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Lorene M. Birden

THREE ANALYSES OF SALT : THE PERSONA OF VIRTUE IN *THE MILL ON THE FLOSS, BLEAK HOUSE* AND 'THE SALT OF THE EARTH'

1. Introduction

> You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltness be restored?
>
> Mt. 5:13

In this two-thousand-year-old quotation, "salt" is given its metaphoric theme in the concept of charity. "Salting" the earth in this sense would be to sow pious deeds. The expression "S/he is the salt of the earth" has crept into daily usage to designate a good, helpful, willing person. This metaphor in addition suggests the binary opposition "salt/unsalt", which suggests the themic parallel "charitable/uncharitable" with all its requisite connotations of selfishness, greed, or unawareness.

The Christian ideology that drives the Western world — whether that world believes in it or not — tends to guide society towards that perfection in virtue represented by salt, through the expounding of principles and models. The images of principle form an ideal that many a poor sinner

strives to embody. Such striving in turn evokes yet another binary opposition, that of "be/seem". The disciples of the charitable ideal are in perpetual risk of taking a superficial or innocuous act for the essence of virtue; they put themselves thus in a position of "appearing salt" while being in reality "unsalt". Those who participate willingly in this duality are called hypocrites. But what name can be given to those who fall into false virtue by blindness, who truly believe they are benefactors? What play of psychological self-deception brings them to believe unfailingly in the goodness of the futile, sterile, or even harmful acts that they perform?

This problem of conceptual and perceptual discrepancy in a person who truly believes in his or her charity is straightforwardly treated by Rebecca West, as the title of her short story "The Salt of the Earth" indicates. The same dichotomy can be discerned additionally in the Dodson sisters in *The Mill on the Floss* and in Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle in *Bleak House*. These three authors, George Eliot, Charles Dickens, and Rebecca West, develop in different ways different aspects of this problem of involuntary imposture in pursuit of an ideal.

The exact nature of the virtue ideal changes from character to character in the three narratives mentioned. For Mrs. Pardiggle and Mrs. Jellyby, charity is perforce of the official, institutional kind; thus their efforts are "disinterested", inasmuch as they are expended on people who are destitute, and have no family or societal ties with these women. On the other hand, the Dodsons and Alice Pemberton could be considered to engage in "interested

charity", with few exceptions, they bring their aid and succor to friends and family. However, whoever the recipient, this wrongheaded charity is always harmful, by negligence if not by action, and springs from within the character, affecting her relationship to herself and to others. This mistakenly virtuous character passes through a state of mind characterized by a. the assimilation of an ideal that conforms not at all with her personality, b. willful blindness to this discrepancy, and c. rigidity and extremism in speech and act, and principle. In this state the characters' rapport with others could not but be complex, based as they are in misrecognition (Lacan's *meconnaissance*) of herself (leading to an exaggerated sense of sacrifice) and a misrecognition of these others (leading to misunderstanding of their motivations and personalities, and of their reactions to her sacrifice).

II. Ideal, Ignorance, Imposture

In order to elucidate the problem of this divorce between the being and the ideal, it is useful to refer to the studies of Carl Gustav Jung, who explains the phenomenon in terms of a rupture between *interior and exterior* :

> There are many people whose conscious attitude is defective not as regards adaptation to environment but as regards expression of their own character. These are people whose conscious attitude and adaptive performance exceed their capacities as individuals; that is to say, they appear to be better and more valuable than they really are. Their outward success is naturally never paid for out of their individual resources alone, but very largely out of the dynamic reserves generated by collective suggestion. Such people climb above their natural

> level thanks to the influence of a collective ideal or the lure of some social advantage, or the support offered by society. They have not grown inwardly to the level of their outward eminence, for which reason the unconscious in all these cases has a *negatively compensating*, or *reductive*, function. (Jung 8 : 257)

The "exterior ambiance" created by an ideal prompts in the individual an attempted response to what she preceives as a social imperative, without prompting her to consider whether she has it within her to accomplish this project. The "common ideal" postulated by religion and democracy consists of helping others, a gesture that is fundamentally foreign to the psychological makeup of the characters in question. This character adheres to this ideal, striving inwardly to seem noble enough to accomplish it, thus establishing a state of "false consciousness" (Weissman 10). Unconsciously, she endeavors to present the required amount of goodness to the exterior world. To do this, the "falsely charitable" character constructs a "bridge of illusion.... disposing so simply and satisfactorily of all those alleged virtues that are intended to reform and improve others" (Jung 8 : 272). The most important part of this game of deceptions is to establish "identity with the collective psyche", which "brings with it a feeling of universal validity" to the character's acts (Jung 7 : 152). In this way the character protects herself from any attempts to destroy the "bridge" that supports the illusion of her generosity; she links this illusion to a principle perceived to be immutable. This accomplished, she can sustain the illusion by an array of specific "charitable" acts, full of

significance to the character, but empty of even humanity in the eyes of others.

