL" (*MAN AND SUPERMAN*) AND *NO EXIT*

I

I (a) Old Woman. Where are we?
Don Juan: In hell

Old Woman: I tell you wretch, I know I am not in hell.
Don Juan: How do you know?
Old Woman: Because I feel no pain
Don Juan: Oh, then there is no mistake you are intentionally damned

Old Woman: Do you feel no pain?
Don Juan: I am not one of the wicked, senora, therefore it bores me, bores me beyond description, beyond belief.[1]
(Shaw: *Man and Superman*)

(b) Inez: Yes we are criminals, murderers, all three of us we are in hell, my pets, they never make mistakes and people are not damned for nothing ... in hell, damned souls, all three of us.[2]
(Sartre: *No Exit*)

II (a) Don Juan: Hell is the home of honour, justice, duty, and the rest of the seven deadly virtues ...

Don Juan: Hell is the home of the unreal and the seekers for happiness. It is the only refuge from heaven which is the home of masters of reality and from earth, which is the home of slaves of reality ---[3]
(Shaw: *Man and Superman*)

(b) Don Juan: Here they talk of nothing but love --- Its beauty, its holiness, its spirituality, its devil knows what --- they think they have achieved the perfection of love because they have no bodies, sheer imaginative debauchery.[4]
(Shaw: *Man and Superman*)

(c) Garcin: So this is hell, I'd never have believed it. You remember all we were told about the torture chambers, the fire and the brimstone, the burning marl, Old wives' tales! There is no need for red hot pokers --- Hell is other people.[5]
(Sartre: *No Exit*)

(d) Inez: It is obvious what they are after an economy of man power, or devil power if you prefer --- I mean that each of us will act as a torturer of the two others.[6]
(Sartre: *No Exit*)

III (a) Don Juan: Never in my worst moments of superstitious terror on earth did I dream that hell was so horrible. It is like sitting for all eternity at the first act of a fashionable play, before the complications begin[7] (Shaw: *Man and Superman*)

(b) Garcin: Open the door, open, blast you, I'll endure anything, your red hot tongues and molten lead, all your fiendish gadgets--- everything that burns and flays and tears --- anything, anything would be better than this creeping pain that gnaws and fumbles and caresses one, and never hurts quite enough[8]
(Sartre: *No Exit*)

IV (a) Ana: Can anybody, can I go to heaven if I want to ?

The Devil: Certainly, if your taste lies that way.

Ana: But why doesn't everybody go to heaven then?

The Statue: It is because the heaven is the most angelically dull place in all creation ---

The Devil: The strain of living in heaven is intolerable. There is a notion that I was turned out of it, but as a matter of fact nothing could have induced me to stay there. I simply left it and organized this place.[9]
(Shaw: *Man and Superman*)

(b) Don Juan: Senor Commander, you know the way to the frontiers of hell and heaven. Be good enough to direct me.

The Statue: Oh, the frontier is only the difference between two ways of looking at things Any road will take you across it, if you really want to get there.[10]
(Shaw: *Man and Superman*)

(c) Garcin: What is there outside?

Valet: There is a passage.

Garcin: And at the end of that passage?

Valet: There are rooms, more passages and stairs.

Garcin: And what lies beyond them?

Valet: That's all.[11]
(Sartre: *No Exit*)

II

Shaw's Hell in *Man and Superman* and Sartre's Hell in *No Exit* as the above excerpts from the two plays will bear out, present a sharp contrast of tone, texture, atmosphere, experiences and point of view, and in a way exemplify the distance western drama and thought has travelled in the four

decades that separate the two plays. And yet they invite a comparison, as not withstanding the basic difference in the philosophic approach, there is a striking similarity in the treatment of the subject, by the two authors and the use they make of the Christian myth. Both Shaw and Sartre invert the Christian myth of Heaven and Hell to suit their specific purposes, and both use it to project their different philosophic outlooks. In both these plays, hell is not, primarily, an account of life after death, but for all its trappings of the hereafter it is essentially a certain state of being and a choice of existence in this world. And in both "Hell" is a metaphor for unauthentic existence, although their authors' conceptions of the unauthentic existence are poles apart. And finally both the authors insist on the eternity of "hell" in order to emphasize the recurring or permanent nature of the tendencies, experiences and situations they dramatize. In order to discriminate better these interesting similarities and essential differences, we may now have a closer look at the two plays.

III

Shaw's hell scene, popularly known as "Don Juan in Hell" is the centrepiece of the sparkling comedy of *Man* and *Superman*. It is the dream of John Tanner -- the Shavian hero and Mendoza -- the Romantic brigand. They both reappear in this dream as Don Juan and the Devil and are the chief antagonists in the philosophic debate that follows, covering a wide range of subjects from conventional morality and romantic love to higher reaches of human consciousness and intellectual potential and Man's responsibility in the universe. It culminates in an elaborate discussion of Shaw's favourite themes, viz. the nature of "Life Force" and the concept of Superman. The other two

comedy characters that make an appearance in this dream sequence are Ann Whitefield as Ana, the one time sweetheart of Don Juan and Roebuck Ramsden as Don Gonzalo Ana's father who was killed by Don Juan in a duel. Don Gonzalo however, has assumed the appearance of his famous and flattering statue and is referred to as "The Statue."

Shaw's hell is vast, mysterious and physically undefined. As Tanner and Mendoza settle down to sleep in Sierra Nevada, the darkness deepens, stillness settles down and the peaks appear "unfathomably dark" and we experience a sense of distance and mystery. And then "the stars vanish" and "the sky seems to steal away out of the universe and we are in the presence of "an utter void" an "omnipresent nothing"[12] redeemed only by Mozartian strains. In this romantic void appears the handsome figure of the legendary hero Don Juan and then an old woman who soon changes herself into a young and beautiful woman-Donna Ana, the earstwhile sweetheart of Don Juan. Soon the conversation is enlivened by the appearance of a visitor from "Heaven" i.e. the magnificent statue of Don Gonzalo and finally The Devil, the "Monarch of Hell" makes his impressive appearance. A lively debate follows which lasts for about an hour and a half and at the end of which Don Gonzalo has announced his momentous decision to join the 'more interesting and elevating company of the Devil's disciples', Don Juan proceeds to Heaven and Ana follows him.

The Devil, of course, maintains that his Kingdom attracts the best company of all the right thinking people; and the wrong notions about hell have been perpetrated by an Italian (Dante) and an Englishman (Milton). They reviled his character, role, and establishment in two preposterous poems to mislead people. The Italian tried to make it interesting by introducing diverse anecdotes and lively characters. But it is all a pack of

lies. "As for the Englishman his tedious account is in a very long poem which no one has ever been able to wade through." But from the dialogue and the interaction of the four characters in the interlude, we gather that hell is an assembly of vague, inconsequential people who while away their time, rather kill an eternity of non-existence by talking endlessly of love, romance, beauty and holiness of human sentiments. Shaw's hell is full of musical amateurs, card-board lovers, sentimental poets and bodiless beauties. They may indulge in their favourite themes and "fine sentiments" to their hearts' content, for there are no hard facts of earthly existence to contradict their dreams and pretensions. "No human comedy here," says Don Juan, "only a perpetual romance, an universal melodrama". "Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch' entrate"[13] is the inscription on the gate of Dante's "Inferno" and for the inhabitants of hell it means that absence of hope precludes all moral responsibility. Consequently they have nothing to do but to amuse themselves. And yet there is room for high-flown conversation, for hell, according to Don Juan, is "the home of honour, justice, duty and the rest of seven deadly virtues." According to him, "Hell is the home of the unreal," while, "Heaven is the home of masters of reality" and "To be in hell is to drift, to be in heaven is to steer"[14]

It is no wonder then that the soft easy-going people are perfectly happy and at home in hell. There are no tortures for them in this unreal kingdom. But the thinkers, philosophers and geniuses are ill at ease here and prefer to reside in heaven. Milton and Dante are in heaven of course and so is Nietzsche. Mozart and Rembrandt, the musician and the artist par excellence, initially came here for hell claims to patronise art and music, but they soon got tired of it and proceeded to heaven. Don Juan, the Shavian philosopher is still in hell, but

finds it unbearably dull and insipid. "All the clever people," The Devil complains, "somehow turn out to be social failures" in hell. Fortunately, there are no constraints. For in Shaw's scheme of things heaven and hell are free choices of existence. And so at the end of the interlude, Don Juan decides to go to heaven, for there he can contemplate "Life" and can help that "Creative Force" in the task of becoming more conscious of itself. His ideal is the philosophic man, "he who seeks in contemplation the inner will of the world, in invention the means of fulfilling that will and in action to do that"[15] Don Gonzalo, on the other hand, decides to come to hell, for here he can while away the eternity of non-being in harmless amusements, can indulge in high-flown conversation about 'honour', 'duty' and such things and boast about his military exploits and amorous adventures.

Thus we see that Shaw's hell based on the inversion of the Christian myth and the popular version of Don Juan legend is an image of an unauthentic mode of existence, which is sentimental, escapist, self-centred and convention-ridden. In other words, it dramatizes a failure to realize the fullest human potential and face moral responsibility, which characterizes Shaw's concept of Heaven. That this is not a pure fantasy, but an imaginative reconstruction of real human situation and tendencies is indicated by Shaw by establishing an organic connection between the human comedy of *Man and Superman* and the parable of Hell and Heaven. Not only that four of his comedy characters, viz. Tanner, Ann, Ramsden and Mendoza appear in the hell scene as the legendary figures of Don Juan, Ana, Don Gonzalo and The Devil, but we have already had the foretaste of the hell situation in the sentimental love and poetic pretensions of Octavious, in pompous self-righteousness of Ramsden, and narrow-minded conventional morality of his

sister, in the soft and brainless personality of Mrs. Whitefield and above all in the excessive romanticism of Mendoza and endless quibbling and shadow politics of his followers. Similarly Tanner's revolutionary idealism, his ruthless attacks on conventional morality, his moral passion and devotion to "Life Force" define him as a candidate for "Heaven". However as the characters in the comedy are "earth-bound slaves of reality" none of these tendencies is allowed to flourish unhampered. Mendoza the lovelorn romantic brigand, ends up by becoming a business magnet, and Tanner, the Shavian hero, in spite of his best efforts to escape from Ann, finally surrenders his freedom in marriage. "Reduced to its action" says Robert Brustein "*Man and Superman* is too light weight to support Shaw's doctrines"[16] However, we may also note that Shaw's own emphasis is on the comedy, which in my opinion, is infinitely enriched by the "philosophy". Even so in *Man and Superman* the comedy triumphs and the parable of creative evolution, i.e. the hell scene is allowed to dim out like a dream, which it actually is. That this is intentional cannot be doubted as the Shavian hero Tanner is deflated everytime, when he is at the height of his intellectual enthusiasm and moral passion. Even the last laugh is on Tanner the Shavian idealist.

What we regret, however, is not the light structure of the comedy which cannot support the doctorine, but the light-hearted nature of the doctrine itself and the heavy-handed manner in which it is reinforced in a series of speeches in the interlude. Shaw's facile optimism prevents him from probing deeper into the existential questions and define the nature of authentic and unauthentic modes of existence. He insists on the free choice of existence, but fails to see the difficulties and ambiguities involved in such freedom. His account of the

human potential often ends up in vague idealism and pious resolutions. In his debate with the Devil the Shavian hero Don Juan sets out to attack "romantic idealism." But as Robert Brustein points out, with Don Juan's concern with what *should be* and The Devil's concern with what *is*, we are not always quite sure, who is the "romantic idealist" and who "the master of reality."[17] And although it is to Shaw's credit that he gives The Devil his due (some of the most impassioned and concrete speeches come from The Devil), but it also underlines the vagueness of his positive vision and operative principle about which his protagonist Don Juan appears to be so confident. Shaw's failure is not, as some critics have suggested, the failure of artistic integration. For although "Don Juan in Hell" does not have a very complex structure, we need not forget that it is not an independent drama but only an interlude and as such it has sufficient dramatic interest, especially as Shaw carefully establishes organic links with the main action. What may concern us primarily here is the fact that Shaw does not quite exhaust the dramatic possibilities of the image of hell as a metaphor for unauthentic choice of existence, as the major portion of the debate is devoted to the explications of the "Life Force" and the concept of "Superman". Even so the main outlines of his vision of hell as a projection of the unauthentic mode of existence are clear enough. What remains more or less unsubstantiated is his positive programme, i.e. the vision of Heaven which here and elsewhere eludes dramatic realization. We may note here in passing that when Shaw develops his conception of hell in more realistic terms and in a more serious and bitter mood, the result is the unique and poignant drama of *Heartbreak House*. Here hell is not "an omnipresent nothing" but an old house likened to a "sinking ark" where the entire drama of inconsequential sentimentality,

patent confusions and pathetic evasions is acted out, rather than described. But when Shaw elaborates his concept of Heaven and dramatises the advent of The Superman, the result is the major disaster of *Back to Methuselah* which might bring to our mind the warning of the Devil to his followers. "Beware of the pursuit of the Superman, it leads to an indiscriminate contempt of the human."[18] In *Man and Superman*, however the artistic balance is maintained and an overdue importance is not attached to this positive programme, and Shaw's wit, brilliance and dramatic sense are sufficiently in evidence throughout.

To conclude, for all its brilliance and wit the limitation of Shaw's concept of heaven and hell, i.e. of authentic and unauthentic existence lies in the fact that it fails to grapple with the complexity of human encounter with reality and several significant dimensions of human existence. It fails also in being quite convincing and sufficiently disturbing. A certain choice of existence is quite central in Shaw's scheme of things but it does not tackle dramatically, the problem of choice for the suffering and bewildered humanity. And Shaw ignores the pre-eminence of multiple choices which makes life so bewildering and yet so meaningful. His is a clear choice between two absolutes -- Heaven and Hell, which at best is an aristocratic choice, redeemed by Shaw's wit and humour and subtle irony directed against his own formulations.

IV

When we turn from Shaw's "Don Juan in Hell" to Sartre's image of hell in *No Exit*, we find ourselves in a world of infinitely greater complexity, painful intensity and desperate self-encounter. Sartre's hell, too, is a metaphor for unauthentic

existence and is based on an inversion of the Christian myth. Sartre, however, retains some features of the popular notions of Christian hell, for hell, here is an actual place where people are sent to be punished for their past sins. Unlike Shaw's it is not a mysterious void or an "omnipresent nothing" but a quite solid and meticulously defined place. It is a closed room with bare walls furnished in the style of the Second Empire drawing room, and with constant and piercing electric light which obliterates the difference between day and night. Shaw's hell scene, subtitled by him as "A Philosophy" is enclosed by the sparkling human comedy of "*Man and Superman.*" In sharp contrast to that the philosophical framework of Sartre's "*No Exit*, encloses three gruesome dramas of the three inmates, abounding in murder, suicide, perverted sexuality, sadistic tortures and cowardly betrayal. These dramas are gradually unfolded in the course of action. Gracin, a pacifist journalist, who prided himself on his political views, was caught while crossing the border when the war broke out and was executed for betrayal. And he was also a man who indulged in sexual affairs with other women and was totally insensitive to the suffering and humiliation of his wife. Estelle who initially poses to be innocent is gradually exposed as a nymphomaniac who married an old man for money and social status and then indulged in various sexual affairs and is guilty of drowning her new-born baby and causing the suicide of her lover. And finally, Inez who frankly admits her sins, was a lesbian and a sadist who first seduced her cousin's wife and then drove her to suicide by constantly torturing and tormenting her. She prides herself for being a woman who thrives on the suffering of others.

And these three preposterously incompatible people are huddled together in this closed room for eternity. There are no

physical tortures in this hell. But a permanent exposure to light, total absence of sleep and the prison-like room symbolize the tortures of the mind. And above all, the three inmates are ideally chosen to cause maximum torture to one another. The cell-like room becomes a symbol of the trapped situation and a living hell of guilt and ceaseless judgement. The prison image and the image of ensnarement, as Victor Brambert points out, are the recurring images in Sartre's plays, symbolizing the entrapped freedom of man and his walled-in existence.[19] "They have laid their snare cunningly" says Garcin in *No Exit* and Inez admits that "there is a whole network of pitfalls that they cannot see" but insists that Garcin and she herself are traps for each other and for themselves. The self-torturing potential of the mind and intellect is a recurring theme of Sartre's plays. And "*No Exit*" provides an instance of man's double imprisonment in the self and in the consciousness of others. Each character is trapped in a private hell of guilt and shame. And in a mirrorless room they turn to each other for a definition of the self but are met either by a complete indifference or a severe judgement which only deepens their sense of guilt. Their utter misery lies in the fact that they can neither do without their torturers nor tame them enough to get the desired response.

It is often pointed out that in *No Exit* Sartre has given dramatic expression to his analysis of interpersonal relationships in *Being and Nothingness*. According to this analysis all interpersonal relationships are based on conflict as they exemplify the clash of subjectivities. And even if by some rare piece of good luck two individuals succeed in establishing a satisfactory relationship, this precarious harmony is shattered by the "glance" of a third person, who judges them ruthlessly and tries to entrap them in his/her

subjectivity. To some extent this is true of *No Exit*. Gracin's presence precludes the possibility of a lesbian relationship between Inez and Estelle and when Estelle tries to establish a sexual relationship with Garcin, Inez positively hampers it. Even so this cannot be taken to be the central theme of *No Exit* . And Gracin's famous statement at the end of the play. "Hell is other people" is not, in my opinion, Sartre's last word on the subject. In fact it is clear from the testimony of the dramatic situation, that these people are in hell precisely because they failed to establish sincere and meaningful relationships with those around them. Estelle is a child murderess and an insensitive flirt and her bad faith consists in trying to escape the consequences of her actions. Inez is in hell not because she is a lesbian but because she was cruel to others connected with her. And Sartre's point as Anthony Manser points out, is that "failure to respect others as human beings is ultimately self-destructive".[20] Her bad faith consists in asserting that she is a damned soul and a confirmed lesbian. Gracin, too, was cruel to his wife, and his bad faith consists in making light of it and imagining that his high principles in politics provide sufficient justification for his insensitive human relationships. Unfortunately since the motives of his action remain shrouded in the thick mist of doubts and uncertainties, he cannot be sure of his political idealism either. And Inez's hard judgement of him reflects also Sartre's view that a man is no more than the sum total of his acts and choices and the hunt for motives is a futile preoccupation.