An example of a "bridge" appears in Mrs. Jellyby's entire absorption and unceasing activity in the affairs of public charity. She is linked to such affairs from the very first description of her, given by Mr. Kenge : "[she] devotes herself entirely to the public" (32; ch. IV). She is so fervent and intent in her efforts — for the greater part of the novel, in favour of a project to convert and colonize Africa — that she completely fails to notice what is happening around her; thus her house is dirty, the cook is drunk, and the children are unlooked-after and uneducated (34, 37, 42; ch. IV). Mrs. Jellyby's only reaction to an event exterior to her charity is on the occasion of her daughter Caddy's marriage, and that nothing more than moderate irritation at the fact that her activities will be disturbed, and that Caddy will thus cease to work as her secretary : "if I were not so happily engaged... this would distress and disappoint me. But I have so much to think of, in connexion with Borrioboola-Gha,... that there is my remedy, you see" (315; ch. XXIII). Mrs. Jellyby's monomania for Africa protects her self-idealization from intrusions that could destroy it by revealing the futility of the project and the absence of any beneficial result.

The Dodsons of St. Ogg's, and especially Jane and Sophy, are not as enterprising as Mrs. Jellyby, in that they limit their efforts to attempts to "guide" their family. Jane Dodson Glegg's mission is to correct all those who, according to her, are not dutiful, humble, frugal, or reasonable enough. This domestic ideal enters into every word and gesture of this eldest sister; for example, she

refuses systematically to compliment or encourage her retired husband's penchant for gardening, "[as] if it were possible for a healthy female mind to even to simulate respect for a husband's hobby" (134; bk. I, ch. 12). Any pastime representing for her *a priori* frivolity, no woman who knows her duty could possibly encourage it. This attitude is part of what the narrator refers to as "the responsibilities of a wife as a constituted check on her husband's pleasures" (134; bk. I, ch. 12); a husband having apparently some frivolous idea or other in his head at all times, the wife must perforce safeguard the family gravity. Even such an innocuous decision as what dress to wear is dictated by this perceived necessity to teach others in the family a lesson (230; bk. III, ch. 3), let alone the more important matters such as her will and testament, which will be discussed below.

However, Jane's seriousness cannot be compared with that of Alice Pemberton when it comes to an ideal of domestic perfection. The tour of inspection that she undertakes as soon as she arrives home, the very fact that it is a full, official inspection, constitutes a telling indication of her fidelity to her ideal (West 219). It also constitutes an example of the obsessive-compulsive syndrome observed by Freud, a syndrome which can easily be used as a defense or a mask for the interior/exterior dichotomy explained by Jung. Here the ideal is clearly expressed as a standard to attain and maintain. It dictates the choice of furniture, the attempts to "improve" the housekeeper, and her efforts to manage her brother's and sister's households (220, 222, 223). And yet, all the while Alice exerts herself, she wonders why the people she is doing this for do not

think to do these things themselves. Thus she enunciates the universality that she perceives in her ideal of behavior, cleanness, and dress.

It is obvious from her attitude, as well as from those of Mrs. Jellyby and Jane Glegg, that Alice believes not only in her ideal, but that she is attaining it, and by corollary, that it is possible to attain it. These are two more aspects of the pursuit of the ideal. The image Alice retains of herself — "It's a very pretty house.' ...'We've done a great deal to it.'" (216) — implies this same confident attitude, and can be translated thus : "If it is beautiful, it is because I had a hand in it." As she finds herself so indispensable, she has been waiting for a long time for the reward due to such perfection (217). The efforts to protect the "bridge of chimeras" thus leads to what J. Hillis Miller characterizes as "[an] eternally repeated moment of expectation" (191), the necessity to prolong the wait for the reward in the vain hope that one day the exterior, social perception of her deeds conforms with her inner perception of them.