To conclude, *No Exit* is a study of different manifestations of "bad faith" and as such an image of unauthentic existence. The image of hell provides a framework to emphasize Man's choice of himself. What has qualified these characters for hell, viz an eternity of static, meaningless and hopeless existence

is their failure to give content to their freedom and meaning and definition to their existence. Indeed, they are so confirmed in their bad faith, that when the door of the room suddenly opens all three of them are unwilling to step out. They prefer to stay with their torturers rather than face their vast and terrifying freedom, which simply means that they are not ready for the "radical conversion" which may alter the course of their existence and provide a basis for more meaningful choices and relationships. This further emphasizes the fact that this hell is of their own making.

We may also note in passing that the opening of the door signifies the possibility of a choice even in a most desperate situation. It is true, the door opens but once and that too in a dark passage. Contrary to Shaw's universe it is not a clear choice between "good and bad", "real and unreal", "heaven and hell" but at best a desperate choice - a leap in the dark.

The play also incorporates a secondary theme of Death changing life into Destiny as Sartre believes that Man can project himself into the future and thus create his own definition while he is alive, but after his death others judge him and interpret his life just as they wish to and he is quite helpless to change their definition of himself. This theme is also brought out very effectively as the three characters see time passing on earth and other people judging them in a very unflattering way, or simply forgetting them. So in their hopelessness they turn to the other two characters for reassurance and discover it to be an impossible project.

Thus by a careful manipulation of the central symbol and artistic control of the philosophic content Sartre is able to probe into several dimensions of existential experience and analyse acutely the structure of authentic and unauthentic existence. The play is so magnificently constructed that according to one

critic this study of monotony is not monotonous at all but highly dramatic and exhilarating. And yet, who would not like to turn, once again from *No Exit* to *Man and Superman* for a more positive, cheerful and a larger vision of life.

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4- HIG Flat,
Sir Syed Nagar
Aligarh.

Narain Prasad Shukla

ADJUSTING ONE'S DREAMS: ILLUSION AND REALITY IN GEORGE ELIOT'S *MIDDLEMARCH*

The observation of Virginia Wolf that *Middlemarch* is "one of the few English novels written for grown up people"[1] emphasizes the novel's focus on reality. More than any other novel of the age, *Middlemarch* suggests the relationship between the dream of young age and the reality of subsequent years. Examining the succession of generations, George Eliot anticipates the distinction Erikson draws between those different times of life.[2] If early youth brings opportunities of constructing dreams, the later years can result in an increased capacity for dealing with others. As the grown up characters take the time to understand their past and consider the future, the new choices they make or fail to make have implications for the young people and the world in which they will live.

The challenge of early youth consists in shaping youthful dreams to the world one encounters. In *The Mill on the Floss*, George Eliot apparently found herself reluctant to abandon Maggie Tulliver to that process. The intensity of Maggie's adolescent idealism finds its culmination in death. Ten years later, however, George Eliot understood the more complicated task. *Middlemarch* focuses not on fashioning one's dreams but on the complicated business of living them out. As the ambiguities of the world present themselves, self

confidence begins to elude the characters, and their visions of love and accomplishment fade into confusion. Circumstances call into question the ideals of the young adults, and the resulting period of reassessment marks the beginning of their transition to a different way of being in the world.

The illusions of the character mark their love as an adolescent one, which seeks in the other person only a reflection of itself. As the narrator points out early in the story, Dorothea retains "very childlike ideas about marriage."[3] Although her desire for service is contrasted with the more self-serving concerns which entice others into marriage, her understanding of intimate relationships is no less than theirs. Placed just before the scene in which she responds so intensely to the sensuous colour of her mother's gems, her ingenuous description of the ideal husband suggests naivete about sexual intimacy: "The really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it."[4] The difficulties the characters encounter lie less in misconstruing the personalities of their betrothed than in misunderstanding the nature of marriage.

As the couples face the results of their choices, illusion yields either to isolation or intimacy. Dorothea recognizes that marriage "is so unlike everything else. There is something awful in the nearness it brings."[5] The characters who reject that closeness remain locked in time, unable to develop a mature relationship. Rosamond is the primary example; her engaging childishness stultifies into obstinacy and egoism. Unwilling to share the dreams and the disappointment of her husband, she renders the marriage lonely and loveless.

Although Dorothea grows in her ability to care for her husband, he and she are too far apart in goals and personality, and Casaubon is too reserved to share the mutual understanding which distinguishes the middle aged couple. The narrative emphasizes the loneliness of her marriage. Dorothea's desire for a genuinely intimate relationship delineates the progress of her development. Towards the end of her first marriage, she feels the unprompted longing for change which characterizes the beginning of a transitional period. Finding theoretical marriage no longer so companionable, she considers her future:

> It was another or rather a fuller sort of companionship that poor Dorothea was hungering for .... This afternoon was more wretchedly benumbing than ever; she longed for objects who could be dear to her, and to whom she could be dear.[6]

George Eliot once described love as "the actual subjection of soul between a man and a woman... a growth and revelation beginning before all history."[7] Dorothea's own desires reflect that vision of intimacy. Her second marriage like that of David Copperfield with Agnes Wickfield is based on suitability of mind and purpose. The delight of intimate communication between Dorothea and Will contrasts with the reserved communication between Dorothea and Casaubon. Exchanging her original vision of a husband as mentor and master for a man who captures her heart, Dorothea finally disentangles intimacy from vocation.

George Eliot's examination of the relationship between idealism and intimacy encompasses not only the illusions about marriage but also the cultural assumptions which encourage them. Like other novels about adulthood,

Middlemarch reflects the growing interest characteristic of the Victorian period. As an article published in the *Westminster Review* in 1864 asserted, "the greatest difficulty in the England of today is found in the relationship between man and woman.. The institution of marriage might almost seem to be .. just now upon its trial."[8] In the stories of the couples who make their various types of marriages, George Eliot examines the effects of the changing expectations about women and marriage which were evident in such political measures as the Marriage and Divorce Act of 1867 as well as in contempo-rary writings. Perhaps, the most articulate spokesman for the new vision of domestic possibilities was John Ruskin, whom George Eliot once called "the finest writer living."[9] Abjuring the traditional view of woman as merely passive and ornamental, Ruskin assigns them an active part in shaping the moral conscience of the nation.[10] Thus George Eliot's reverence for Dorothea's power of inspiring good in others, which so exasperates F.R. Leavis,[11] is reminiscent of Ruskin's view of women, and her personal conception of potentiality of marriage is similar to his. In a letter to Francis Otter, she asserted that the "possibility of constantly growing blessedness in marriage is to me the very basis of good in our mortal life..."[12]

George Eliot's affinity with the intellectual tradition of idealizing marriage does not, however, prevent her from recognizing how that vision entangles people in illusion. Casaubon's desire for a wife who will aid his work finds an echo in Dorothea's desire to have him define her life. His vision suggests not simply the male egoism submerged within contemporary assertions of women's special talents but more particularly the misunderstanding of the essential character of marriage. Each of the characters in the novel is seduced

not simply by immaturity or egoism but by the idealization implicit in the social milieu. The particular sort of homage to domesticity which Ruskin's essay exemplifies ignores intimacy and isolates marriage from both the larger concerns of humanity and the social responsibilities which bring fulfilment. In an article George Eliot wrote for the *Westminster Review* during the first months of her union with George Henry Lewes, she defined the quality of intimacy and suggested the role of adult love in fostering literary, political and social achievements.:

> But it is undeniable, that unions formed in maturity of thought and feeling, and grounded only on inherent fitness and mutual attraction, tended to bring woman into more intelligent, sympathy with men, and to heighten and complicate their share in the political drama...."[13]

Although the essay refers to liaisons outside of wedlock, the description looks forward to the portrayal of Dorothea whose early experience of marriage results in the capacity for a new kind of relationship, one which encompasses both intimacy and social responsibility.

The transitional period of early adulthood includes refashioning one's dreams about work as well as those about love. In *Middlemarch*, growing older entails losing one's vocation as often as finding it. Time subverts the plans of each of the characters, Casaubon and Bulstrode lose the sense of mission which illuminated the beginning of their project; Fred foregoes the ministry; and Brooke gives up his political candidacy. Dorothea's public-spirited intentions prove as ineffectual as Lydgate's ambitious plans, but some characters ultimately manage to impose their beneficence on an obdurate world. In its examination of the toll which living takes on youthful idealism, *Middlemarch* suggests various solutions. Although

those who dream are frustrated by either social conditions or their own limitations or both, the challenge lies in adjusting their vision to the possibilities which present themselves, The multiplicity of clergymen, physicians and politicians in the novel, contemporary and historical, implies the numerous ways of creating a place for oneself.

In *Middlemarch*, reality invites acceptance of the common lot of humanity. Dorothea's recognition of her relation to the world is marked by her seeing outside her window a scene of the ordinary round of life – a man working, a woman with her baby; she understands how much she is "a part of that involuntary palpitating life" and can "neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining."[14] In relinquishing her dream of serving the world by imitating grand projects, Dorothea in fact finds the thread of her real contribution. Acceptance of "the old Adam" in everyone, however, never comes to mellow Lydgate's understanding. If he escapes self-delusion, he also denies himself forgiveness; "he always regarded himself as a failure; he had not done what he once meant to do."[15] Toward the end of the novel, Dorothea unwillingly defines the meaning of Lydgate's failure: "And that all this should have come to you who had meant to lead a higher life than the common, and to find out better ways....".[16] Her use of the word "common" recalls not only the commonness of his mind but also his refusal to link himself with common humanity. The language of the "Prelude" sets up the conflict which the process of growing older can reconcile: "these later born Theresas... alternated between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood...".[17] The tension between idealistic plans and the ordinary desires for affectionate relationship and useful

work can be resolved by acknowledging this connection with others.

The illusion which characterizes Lydgate during his first months in *Middlemarch* is conveyed with a nostalgia which suggests how quickly he will encounter disappointment:

> He was but seven-and-twenty, an age at which many men are not quite common - at which they are hopeful of achievement, resolute in avoidance....[18]

The reference to his age, which recurs on several occasions, foretells the chastening effect of time on illusions. Lydgate's ambitious plans for aiding his patients while reforming his profession and conducting essential research fall victim not simply to the specific limitations of his own character but also to the confusion and temptations which afflict everyone. As Lydgate encounters the compelling pressure of daily living, he is drawn into situations he had previously scorned. Lydgate falling away from his own high standards is informed, however, not simply by the story of the older man's personal weaknesses, but also by the history of all those whom time shapes.

The story of Lydgate focuses the novel's exploration of the reality which comes with time. Throughout the narrative, nostalgia for an earlier period of history when "summer afternoons were specious"[19] is placed against the indeterminate implications of political and industrial change. The inevitability of Featherstone's death pervades the first half of the novel, just as the consequences of Casaubon's underlie the latter part. Half the book titles refer either to age or death or the passage of the sun. Like the poem which introduces the chapter

describing Casaubon's death, *Middlemarch* evokes a sense that "the golden hours are turning grey/And dance no more, and vainly strive to run..."[20] While writing the first part of *Middlemarch,* George Eliot was caring for Thronie Lewes, the son of George Hendry Lewes, who had contracted spinal tuberculosis. On the day he died, at the age of twenty-five, she wrote in her journal: "The death seems to me the beginning of our own."[21] Her letters during that period reflect consideration of mortality. Soon after her fiftieth birthday, in a letter to Eugene Bodichon, she described the difference in her perspective: "But I have a deep sense of change within, and of a permanently closer companionship with death."[22] And several months later she wrote to a friend who had been sick:

> Can severe trouble ever be said to have quite passed away? I think it alters all one's tissues, enlarging life perhaps by bringing new susceptibilities, but often dulling even the wish for personal pleasure.[23]

Middlemarch suggests, perhaps, the resolution of the question she poses; the novel's unique quality lies in the way its acknowledgement of mortality portrays events "in their larger, quieter masses."[24]

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Madan Mohan Malaviya
Engineering College
Gorakhpur

Bimaljit Saini

ANITA DESAI: *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*

Nanda Kaul, the central figure of *Fire on the Mountain*[1], is an elderly widow who has endured "the nimiety, the disorder, the fluctuating and unpredictable excess" (p.30) of domestic duties and has now arrived at a single and secluded life in the hills of Kasauli. She seems to shirk away from contacts, personal or social and does not wish to perpetuate any, even through correspondence, "... had no wish for letters... She asked to be left to the pines and cicadas alone" (p.3). This self-imposed exile calms and pacifies her over-strained nerves to some extent, and here high up in the hills she wishes to arrange her thoughts into tranquillity. She desires to experience a contentment of being oneself and "whatever else came, or happened here, would be an unwelcome intrusion and distraction" (p.3)

She had carried out her domestic duties unflinchingly and had cared for the children and also her grandchildren for a considerable period of time, so her wish for respite at Carignano to go undisrupted and undisturbed was well deserved and justified. On the other hand, from this innate desire of hers to be alone, to live away from her family and friends surface a sense of extreme exhaustion together with an over-satiation with the mundane routine of living and relating, that she is left with a feeling of insipidity and emptiness.

Moving back in time to the days when she was admired and held in awe for the poise and dignity with which she preserved her status, and for the proficiency with which she ran the busy household of a Vice-Chancellor, we have a Nanda Kaul, who looks down on these people with disdain. Their words of appreciation...

"Isn't she splendid? Isn't she like a queen? Really, Vice-Chancellor is lucky to have a wife who can run everything as she does" (p.18), ring hollow in her ears. She is so outranged with them that "her eyes had flashed when she heard, like a pair of black blades, wanting to cut them, despising them, crawling grey bugs about her fastidious feet. That was the look no one had dared to catch or return" (p.18).

Her anger is not simply founded on the utterances of the neighbours but on the irony of her own situation in life, where despite her whole-hearted indulgence in the family, her own private, personal self suffered sheer neglect. Her inner self experienced a strange void and frustration and was not "bare and shining as the plains below, but like the gorge, cluttered and blackened with the heads of children and grandchildren, servants and guests, all restlessly surging, clamouring about her" (p.71).

The burden of these endless demands on her scuttles her own freedom, leaving no time and space for her to be herself. Though outwardly she appears calm, collected and dignified, inwardly she is all contempt and hatred for those who prick her and push her to reflect on her predicament. These undercurrents of disturbances in her husband's house, a place she was never made to feel a part of, make her long for peace and serenity. Her 'enviable position' as the Vice-Chancellor's wife is farcical. It is simply put on to uphold the honour and respect akin to her husband's status. Our doubts about a marital discord get substantiated when she reveals through her reminiscences, the presence of a mistress in his life. Despite this humiliating treatment, she had continued to preserve the normalcy of the household, that no one got an inkling of a rift between them. In order to ward off depression and stabilize and strengthen her mind,

she observed an hour of stillness every day:

> She had practised this stillness, this composure, for years, for an hour every afternoon: it was an art, not easily acquired... She remembered how she had tried to shut out sound by shutting out light, how she had spent the sleepless hour making out the direction from which a shout came, or a burst of giggles... All was subdued, but nothing was ever still. (p.23).

She considered this hour her own, but it was interrupted with noises made by her children. The refrain "Discharge me... I've discharged all my duties. Discharge" (p.30) rings out of desperation from a person who wants to break free from a subjugated and an unrewarding existence. She finds this life of servitude stifling as it seemed to lead her nowhere. She was caught up in a traditional Hindu set-up where duties to the family gained priority over personal desires. She realized it was a one-sided affair:

> The care of others was a habit Nanda Kaul had mislaid. It had been a religious calling she believed in till she found it fake. It had been a vocation that one day went dull and drought-struck as though its life-spring had dried up. (p.30).

Malashri Lal asserts that Nanda Kaul with a background of an English education and an intellectual alertness, dreams of a possible future when she will be discharged from domesticity and left to pursue her own thought.[2] But the release from traditional constraints comes only with widowhood as earlier she had lacked the nerve and volition to dissociate herself from her lot.

At Carignano she expresses her desire to merge with the pine trees and to be mistaken for one: "To be a tree, no more and

no less, was all she was prepared to undertake". Later she wishes to achieve an identification with the eagle — "to imitate that eagle-gliding with eyes closed" (p.19). Even to Raka, she seemed "another pine tree, the grey Sari a rock - all components of the bareness and stillness of the Carignano garden" (p.40)

Highly disillusioned with life Nanda Kaul wishes to shed her identity and become depersonalized . The torture she had undergone was slow but continual, that it had unsettled her so much that at this last juncture of her life she wishes for nothing but idyllic solitude in an isolated place . This much sought-after bliss appears elusive and short -lived . No sooner had she begun to inhale the free air that she is thrown to her traditional place in the extended family by the arrival of her great-granddaughter , Raka . Demands are made on her hospitality by the child and she appears visibly distressed because she knows now she will be left with nothing .

Her quest for detachment had been the only possible escape from the strains and stresses of innumerable family obligations . Having been obsessed with emptiness she ultimately finds some solace in the hearth of Carignano. But this too is marred to some extent, as she is required to devote considerable attention to the young dependent. It was going to be a painful process, "Now to converse again when it was silence she wished to question and follow up, make sure of another's life and comfort and other, to involve oneself, to involve another" (p.19). As all these activities needed enterprise and the giving of onself, it was going to be hard on Nanda Kaul to re-enter such a course, when she had already resigned from the business of living, of relating. Simone de Beauvoir asserts that "Any woman who has preserved her independence through all her servitudes will ardently love her own freedom in Nature."[3]

The intrusion of Raka, a strange, indifferent creature does

not enthuse Nanda Kaul. But to her astonishment she discovers a strange likeness between the child and herself - that the child's need for solitude was as intense as hers. She keeps herself aloof from the little girl so as to preserve some of her privacy and in turn to give some time to the newcomer to emerge from the painful reality of a broken home. The girl takes an instant liking for the place and stealthily slips away on an escapade. She makes no demands on the old lady as she has none. In Shantha Krishnaswamy's words "She has mastered the technique of existing and yet appearing as non-existent."[4] So both exhibit a desire for aloneness, one's is a cultivated one, the other's is a natural one, and both live at Carignano without trampling on each other's path.