Although Miller's analysis applies well to Alice, it is to Mrs. Jellyby that he is referring. Her unflagging activity, her "evenness of disposition" (Dickens 38; ch. IV) are attributable not only to the fixity of her ideal, as has already been indicated, but also to her assurance in its completion : "I am more certain of success every day," she announces (36; ch. IV). This confidence also is evident in her contempt for Caddy's "desertion", and her disapproval of Esther's lack of "charitable" (that is, visible, institutional) activity (40, 316; chs. IV, XXIII). Moreover, Mrs. Jellyby offers not only the proof of her confidence, similar to that

of Alice, but also the "proof" of the success of the project, and therefore of the "reality" of the ideal : her abundant correspondence. Mrs. Jellyby's success at saving Africans is measured both by her and by her admirers by the number of circulars she mails in a day (39, 175; chs. IV, XIV). This detail highlights both the fragility of this perception of the ideal — which relies so heavily on an anonymous mass mailing — and the force with which Mrs. Jellyby adheres to the ideal. She clings to the slightest proof in order to sustain her conviction. This insistence can be conceived of as an example of the domination of a "persona", postulated by Jung :

> A certain kind of behaviour is forced on [professionals] by the world, and professional people endeavor to come up to these expectations. Only, the danger is that they become identical with their personas... Then the damage is done, henceforth he lives exclusively against the background of his own biography... One could say, with a little exaggeration, that the persona is that which in reality one is not, but which oneself as well as others think one is. (Jung 9.1:123. As Jung in other passages uses the term persona synonymously with that of imago, the terms will be used interchangeably in this study.)

With her correspondence, Mrs. Jellyby, "professionally charitable", endeavors to appear the very model of the "perfectly charitable", taking the pose demanded of her by her admirers (such as Mr. Quale) and her own perception of the philanthropic ideal. Thus she exercises imposture by mailing.This quotation by Jung also explains why Mrs. Jellyby misrecognizes the profoundly charitable

character, the goodness and self-abnegation, of Esther; the latter's behavior does not conform to the outward behavior of the charitable persona that Mrs. Jellyby recognizes in her ideal. Mrs. Jellyby lives a fiction, and searches for this fictive quality in Esther, which does not exist in her.

In the same way, Mrs. Pardiggle clings to thin evidence of her effectiveness in realizing her ideal, and constructs a fiction around herself as well. Learning of the presence of Esther and Ada at Bleak House, and of their "lamentable" negligence of institutional charitable activity, Mrs. Pardiggle stops by to take them with her on a "visit" to a destitute house. In her idealistic self-assurance, she presents to them the spectacle of herself, highly unconscious of the hostility of the poor family towards her, exercising her "charity" : readings from the Bible, delivering of unreadable tracts to illiterate people, and the almost military order to the family to improve" (102-103; ch. VIII). Thus she plays out her role as "benefactress", sure of her salutary effect, never once searching for the least tangible proof of it outside of the gesture itself. In fact, she has riveted the image of her bounty to her soul so solidly that she finds it completely normal to engulf her entire family in her activity, taking her children's pocket money and her husband's salary in order to make donations in their names (96, 98; ch. VIII). Thus the illusion of charity creates in these women an unshakable faith which enables them to continue the actions that Esther characterizes as being of "rapacious benevolence" (95; ch. VIII), and which correspond to the description of "execrable virtue" that Jung offers (*L'Ame et la vie* 331).

The result of being taken up in one's unconscious imposture is precisely this sort of violence and extremism, that one can also interpret as the result of the tension between the character's inner state and her exterior situation, the necessity for the character to bar the way to any sudden revelation of the imposture from outside. Drawn between these two forces, illusion and reality, the persona of virtue responds with rigidity in order to resist. This effort reveals itself, for example, in the vocal force and powerful movements of Mrs. Pardiggle. As E.M. Forster expresses it,"they will knock in tin tacks with a sledge hammer" (quoted in Monod 411). This force appears also in Alice, who declares her principles without hesitation, clinging to them more and more obstinately the more her husband tries to pry her from them; it is at the moments in which Alice can reimpose this rigidity, in the lulls of the argument, that she can calm herself (246). As will be demonstrated below, this stubbornness leads to her ruin. Since, according to Jung, "the superiority of consciousness is desirable only if it does not suppress and shut out too much life" (16 : 294), and since Alice is threatening the "suppression" of her brother, her sister, and her brother-in-law through her "good deeds", it becomes necessary to suppress her (West 261-63). This opposition between Alice and her family marks her and her attempt to realize her ideal as the destructive forces of the narrative.