Raka, not requiring any attention or care from Nanda Kaul is delightfully pre-occupied with exploring the ravines where jackals prowled, where snakes and lizards swarmed. She was engrossed in mysterious excursions and was occasionally given to spells of brooding over strange surroundings and the unusual things she saw. Her complete involvement in the natural environs makes her oblivious of the world around thereby amounting to a total rejection of Nanda and the life offered by her at Carignano. This indifference is natural and instinctive, coming with an effortless ease, whereas Nanda's is a conscious, a planned and a wilful one. Hence, Raka is a finished model of what Nanda is merely a forced imitation.

Raka's aloofness provokes Nanda Kaul to discover her, as deep within she accepts Raka's rejection as a challenge:

> If Nanda Kaul was a recluse out of vengeance for a long life of duty and obligation, her great-granddaughter was a recluse by nature, by instinct. She had not arrived at this condition by a long route of rejection and sacrifice, she was born to it simply. (p.48).

The natural aloofness of Raka and the self-willed one of Nanda posit a polarity in the novel, and no one is more aware of it than Nanda herself.

But viewing it from the other angle, Raka's withdrawal at this young age is abnormal, while Nanda's is understandable. Perhaps, Raka's introversion is the result of a broken home - the violence between the parents. The ugly experience seems to have had a deep influence on her and has made her secretive and withdrawn. The reality being unbearable, the child had turned inward avoiding interaction with people and ignoring her great-grandmother, too. On the other side Nanda's compliance overpowers her conscious effort of restraint. And, out of a sense of curiosity, she slips out to observe and keep a track of the child's secretive escapades. The more Raka avoids Nanda, the more the old lady is drawn towards her. Probably, she wants to discover in Raka, the self that she so desired to be.

For Raka, discipline and order, by way of attending school and refinement and socialization seem remote. Instead, she is attracted by the natural and the wild and is fascinated by stories of adventure and scenes of destruction. Darkness seems to be more akin to her than the lighted clubs. She is the first child of her kind among Nanda's children and grandchildren. She was not bothered about being loved. Solitude became her and the possessed the knack of avoiding what she thought dispensable. These peculiarities rouse in Nanda a feeling to befriend the child, more so because in her she saw a reflection of her own aspirations. She tells her: "Raka, you really are a great-grandchild of mine, aren't you? You are exactly like me, Raka," (p.64). In an outburst of spontaneity, Nanda Kaul identifies herself with Raka.

She contemplates on the similarity between herself and Raka, imagining herself as a 'tree' and Raka as a 'still twig' - Raka

being an extension of her. She thinks Raka deserves to inherit Carignano, as there is no one who would value it more. She tries to lure the child through narrations of imaginary tales of a golden period, when her adventurous father brought exotic relics from Tibet. R.S. Sharma says that in so doing she recreates "a second childhood" which provides "an illusory substitute"[5] for her harsh experiences which have made her seek refuge at Carignano. During these nostalgic moments Nanda is able to escape the drab reality of her existence and momentarily invite the attention of the child. But she is puzzled that all her moves to hold her interest prove futile as she shows a greater inclination for the bizarre spots of Kasauli than for the disagreeable intimacy of her company. Nanda Kaul experiences a conflict between her desire to love and her resolve to remain distant and detached, for she fears her own self, which may sooner or later get entangled with Raka and face rejection once again. She is gradually drawn towards her, that she cannot allow her to remain out of sight for long —"It was as if Raka's indifference was a goad, a challenge to her - the elusive fish, the golden catch" (pp.98-99). But Raka's failure in reciprocating the affection and attention of Nanda Kaul seems to be another fatal blow for her.

Another intruder who destroys 'the substitute reality' of Nanda Kaul is Ila Das. She is hard pressed for money, is harassed by the local boys and is considered an object of ridicule by others; but still whenever she surfaces she is cheerful and optimistic. Both she and Nanda Kaul were products of an education that was not practicable. Anita Desai elaborates through the reminiscences of Nanda and Ila the setbacks that such an education imposed:

> "Isn't it absurd?" Ila rattled on, "how helpless our upbringing made us, Nanda. We thought we were being equipped with the very best - French lessons, piano

> lessons, English governesses - my, all that only to find it left us helpless, positively handicapped." (p.127).

Hence, Ila Das's role as a social worker in a tradition-bound community was ineffective because her sentiments and values were not those of the people she related with. Yet, she prodded on for the salary that it fetched. Jogesa Chandra Ghosh's view of convent education is that "Far from being taught to cherish the Hindu ideals of life, a girl leaving such an institution carries ideas which embarrass her in life and often make her doubt the worth of the sentiments the Hindus so much cherish."[6]

Faced with hostility, Ila continues to uphold her ideals, doing the best she could for the welfare of the people. In so doing, she ultimately meets her own tragic end. Implicit in Ila's death is the vulnerability of single women and their conflicting desires for independence as well as security. This tragedy is quite a jolt for Nanda Kaul that she begins to pour out the truth of her own life:

> It was all a lie, all. She had lied to Raka, lied about everything. Nor had her husband loved and cherished her and kept her like a queen - he had only done enough to keep her quiet while he carried on a lifelong affair with Miss David, the mathematics mistress, whom he had not married because she was a Christian but whom he had loved, all his life loved. And her children - the children were all alien to her nature. She neither understood nor loved them. She did not live here alone by choice - she lived here alone because that was what she was forced to do, reduced to doing. All those graces and glories with which she had tried to captivate Raka were only a fabrication. They helped her sleep at night, they were tranquillisers, pills. She had lied to Raka. And Ila had lied too, Ila, too, had lied, had tried. (p.145).

Nanda Kaul is overpowered by a sense of helplessness and regret at not being hospitable enough to have asked Ila to stay for the night. Overcome by a deep sense of guilt she introspects on the transitoriness of escape from the harsh reality and the circumstantial difficulties of single women. Bridging the gap between the external world and the internal experiences seems a Herculean task for Nanda. Her strength fails her and she begins to lack the will to continue with the facade when all that stares her in the face is defeat and destruction. Her desire for nothing in the present crisis is a symbolic death-wish that had been corroding her for quite some time. The enormity of the harsh truth about her personal life obliterates the small spell of self-discovery that she had during the moments she had begun to identify with the little girl. Engulfed by a deep feeling of pain and hurt, Nanda brings an end to her unfulfilled self. And with it we have Raka's final utterance, "Look, Nani, I have set the forest on fire".. These words acquire a tremendous symbolic significance as besides pointing to Raka's detachment, they convey a sense of thrill she derives in destroying a world that spelt unhappiness for a woman who wished to be independent and free. Nanda Kaul had been unable to accept the dull, meaningless routine of her husband's household, without a promise of any recognition or fulfilment.

Anita Desai, through the portrayal of Nanda, a mature, elderly lady has established the individual's desire to find a significance of her existence. Having the advantages of an education and a refined sensibility, Nanda Kaul was above the mediocre and average women of her social set-up. She could only free herself from the demands of a busy life toward her retired years. Till then she was intermittently overtaken by phases of brooding and introspection; nevertheless, she veered ahead irrespective of her anxieties and apprehensions as the desire to be herself was supreme.

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Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
College of Basic Sciences and Humanities
G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology,
Pantnagar, U.P.

Renate Sarma

THE RIVER AND THE LAND BEYOND— SYMBOLISM IN R.K. NARAYAN'S NOVELS

The novels of R.K. Narayan are characterised by the close connection between the town of Malgudi and river Sarayu. Significantly, at the very first mention, the river takes precedence:

> River Sarayu was the pride of Malgudi. It was some ten minutes walk from Ellaman Street, the last street of the town, chiefly occupied by oilmongers. Its sandbanks were the evening resort of all the people of the town. The Municipal President took any distinguished visitor to the top of the Town Hall and proudly pointed to him Sarayu in moonlight, glistening like a silver belt across the North.[1]

Whereas the name of Narayan's South Indian town is invented, that of his river belongs to Indian mythology. In the Ramayana, Sarayu is the river on which Ayodhya is situated, the capital of Rama's kingdom. With the waters of Sarayu, one of the seven holy rivers, sins can be atoned for,

> (...) one is purified from sin who drinks the waters of Ganges, Yamuna, Sarasvati (Plaksajata), Rathastha, Sarayu, Gomti or Gandaki.[2]

Sarayu is Narayan's metaphor for the life-sustaining forces of divine creation. For the characters of Narayan, the

old legends are part of their immediate surroundings. Thus, the history of Malgudi becomes part of the ancient myths: Rama created river Sarayu by scratching a line on the sand,[3] and 'a small shrine, its concrete walls green with age, and its little dome showing cracks' near the lotus pond in the old garden across the river was created through the prayers of Shankara who preached his gospel of Vedanta there.[4]

In this world, acceptance of the present implies the acceptance of the past and belief in the divine origin of all creation. The regenerative forces of the divine are most powerful near the river, and in moments of crisis, Narayan's characters remember the river. Therefore, in all Malgudi novels, crucial events take place near the gently flowing Sarayu.

River Sarayu is Narayan's symbol for the omnipresent divine. Through their contact with Sarayu, Narayan's protagonists become aware of the eternal flux of life, the unending cycle of growth and decay. In these novels, harmony in nature is exemplary for harmony in creation as such. Man is included in this primeval harmony, even if disharmony threatens his inner balance.

Narayan uses the motif of the flow of the river with the theme of initiation into life: on the banks of the divine Sarayu, the people of Malgudi find balance and harmony and by a deeper understanding of their true self gain insights into the meaning of life.

Already in Narayan's first novel, *Swami and Friends*, the regenerative forces of nature are represented in a river-scene. When the happy world of childhood is endangered by a crisis of friendship, Swami, Mani and Rajam meet on the banks of the Sarayu. At first, their isolation from the other people who spend the evening at the river reflects the children's intense

experience of danger. The friends cannot name their fear, but they can find the cause of disharmony and overcome it with a gesture of goodwill. When friendship has been pledged anew, the solitude of the children near the quietly flowing river stands for idyllic harmony.

The security of the children in *Swami and Friends* is based on their immediate access to the origins of life. In the later novels, the theme of the endangered idyll returns as the deviation from the norm. Then the restoration of harmony is possible only through a conscious effort, and the decision to visit the banks of Sarayu is often the first sign of the protagonists' awareness of disharmony.

Since contact with the Sarayu and the divine are the assurance of the continuity of life in Narayan's novels, a semblance of harmony can be restored even in his most sombre work, *The Dark Room*. After the protagonist's fateful loss of inner security through the infidelity of her husband, she attempts to commit suicide by drowning in river Sarayu. Rescued and taken to a temple in a village nearby, Savitri regains her balance when she admits to herself that she cannot bear the separation from her children. With Savitri's return to Malgudi, her initiation into life is complete, albeit on the dominant note of resignation. Even though the central theme of this and other Malgudi novels is the loss of security and the resulting disturbance of the even rhythm of life, *The Dark Room* lastly also affirms the life-sustaining forces of the divine, because in the proximity of river Sarayu that which is continuous in the unending process of creation operates in the life of the individual.

From the beginning, in *Swami and Friends*, the river on which Malgudi is situated is the symbol of continuity of life: river Sarayu carries water even at the height of summer.[5] By

contrast, the river in *The Guide* remains nameless, since the events around Raju, the fake swami, require the drying-up of the river and this motif which is necessary for the development of the plot of the novel is incompatible with the symbolic meaning of river Sarayu.

That Malgudi flourishes on the banks of Sarayu and that the river is the pride of the town means, on the symbolic level, that the present takes its strength from its links with the past. The author's subtle irony frequently focuses on the humorous aspects of the amalgam of past and present - 'a hotchpotch of history, mythology, politics and opinion'.[6] The reference is to the District Board President's speech for the function of the opening of a bridge across Sarayu, five miles away from the town. The vignette sketching one more detail of life in Malgudi shows the attic of Truth Printing Works in Kabir Lane with the printer-owner Mr. Sampath who is reading to an audience of two 'as if addressing a gathering.(...) a masterly declamation, giving a history of the Sarayu bridge and all its politics.'[7]

There is no bridge across the river within the town: Market Road, 'the lifeline of Malgudi,'[8] leads straight to the Trunk Road to Trichinopoly which bypasses the old part of town near Lawley Extension and branches off into Mempi Forest Road.[9] The town is expanding towards the South,[10] while the fields, villages and faraway hills in the North can be reached by fording the river, downstream from Ellaman Street, near Nallappa's Mango Grove.[11]

With the deceptively simple narrative device of making the river the geographical boundary of his imaginary town, Narayan imbues his novels with yet another deep meaning: Sarayu becomes the symbol of the limitations of human experience, and the land on the other side of the river stands for the unknown beyond.

The symbolic meaning of the other side of Sarayu is already used in *Swami and Friends*. In this novel of transition from childhood to youth, the dreamland beyond has a fairy-tale quality; wishes come true and fantastic transformations occur:

> Swaminathan's one consuming passion in life now was to get a hoop. He dreamt of it day and night. He feasted on visions of an ex-cycle wheel without spokes or tyre. You had only to press a stick into the groove and the thing would fly. (...) He dreamt one night that he crossed the Sarayu near Nallappa's Grove 'on' his wheel. It was a vivid dream; the steel wheel crunched on the sandy bed of the river as it struggled and heaved across. It became a sort of horse when it reached the other bank. It went back home in one leap, took him to the kitchen, and then to his bed, and lay down beside him.[12]

Here the fairy-tale motif of the flying horse is combined with the symbol of the land on the other side of the river as a magic world. The immediate return from the strange country to the familiar surroundings shows the security of the child. However, there is also the hint that crossing the river has its own dangers: 'It nearly maddened him to wake to a hoopless morning.'[13] The experience of blissful happiness can threaten a person's balance when reality takes over. This theme is later developed as the dangerous encounter with the beyond in *Mr. Sampath* and *The Financial Expert*.

Mr. Sampath is Narayan's most philosophical novel of the quest for the meaning of life, with tragi-comedy as the prevailing mood of the narrative and irony setting the tone for squabbles in family and neighbourhood disputes as well as for wrangles concerning mythological themes suitable for the

entertainment and enlightenment of the masses. The human comedy, set in 'eternal' Malgudi, reflects the presumptions and the masquerades of human ambitions as the stuff out of which the imperfections of life are woven in a web so intricate that the discrepancies which separate reality and the ideal are barely perceptible.

Neither the protagonist nor his young friend has a convincing answer when faced with the question: "What exactly is it that you want to do? (...) What exactly is it that you wish to do in life?"[14] Yet the solution to bring out a weekly appears to Srinivas 'in a flash'[15] and the unassuming Ravi has no doubts about his artistic genius: I can make a full-length portrait in oils, the like of which no one else will have done in India. Give me another glimpse of my subject, and the picture is yours."[16]

The bond between Srinivas and Ravi is idealism coupled with a lack of worldly wisdom. Pursuing his vision of publishing "The Banner" from Malgudi, Srinivas allows himself to be taken charge of by a stranger with northern Indian accents who waves away formalities of introduction:

> "There are no strangers for Sampath. (...) Customers are God's messengers, in my humble opinion. If I serve them aright I make some money in this world and also acquire merit for the next. (...) When a person becomes my customer he becomes a sort of blood relation of mine: do you understand?[17]

It takes the destruction of their quiet world to make guilless Srinivas and his protegé, the would-be artist, aware that the ever-obliging, resourceful Sampath is a false friend. Through Sampath they got involved with "Sunrise Pictures" which had set up studios - seemingly overnight - on the other side of the river. What looked like a golden opportunity stands revealed

as fatal, strange ill-luck when Ravi's fragile dreamworld breaks apart. As he causes havoc on the sets during the shooting of the crucial episode of the ancient legend, Ravi goes insane, his labile mind succumbing to the powers of darkness.

Srinivas emerges unscathed and even stronger than before from the maelstrom of Sampath's activities because his life was always anchored firmly to traditional values. This is shown with the recurring motif of the rumbling of the river merging with the noises of the town. The novel ends with the self-confession of Sampath on the banks of the river. Srinivas has learnt to see through the white lies of his former Cicerone. He can keep his equanimity and likewise his resolution not to become entangled with Sampath once again. While earlier he let himself be taken across the river to the studio, he now selects a quiet spot on the bank of Sarayu and in Malgudi from where to observe the inevitable changes of life:

> Beyond the other bank, half a mile off, they saw the glare of the studio lights. (...) Srinivas led him along, and they sat down in a quiet nook, where there was no one. Darkness had gathered about them. The river flowed on into the night. Sampath remained silent for a moment, drawing circles on the sand. Srinivas left him alone and listened to the murmur of the river and the distant, muffled roar of the town. (...)
>
> They walked back in silence. At Market Square, Srinivas realized that they must part. (...) he merely said: "All right then. Good-bye," and passed on resolutely. While turning down Anderson Lane he looked back for a second and saw far off the glow of a cigarette end in the square where he had left Sampath; it was like a ruby set in the night. He raised his hand, flourished a final farewell, and set his face homeward.[18]

A variation of the theme of the regenerative forces of nature versus the destructive powers of darkness is given in Narayan's novel of the quest for social recognition and fabulous fortunes, *The Financial Expert*. Here the continuity of life is represented by a banyan tree in the heart of Malgudi.

In the shade of the ancient banyan tree the protagonist Margayya, financial wizard to villagers from far and near, transacts his business of money-lending and procuring loans from the Cooperative Bank opposite. Starting with Margayya's contentment, followed by his determined pursuit of wealth and the eventual upheaval of the even rhythm of his life, the novel's climax comes at the end when the protagonist's old pugnacity asserts itself as he explains to his son that the way out of the impasse is the return to their beginnings amidst the aerial roots of the banyan tree.[19]

The antagonist, a jovial stranger: "I'm Dr Pal, journalist, correspondent and author."[20], helps Margayya on his way to wealth. He is the emissary of evil that grows from a person's deepest desires. Dr Pal is the tempter who keeps in the background, allowing his powers to be unacknowledged until he pulls the strings that bring about the events which lead to disgrace and disaster.

The first encounter between the protagonist and his antagonist takes place on the other side of the river, at the end of the day. At the outset of his search for riches, Margayya was set the task to propitiate Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, with a forty days ritual in which a red lotus flower was required: 'Beyond Sarayu, towards the North, there is a garden where there is a ruined temple with a pond. You will find red lotus there.'[21] Having reached the place with difficulties, Margayya felt afraid of its loneliness, overgrown wilderness and the approaching darkness. His instincts warn him of danger when

a stranger emerges from a far-away corner of the little mantap on the other side of the pond, but with presence of mind Margayya shrewdly asks him to wade through the murky, greenish water and pluck a lotus flower.[22]

The antagonist states unabashedly that he is an intruder: 'I have nothing to do with the garden. I'm here because (...) there seems to be no one to make me get out.'[23] Thus, to semi-darkness and wilderness is added the motif of the usurper to signify that the neglected, deserted garden has been invaded by the denizens of the deep.