In a similar way Miller links Mrs. Pardiggle and Mrs. Jellyby to a force, if not destructive, at least harmful in its incapacity to construct. Or rather, to reconstruct; according to him, the world of *Bleak House* is already in putrefaction: "The world possesses an immanent tendency toward

decomposition, which only the most delicately and absolutely applied constructive force can counteract. And it is just this force which is almost totally absent in *Bleak House*. The world of the novel is already, when the story begins, a kind of junk heap of broken things" (191). Since the process of decomposition is already ended, time no longer "flows"; the narrative is in temporal stagnation, represented by Mrs. Jellyby and her insouciance of schedules (Dickens 37; ch. IV). Thus the dysfunction between the inner and the outer succeeds in breaking the natural "clock", and a dysfunctional being stops time.

The association between the virtuous persona and the destruction or dislocation of her environment appears equally in *The Mill on the Floss*. Judith Weissman discusses the Dodsons as "agents of degeneration" and an example of the "pernicious influence of women" (166, 167). Jane's rigidity in particular evokes a mind, and by extension a society, dying of inertia. Inability to escape from the immobility created by the tension between the interior and the exterior, the refusal of any change that could destroy the delicate equilibrium between these opposing forces, immobilize in turn, all that surrounds the persona. This mechanism can be seen particularly in Jane's efforts to check the more spontaneous, less controlled actions of Maggie.

The immoblity of the Dodsons is especially expressed in their repetitions and their maxims. The Dodsons have a great capacity to parrot formulas; Jane especially characterizes any behavior that she disapproves of as "weakness" (56, 57, 133; bk. I, chs. 7, 12), and insists regularly on the humbleness of others (65, 230, 236,

563; bk. I, ch. 7; bk. III, ch. 3; bk. VII, ch. 3). She speaks of nothing but "the family", thinking of nothing but that long-established unit to the point where she considers her sister Bessy's house "[a] strange house" because it belongs to her husband's family, the Tullivers (56; bk. I, ch. 7). "Duty" is also a word that rises frequently to her lips, especially when it concerns duty towards her (66, 510; bk. I, ch. 7; bk. VI, ch. 12), a duty also strongly linked to her sense of family (137, 561; bk. I, ch. 12; bk. VII, ch. 3). Her talk of inheritances and what they require in the way of duty and behaviour is endless (58, 61, 141, 142, 362; bk. I, chs. 7, 13; bk. V, ch. 2). This terminology defines the narrow limits of Jane's vision and judgement.

As Reva Stump notes, the limitations of such a "man of maxims" cannot but imply narrow judgement, as they exclude the possibility of considering the circumstances of any situation. This capacity is necessary in order to form sound judgements, and is present in the "man of vision" (70). Moreover, Stump interprets this narrow-mindedness as part of a "retrograde moral movement" provoked by this same lack of vision; for this study, this condition can be labeled distorted vision, warped by the self-deception of virtuous imposture. For Stump as much as for Weissman, Jane is the figurehead of negative and destructive forces. The concepts of duty and place that Jane evokes constantly are particularly illustrative of this position. As "the voice of the law within her clan" (Fuchs 430), she pronounces judgement on the behavior of all the others, always with the certainty that it is for their own good. Thus she forbids her sister Sophy to cry for the death of those who are not of the family, considering it an act of squandering (Eliot 61; bk. I, ch. 7).

It is only just, however, to note that Jane is as demanding of herself as she is of others. As has already been noted, she meditates on "the responsibilities of a wife as a constituted check on her husband's pleasures" (134; bk. I, ch. 12). The word "constituted" evokes the idea of a pact, a tacit accord, and Jane makes it a point of honor to keep her word in that pact. By the same token, she expects the husband to keep in mind that same sense of duty : "it's the husband's place to stand by the wife", she reminds him pointedly to reprimand a husband who did not defend her enough to please her in a quarrel with her brother-in-law (138; bk. I, ch. 12). Jane extends this rigid concept of duty to the entire family; thus she acknowledges her duty at the same time that she puts a sister in her place; "Mrs. Glegg, indeed, checked [Sophy] rather sharply for thinking it would be necessary to tell her oldest sister what was the right mode of behaviour in family matters" (143; bk. I, ch. 12).

Another aspect of Jane's limited judgement is indicated by her "rigid restraints on appetite" (Fuchs 430), expressed most often in her attitude towards money. Her prudence attains the absurd, especially in its sartorial aspects. Every new article of clothing is carefully put away until the other is completely worn out : "it was not her way to wear her old things out before her new ones" (55; bk. I, ch. 7.). The narrator highlights the extremism in this hoarding by describing her mold-stained dress : "it was probably that it belonged to a stratum of garments just old enough to have come into use" 57; bk. I, ch. 7). Jane's rigid insistence on sartorial economy nearly causes the loss of these garments by rot. Such decomposition constitutes

another element of the stifling qualities of this falsely charitable person, the eldest member of a family who thinks of herself as its guiding light, and the destructive aspects of an ideal sustained through inertia or immobility. Such an ideal engenders rigidity (Jung, *L'Ame et la vie* 277), and finally putrescence.

Jane,"the most ridigly intolerant of deviation from pattern" of the Dodson sisters (Fuchs 430), is always ready to exercise her prime duty, that of recalling theirs to others. She is the only one in the family who accepts to take Maggie in after her adventure with Stephen Guest, acting on the idea that one does not refuse help to family unless the family member has been proven to be a disgrace; however, she does so indicating how much she will have to change her habits, and insists that Maggie show the "appropriate" attitude : "go to her dutiful" (Eliot 563; bk; VII, ch. 3). During the Tulliver family crisis, she finds it more important to sermonize the children than to sympathize or to find a solution (235; bk. III, ch. 3). This arises equally from her long-standing conviction that the children would be lost without her : "they'd need have somebody to make them feel their duty" (66; bk. I, ch. 7). Without her narrow sense of duty, she is sure there would be only misfortune for them (45; bk. I, ch. 6). The characteristics that Weissman considers fundamental to the society that the Dodsons belong to, "ignorance, self-congratulatory pride in belonging to a place, distrust of everything new" (166) are displayed constantly by Jane with the self-assurance of one who believes she is the only salvation for her family (510-11; bk. VI, ch. 12).

"[The] struggle between the energetic human spirit and a limited and limiting society" that Barbara Hardy identifies as forming the core of *The Mill on the Floss* (47) and that Jane Glegg's struggle with Maggie exemplifies exists in equal form between Mrs. Jellyby and Caddy. Again, a character rendered rigid by the tension of imposture blindly dominates a spirit lacking in this tension and by that fact more lucid. Mrs. Jellyby's inflexible attitude is more fully expressed than that of Jane, as it is limited to a single concept, that of social duty, that of civilizing Africa. In her narrowness, she cannot see the disastrous state of her house and her failure as a parent, any more than she notices her husband's bankruptcy (thanks to her) and Caddy's wedding (45, 314, 315; chs. V, XXIII). Mrs. Jellyby is the incarnation of Jung's observation : "Through his identification with the collective psyche [a person] will infallibly try to force the demands of his unconscious upon others... This disregard for individuality obviously means the suffocation of the single individual, as a consequence of which the element of differentiation is obliterated from the community" (7 : 152). To Mrs. Jellyby, those who surround her are without distinguishing features; her eyes are the prime illustration of this fact : "they had a curious habit of seeming to look a long way off : As if... they could see nothing nearer than Africa!" (35; ch. IV). Mrs. Jellyby's gaze passes through the persons surrounding her, no individual ever receives a look in which he or she could detect a recognition of his or her identity or character. Thus the look illustrates an additional element in the dichotomy between exterior and interior, between the ideal and the real, as it only recognizes what it creates : the image of that

ideal (315; ch. XXIII). Mrs. Pardiggle's eyes are no less remarkable, as they are as blind, incapable of seeing beyond committees, occupied with lists and sums (96-97; ch. VIII). The existence of these two women can be reduced to their functions:

> Identification with one's office or one's title is very attractive indeed, which is precisely why so many men are nothing more than the decorum accorded to them by society. In vain would one look for a personality behind the husk. Underneath all the padding one would find a very pitiable little creature. That is why the office — or whatever this outer husk may be — is so attractive : it offers easy compensation for personal deficiencies. (Jung 7 : 145).

Mrs. Pardiggle and Mrs. Jellyby identify with their causes to the point of losing their own identities, at the same time that they are incapable of recognizing the identity of others.