That both good and evil are set free when contact is established with the beyond is a recurring theme in the Malgudi novels. In Narayan's world, the ultimate victory goes to the positive, creative powers of transcendence.

In the realm of the beyond, the garden is the sphere of peace and harmony. Already in the early, poignantly auto-biographical novel, *The English Teacher* the garden beyond the river is the place of refuge. In the late novel, *The Sweet Vendor*, also the garden across the Sarayu is the sanctuary, when the generation conflict is solved by recourse to the tradition of vanaprasthya.[24]

As the alienation between Jagan, the vendor of sweets, and his son becomes insurmountable, Jagan leaves the town to live as a recluse in the garden on the other side of the river. This solution, in accordance with the age-old Indian value system, marks the positive, regenerative influence emanating from the peaceful solitude of the garden:

> You know, my friend, at some stage in one's life one must uproot oneself from the accustomed surroundings and disappear so that others may continue in peace. (...) If I don't like the place, I will go away somewhere else. I am a free man.[25]

Beneath the deceptive simplicity, there is a strong undercurrent of profound insights in R.K. Narayan's novels. Reading and re-reading Narayan means discovering what Sergiu Al-George, the Romanian Indologist, said in his 'Notes from India' about the country he loved:

> India knows well that Time and History devour but at the same time immortalize, as they bestow an ever-growing light on perennial values.[26]

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21. Ibid., pp. 40, 48.

22. Ibid., cf. pp.50-51.
23. Ibid., p.51. 'At their second meeting, the antagonist will admit unperturbedly that he was, indeed, asked to get out: Margayya was mystified. 'Where is your house? Are you still in that garden?'
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Department of English
Aligarh Muslim University
Aligarh

S. Imtiaz Hasnain

LANGUAGE AND POWER: A CRITICAL LANGUAGE STUDY

While making preliminary investigation on disciplining of language, Foucault, in his inaugural lecture on the order of discourse given at the College de France in 1970, made a startling pronouncement that language is disciplined. This view of Foucault becomes evident if one looks into both - the subjection of discourse and the web of prohibitions that surrounds discourse. The former entails the ways in which discourse is controlled and delimited through the systems of exclusion, ordering and distribution, while the prohibitions "interrelate, reinforce and complement each other, forming a complex web, continually subject to modification". According to Foucault, both the subjection of discourse and prohibitions that surround it have a definite purpose, for "in every society the production of discourse is at one [sic] controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its power and dangers" (1972:216). Although Foucault has carefully avoided the assignation of power in any restricted sense to a particular group, he did concentrate in the system of education for studying the dissemination of power.

If one were to go outside the system of education to trace the set of processes, practices and institutions through which power dominates, then institution of language planning provides

an ideal ground for contestation and disciplining of language. As a dynamic of Language Planning, standardization, i.e. a process where a particular social dialect comes to be elevated into becoming a standard language (or even a national language), is suggestive of a complex and unceasing process of permission and denial, exclusion and inclusion, an ordering of which one to be selected and which one to be rejected, of who can be represented and also who is to remain in silence. Choice of one option necessarily implies rejection of other options. It, therefore, marks an intriguing relationship between language and power. This relationship between language and power can also be discerned in the discourse on standard language. The apparently simple and seemingly innocuous definition of standard language as "a codified variety of a language that serves the multiple and complex communicative needs of a speech community..." (Garvin 1991: 6) performs a transparent communication of conveying a truth statement about linguistic features which are characteristics of standard language. But what remains silent in such a transparent communication is the processes by which suppression of optional variability and selection of some at the cost of others are constituted and incorporated into a form of authority and control in the construction of a standard language.

The obverse of standard is non-standard. Here 'non' does not merely connote a simple linguistic process of prefixation suggesting a negative meaning. Nor does it reflect a transparent dimension of discursive practices absorbed in truth value statement. It is, in fact, suggestive of a political content and renders a political currency by positioning the discourse of standard language in the semantic space which is positive and negative. The positive semantic space is unmarked and reserved for dominant groups in society. Like all other linguistic

features, the unmarked terms are also reserved for the norm. The marked term, on the other hand, occupies a negative semantic space and it is linguistically expressed as non-standard. It is construed as deviation from the norm and is reserved for the dominated groups in society. Therefore the ideology of standardization operative in the discourse of standard language is a case of power behind discourse in language-power relationships, for it shows how discourse (i.e. language as social practice) and orders of discourse, as dimensions of the social orders of social institutions or societies, are themselves shaped and constituted by relations of power.

How do the power relations manifest supremacy of a social group? Gramsci believes that there are two ways in which power manifests the supremacy of a social group - as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership". The former is achieved through coercion of various sorts including physical violence, while the latter is achieved through the manufacture of consent by means of ideology and discursive practices. However, according to Gramsci, before any rise of power "there must be a hegemonic activity... and one should not count only on the material force which power gives in order to exercise an effective leadership" (Gramsci 1971: 57). Implicit in this statement is an assertion that in the perpetuation of hegemony the discursive practices assume a far more important position than force or coercion because they help ideology to mask its actual intentions. In fact, the post-Arnoldian cultural criticism is suggestive of a consensus that the age of ideology begins when force gives way to ideas.

Johnson's "Preface" to his Dictionary that "tongues like governments, have a natural tendency to degenerate: we have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggles

for our language" (qtd in Crowley 1989: 79) provides compelling evidence to suggest not only the importance of discursive practices with moral and intellectual suasion in matters of government, but also an implicit tactical maneuver in the consolidation of power. Checking of the progressive degeneration of standard and cultivating a language are issues pertaining to standard language. These issues inform us of the practices of correction and normalization which are, according to Foucault, "central to the relations of power in the society in which we live" (Wickham 1983: 475).

The politics of discourse on standard language documents two senses in which the term 'standard' has been used, and in both the senses the 'standard' represents the question of authority, commonality and evaluation. The first sense emanates from the definition provided by the OED (Oxford English Dictionary) in which standard has been defined in terms of military or naval ensign as "a flag, sculptured figure or other conspicuous object, raised on a pole to indicate the rallying point of an army (or fleet) ... the distinctive ensign of a king, great noble, or commander, or of a nation or city" (qtd in Crowley 1989: 91). Signification of this definition is important, for it suggests the inseparability of standard from concepts of authority and commonality. In the second sense, standard signifies an exemplar of measure or weight. In this sense the standard is interlocked with the concepts of authority and evaluation. In either case the definition of standard assumes significance and needs to be treated as political problematic, for the signification no longer allows the standard to remain merely" a marker for an authority external to it but... an authority in itself" (Crowley 1989: 92) and also helps the commonality and evaluation to mask the ideology of moral and intellectual persuasions. As a part of ideology of standardization, the

process of language standardization involves suppression of optional variability in language and as a consequence, non-standard varieties are observed to permit more variability than standard ones. Inasmuch as ideology of standardization is inimical to change and variation, scholars have often identified standard in terms of "point". Scholars have also looked at standard exclusively in terms of written language, and therefore, any inclusion of spoken form in the description of standard has been perceived as loosening the definition of standard. Strictly speaking, standardization does not tolerate variability and it is this strict notion of non-tolerance of variation or deviation from the norm that makes the case for written standard form more vigorous. The archives of standard language are replete with expressions like "literary language", "written language", "national language" etc, where all these terms are frequently being interchangeably used in the sense of free variation. Saussure's use of "literary language" in this sense is one such instance of intermingling: "By literary language I mean not only the language of literature but also, in a more general sense, any kind of cultivated language, official or otherwise, that serves the whole community ... But as communications improve with a growing civilization one of the existing dialects is chosen by a tacit convention of some sort to be the vehicle of everything that affects the nation as a whole" (Saussure 1959: 140). But taking cue from the post-structuralists' conception of language, we know that language is not a neutral medium, but a hidden subjective power that shapes experience, order and constrains our perception, defines reality and says what is true, good and beautiful. Therefore, despite the ideality and a political view of social struggles within and among languages in the Saussurean conception of literary language, words like *chosen*, and *tacit*

convention do describe the dominance of one language over another language and hint at the "will to power" inscribed in literary language. This rhetoric of being the language of the whole community enhances the legitimacy of standard (or literary) language and gives it a privilege of being a national language - as the only legitimate language for linguistic exchanges. Inherent in this rhetoric is also a notion of universality in the standard language, informed by transnational and politico-cultural uniformity in usage and shaped by correction morality of standard.

What resulted from the correction morality of standard language is the psychoanalytical abnormality in the form of schizophrenia (Fairclough 1989) and a queer case of ambivalence. While at one level, the standard language aspires to be a national language concerned with "the particular forms of communality which a [national] language happens to enforce" (Strong 1984: 91), at the other level, it is still identified, in many respects, as a repertoire of a particular "class." The simultaneity with which both the separatist and unifying tendencies exist in standard language hints at the ambivalence within both the dominated and the dominant. Thus, at one point the standard language allures the "other" to join the "us", and at the other point it retracts itself by further distancing the "others" from "us". The ambivalence comes from the fact that there is a profound dislike for domination, and at the same time there is attraction for the repertoire of the social class, the language of the social elites.