Alice Pemberton does not reduce her functions to a single duty; she believes she is too indispensable in all things. Her concept of duty may be narrow, but she finds a way of fitting it to all occasions. Two centres around which her vigilance gravitates particularly are those of the family and the servants. In any circumstance concerning them, Alice shows an intransigence that conforms to her inner model. The ardent seriousness with which Alice treats family questions is announced from the very beginning of the narrative : "she was never one to take family duties lightly" (West 210). What she considers family duty is revealed little by little in her negative judgements on the members of her family. Childless herself, she takes the

liberty of remonstrating with her sister over the upbringing of hers (225); in fact, she indicates precisely the reactionary nature of her theories on the matter : "'If you used shorter words...and looked after your children in an old-fashioned way, it might be better" (226). Her ideas of duty and her perception of failure in duty bring her to meddle constantly and irritatingly in the lives of Madge and Walter, Leo and Evie (234).

Her perception of the family becomes such an idée fixe that Alice evokes it at the very moment when her husband is trying to explain to her that her perceptions are the very cause of her harmful actions towards this family (255). To cut the argument short, she flings him an accusation : "You haven't any family feeling" (234). From her point of view, refracted in the prism of her psychic gulf, this is true. Jimmy possesses none of the family feeling that she exalts, and of which she considers herself the prime example, because this concept of family unity exists only on Alice's "bridge", a bridge invisible to Jimmy. Alice cannot perceive of this incapacity of Jimmy's without destroying the bridge, and Jimmy cannot cross it. Thus paradoxically, Alice makes a just criticism, but it is based on a false opposition between her and her husband. Protected by her certainty in her vision of things, Alice feels free to extend the importance of her duty towards civilization itself and all its functions. When Alice says, "You'd never have any civilization at all if you didn't have the people who know best teaching all the others what to do" (234), it is clear that she places herself at the head of the list of "people who know best".

Thus Alice justifies her zeal in correcting the demeanor of her servants. "She knew she had an almost perfect manner with subordinates", the narrator announces, and adds, "she really took trouble over training them" (217). This "perfect manner" invariably consists of picking over little details, making fastidious inspections of every household chore, and scolding severely the least failing — a speck of dust, a misthought menu, the wrong brand of cocoa, a less than exact placing of the table setting, harmless commentaries on one servant by another (219, 220, 230, 231, 238). Alice's obsessive attention and sharp reprimands cause the resignation of her servants regularly, if it is not she who sends them away (221, 222, 232). What she perceives as her zeal in training reveals itself piece by piece to be simple obstinacy and torture.

This torture becomes at times a deliberate act, as Alice tries to catch her servants in the act of negligence. In the name of "thinking out devices for ridding [subordinates] of their little faults" (217), she arrives home unexpectedly, and rings rather than using her key so as to time the maid (214, 216). In the presence of such a torturer few could ever hope to rise above, "freeing themselves [for] a plotless, simple, and just life" (Ginsburg 183). Alice's attitude contributes to the ultimate irony of the situation; it is by trying to spy on her cook that Alice paves the way for her downfall (261).

III. The Self, the Other, and Misrecognition

As has already been indicated, the rift between the psychic inner self and the social, exterior character creates a perceptual blindness that takes the form of

misunderstandings between the blinded one and those around her. This circumstance cannot but profoundly influence their rapport, as J.H.Miller notes: "This self-division is analogous to the impersonal connection between people... in telescopic philanthropy" (209). An impersonal attitude is the salient trait in the relationship between Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle and their families; the latter are only looked on as implements with which to serve the cause. Jane's and Alice's tendency also to measure the behaviour of their family through the prism of their own maxims and immutable principles creates distance between them and their families, which they hide under a pretense of devotion to that family. In addition, the leagues that separate a character's personality from the persona's perception of that personality creates even more distance and a trompe l'oeil effect, an effect of false or skewed perspective. These women have been rendered psychologically myopic by the refraction of the image of the other through this persona. What is most problematic is that it is only through this ideal image that they find even the capacity to communicate with another, without the framework of their projections and their perceptions of their own devotedness and self-sacrifice (never appreciated by the other, in their minds), they simply do not know what to say. This dynamic of incomplete communication is at the very basis of the three narratives.

Miller definitively declares the importance of the problem of the incapacity to communicate in his analysis of *Bleak House:* "It does not seem that a truly human existence is possible here.. no relation between people making possible significant communication" (190). The

distance and incommunicability fragments society and perpetuates its movements towards ruin. The contrast between those who are capable of communicating and those who are not is incarnated in Esther's commentary on Caddy's wedding breakfast; "None of them seemed able to talk about anything but his, or her, own subject, and none of them seemed able to talk about even that, as part of a world in which there was anything else" (404; ch. XXX). Esther, one of the characters who possess some of the "constructive force" necessary to resist societal putrefaction (Miller 191), remarks on one of the forms of putrescence, incommunication, and highlights the fact that none of the "institutionally charitable" personages present — Mrs. Jellyby, Mrs. Pardiggle, Mr. Quale or Miss Wisk can find common ground for conversation. The sort of contact which engenders true conversation is absent: [the] determining contact of people with one another is... immediate and intimate... not between person and institution or between person and person via institution (Miller 207). Neither, let us add, between person and person via a bridge of chimeras. Even an approved charity approved by the others does not constitute a secondary bridge. Bridges are only formed between the persona and its ideal; the narrowness of exclusivity is thus added to the other narrownesses which bind this figure. Esther, however, is free of these trammels, and shows the capacity to communicate, in inverse parallel to these charitable people (Jakobson 45).

In *The Mill on the Floss,* it is the narrator who underlines the barrier that separates the Dodsons from society (304-05; bk. IV, ch. 1). Within the family, no one

perceives of the limited character of their conversation. Jane scolds her nephew and niece or her sisters regularly without anyone noticing the monotony of her tirades (65-66, 143, 362; bk. I, ch. 7; bk. V, ch. 2). But the reader is well aware of this limited quality, and Caraes points it out : "pour Mrs. Tulliver et les soeurs Dodson, chapitrer les nièces est l'unique et saine facon de leur téloigner un intérêt qui se dit bienveillant, mais n'est ni compréhensif ni affectueux" (for Mrs. Tulliver and the Dodson sisters, lecturing their nieces is the only wholesome way to show interest in them, an interest which claims to be kindly, but which is neither understanding nor affectionate) (517). Thus, the idea of propriety is revealed to be one of the facets of communication. Even if Jane could find another way of communicating with the family, she would not dare to use it for fear that it would be "improper".

Caraes' commentary brings the discussion to another element of the problem of the charitable persona's relationship to society. Jane's interest "claims to be kindly"; Jane believes that she has a salutary effect on the family, and that she is the only one who does. This perception has already been commented on, but it is necessary here to examine this aspect of the persona in more detail, as much in Jane as in the other ladies in question. For at the core of their problems of relationships with the others, one finds the image of the self and the image of the other created by the internal/external dichotomy and by inappropriate pursuit of an inapt ideal. In her exalted state, each woman shows her identification with her image to the point where she is completely blinded by it; they experience and display misrecognition of themselves. They proclaim calmly their

superiority, and are astonished that no others recognize it. Thus the insistence of Mrs. Pardiggle, who thinks she is paying herself a great compliment in describing her energy: "you have found me out... Found out, I mean, ... the prominent point in my character. I am aware that it is so prominent as to be discovered immediately. I lay myself open to detection, I know. Well! I freely admit, I am a woman of business. I love hard work; I enjoy hard work. The excitement does me good. I am so accustomed and inured to hard work that I don't know what fatigue is" (98-99; ch. VIII). She continues to enumerate the elements of this supposed superiority describing her astonishment at the quantity of work she can achieve in one day, and the advantage that her energy affords her in the accomplishment of her work. Through all this self promotion, her children fume behind her, communicating through grimaces and closed fists all the falseness of the situation, and Esther wonders if Mr. Pardiggle would like to unburden himself to Mr. Jellyby. Mrs. Pardiggle, full of her persona, never tires indeed, of displaying her superiority, at going so far as to send objects crashing to the floor in her élan. Thus this tendency to knock things over can be read here as a force emanating from the interior, from the source of the imposture, and thus from the necessity to convince or conquer an opposite opinion, two actions created to protect the imago. The contrast between Mrs. Pardiggle's self-aggrandizement and her real character is summarized by Jarndyce when he fumes against the "unsatisfactory company, where benevolence took spasmodic forms" (194; ch. XV). It is interesting to note that in his analysis of the character of Mrs. Jellyby and Pardiggle, Miller's language resembles Jung's closely:

> The effect of this mechanical involvement with the world, an involvement which leaves the inner self of the person untouched and isolated, is a further form of alienation. Such characters lose the sense of their own existence... A wide gap opens between the selves who are involved in the world of impersonal institutions, and the selves they really are, and the latter, lacking all contact with the world, dissolve and disappear into a profound inner void. It is a void of which the characters themselves are not even aware. (208).