A close observation into the dynamics of language and power suggest that both schizophrenia and ambivalence are sensed by people, by the dominated ones. There is a kind of consciousness among the dominated of being a victim of historical and ideological givens, for they know that standard

language is not their language. It is someone else's language and it is a language of power. This sense of consciousness is illuminating and significant, as it provides an insight into the conceptualization of power. The fact that the dominance of the standard language does not go unnoticed suggests that the power of the oppressors is not independent of the self-understanding of the oppressed. The oppressed are not passive objects being manipulated and controlled by forces outside of them. It will be too naive to suggest (or even to believe) that forces external to the system impose themselves on the will of others. In fact, "something as crucial in social life as power must involve the activity of those being led or commanded as much as those leading or commanding" (Fay 1987: 120). Thus, there is a dyadic conception of power which involves the interaction of both the powerful and the powerless and where both sides contribute something necessary for the existence of power.

What contributes towards this activist conception of power in terms of exploitation by discursive practices operating through the ideology of standard language? The answer probably lies in the kind of "idealization" prevailing in the linguistic theory or "the illusion of linguistic communism," as Bourdieu (rather provocatively) puts it (1992 : 5). The presuppositions of Saussurean and Chomskyan linguistics which take a particular set of linguistic practices as a normative model of correct usage have forced linguists to reinforce the illusion of a common language. In these theoretical presuppositions the socio-historical conditions which have established a particular set of linguistic practices as dominant and legitimate are completely being ignored. This dominant and legitimate language is not only taken for granted as a "standard language", but also treated as a language

representing the whole community as a "national language." Language policy and language planning not only provides a ground for contestation, but also plays a significant role in the process of national or state formation. Cultural hegemony is established through language of the nation and central powers are consolidated through linguistics means. Therefore, any discussion of standardization or linguistic unification has a serious totalizing undercurrent, for it implicitly invokes features of nationhood. Johnson's reference to language in tandem with government or even Saussure's use of literary language in the context of serving the nation as a whole suggests that language is a basic attribute of a nation and concommitantly this makes talks of language as politically defined territories meaningful. The creation of a myth of national language marks complex inter-relationship between language and power which can be seen to be operative in the most blatant as well as the most insidious levels. Both ambivalence and schizophrenia have arisen largely on account of the transmutation of a standard language into a mythical national language.

A critical language study which draws its inspiration from Critical Theory aims at looking into a particular signification by taking the entire socio-historical conditions in which it occurs. The deliberate or inadvertent political motivations in the transmutation of a standard language into a national language will simply go unnoticed in the absence of complex historical processes and social conditions of existence. As Kress and Hodge have pointed out "without immediate and direct relations to the social context, the forms and functions of language are not fully explicable" (1979 : 13). In fact, it is this ignorance of the socio-historical conditions that helps linguists produce the illusion of a common language. As Bourdieu puts it "By taking a particular set of linguistic practices as a normative model of

correct usage, the linguist produces the illusion of a common language and ignores the social-historical conditions which have established a particular set of linguistic practices as dominant and legitimate". (Bourdieu 1982 : 5) Although Saussure's langue - parole distinction was innovative and provided a convincing answer to the vexed problem of "what is a language?" that had overwhelmed linguists throughout the nineteenth century, its appearance coinciding with the period marking the emergence of mythical 'national language' cannot be simply taken as an accident.

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Department of Linguistics
Aligarh Muslim University
Aligarh

Book Review

BYRON AND THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD
Edited by Marius B. Raizis
Athens, Hellenic Byron Society, 1995. Pp.235.

Of late, Byron's "Turkish Tales" and his literary Orientalism, hitherto a neglected area of Byron scholarship, have received some critical attention. Illustrative of it is the publication of Nigel Leask's *British Romantic Writers and the East* (Cambridge, 1992), and M. Sharafuddin's *Islam and Romantic Orientalism : Literary Encounters with the East* (London,1994). What is more gratifying is that the volume under review, comprising the Proceedings of the Twentieth International Byron Conference at the University of Athens (20-21 September 1995), contains several pieces by the leading Byron specialists which bring into sharper relief various dimensions of Byron's multi-faceted Orientalism.

The opening article of the volume,"Samples of the Finest Orientalism: The Turkish Tales Revisited" (pp.13-23) by the distinguished Byron scholar, Andrew Rutherford appropriately and earnestly sets the agenda on this count. Rutherford explores effectively and energetically Byron's letters, journals, and works in order to identify the poet's fascination with the Orient 'which had roots in his early reading, in current fashion, and in recent political/military events.' (p.14) His account of Byron's Oriental reading is, however, far from being exhaustive. For he seems to have overlooked some of the significant works on the Orient on which Byron drew heavily for providing both

Oriental diction, imagery and aliusions in his poetical works and for explicating things Oriental in his copious annotations which are appended to his "Turkish Tales". For example, he fails to mention in this context Jonathan Scott's translation of the *Arabian Nights*, Henley's notes in Beckford's *Vathek*, and the chapters on Islam and Muslims in Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* Nevertheless, the most valuable element of Rutherford's piece is his bringing home the point how Byron revisits imaginatively the Orient in his Tales. Equally apt and illuminating is his reference to Byron's denunciation of British imperialism in India in *The Curse of Minerva* (1811), corroborating as it does Byron's cross-cultural empathy, which happens to be the most outstanding feature of his Orientalism. Rutherford's authoritative piece, rich in historical details, will be read with great profit by the students and is destined to inspire further studies on Byron's Orientalism.

Malcom Kelsall's "Once Did She Hold the Gorgeous East...Byron's Venice and the Oriental Empire" (pp.47-56) stands out for its solid contents and for its incisive and insightful study of Western imperial history, which, in turn, facilitates a better understanding of Byron's Orientalism. Kelsall's treatment of Edward Said's influential writings on the subject has enhanced greatly the value of his piece. Of a similar import is his deft analysis of Byron's "Beppo" in the perspective of his Orientalism.

An in-depth and engaging study of the subject,however, comes out at its sharpest in Nora Liassis's"Oriental Females in Byron's Verse Narratives" (pp.82-92). Her treatment of Byron's Oriental characters is, on the whole, balanced and comprehensive.Take her comments on Zuleika in *The Bride of Abydos* as illustrative, which are, no doubt, judicious and illuminating. However, Zuleika's 'submissive' and 'compliant'

nature and her passivity (pp.86 and 87) ought to be examined in the broader context of her association with tradition and of Byron's attempt to bring out the ultimate force of convention. The preponderance of religious objects in her 'Peri cell' reinforces her conformity to tradition. More importantly, Byron's Zuleika differs radically from the stereotype Oriental female in Western literary Orientalism, who peremptorily abandons her Islamic faith and attains redemption in Christianity. Likewise, Gulnare in *The Corsair*, far from being a timid plaything reeling under patriarchal tyranny in the Muslim society, overwhelms both the males in the poem – Syed physically in murdering him and Conrad psychologically in stupefying him by her indomitable courage and resourcefulness.

While other Oriental females in the Tales such as Leila in *The Giaour* and Zuleika in *The Bride* are, in varying degrees, embodiments of idealized beauty, suffer silently and are the cause of tragedy and conflict in others, Gulnare actually revolts even against the conventional gender role. In Gulnare Byron appears to make trial of a new concept of force and unsettlement; she, a woman, succeeds in rebellion, where Selim, a man, fails, though ultimately and disturbingly she is denied the centrality she had earned and is returned to a position of marginality. Regrettably Liassis does not focus much on the salient features of Byron's portrayal of Oriental females. For instance, little is said about the intense local colour with the help of details upon details and allusions upon allusions about Oriental dress, vocabulary and customs which help shape authentic Oriental females in Byron's Tales. Furthermore, another striking feature of Byron's portrayal which largely goes unnoticed in her otherwise excellent study of the subject is the absence of centuries-old ideological attitudes in the West about the status of woman in Islam which feature

prominently in *The Songs of Geste*, Massinger's *Renegado*, Dryden's *Don Sebastian*, Johnson's *Irene* and Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh*.

Naji B.Oueijan's article "Byron's Eastern Literary Portraits" (pp. 93-103) is a fitting conclusion to the discussion on Byron's Orientalism. His familiarity with both Byron's works and Oriental material is wide-ranging and impressive. Equipped with his enviable knowledge of the subject he conclusively establishes the authenticity of the Oriental ingredients, incidents, characters, costume, scenes of action, customs and literary portraits in Byron's Tales. His identification of "Mu`allaqa of Antara ibn Shaddad", which Byron in all probability read in Sir William Jones's translation of the Arabic masterpiece, *Mu`allaqat*, as a possible source of *The Bride of Abydos* is highly plausible. In a similar vein is his masterly study of the historical antecedents of Byron's Oriental characters.

Byron and the Mediterranean World is a very welcome addition to Byron studies and in view of its wide and perceptive coverage of Byron's Orientalism it deserves to be on the shelf of all those interested in the field of Western literary Orientalism.

A.R. Kidwai
Department of English
Aligarh Muslim University

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