Here is the exact notion of psychic rift, the identification of a void or gulf that separates the idealized self from the real self, a rift that is beyond the perceptions of the person. The only modification needed to create an identical text with Jung's is to replace the idea of "dissolution" of the real self by simple displacement, that real self being necessary for the construction of the bridge of illusion and for the resulting tension between the two selves. Otherwise, the analyses of the critic and the psychoanalyst are the same.

Whereas Mrs. Pardiggle boasts only about her work and her energy, Jane Glegg finds several points on which she can claim moral superiority; the "égoïsme têtu" (stubborn selfishness) that Caraes discerns in Bessy (Caraes 517) exists in her eldest sister as well. However, Jane reinforces this superiority by spying on others (Mrs. Pardiggle does not deign to notice others at all, except for the occasional denunciation of Mrs. Jellyby), and by comparing their behaviour, their "weaknesses", to her "strengths". "Mrs. Glegg had both a front and a back parlor... so that she could observe the weaknesses of her

fellow-beings, and reinforce her thankfulness for her own strength of mind" (Mill 133; bk. I, ch. 12). She counts among these weaknesses the visits womenfolk make to each other during the day and the fashion for cotton stockings (134; bk. I, ch. 12). Every difference between her and others is another reason for Jane to exalt her persona. Nonetheless, the force of this persona appears in all its force within the family; when all her dire predictions for the future of Tom and Maggie come true, she remarks that "it was wonderful to herself how all her words came true" (144; bk. I, ch. 13). Adults as well as children are the object of her comparison : "I know it's my place, as the eldest, to set an example in every respect, and I do it. Nobody can say different of me, if they'll keep to the truth" (144; bk. I, ch. 12). The irony of these attitudes is reflected most broadly in her meeting with Bob the peddler. All the while dealing with him "with a triumphant sense of her insurmountable sagacity", she is "had" by him (354; bk. V, ch. 2).

Jane's perception is so skewed that she believes she is the sole survivor of a long tradition : "there would soon be nothing left of the true Dodson spirit surviving except in herself" (229; bk. III,ch. 3). Nonetheless, the narrator belies this point of view by illustrating the continuing existence of the Dodson ideal, an ideal which can be considered a reduced version of the Jungian common ideal: "no daughter of that house could be indifferent to the privilege of having been born a Dodson, rather than a Gibson or a Watson" (44; bk. I, ch. 6). A list of Dodson characteristics follows in this passage, and it finishes with an affirmation of the family persona : "in so far as they were

'kin', they were of necessity better than those who were 'no kin'" (45; bk. I, ch. 6). Thus we see a sort of exteriorized version of the image of Jane, insofar as it finds its origin in an illusion of superiority proper to her clan. The Dodson "family norm" forms a parallel to the "institutional norm" of Mrs. Jellyby's and Pardiggle's public charity, and identifies this norm as the ideal which provokes the gulf between interior and exterior in Jane. Thus another form of conscious attitude is perceivable, inherited from the family, degraded into a set of tics and mummified in its attempts to protect the persona. At the same time, Jane accentuates her superiority within the frame of this familial superiority, and thus operates a second interiorization within the first. Jane is therefore doubly removed from exterior reality, once by a "personal persona" and a second time by a "familial persona".

This double distancing accentuates the sentiment of rift that Jane perceives: "It's little thanks I get for what I do for folks in this world" (140; bk. I,ch. 12). It also reinforces her stubbornness before any exterior attempt to destroy her bridge of chimeras. The most substantial example of this discrepancy is the dispute between her and Tulliver over Tom's education. The subtle struggle flames into open war principally because Jane, who feels she is the only person in the family worth consulting, is pointedly ignored by Tulliver. When she explodes with irritation, her interior image is confronted with the exterior view of her represented in Tulliver's reaction.

> "Mr. Glegg...you see your own kin going headlongs to ruin."

> "If you mean me by that...you needn't trouble yourself to fret about me. I can manage my own affairs without troubling other folks"...
>
> "There's folks in this world as know better than everybody else."
>
> "Why, I should think that's you, if we're to trust your own tale..."
>
> "Oh, I say nothing... My advice has never been asked, and I don't give it."
>
> "It'll be the first time then... It's the only thing you're over-ready at giving." (77-78; bk. I, ch. 7)

The argument escalates, inciting the intervention of Mr. Glegg, who is paid for his troubles in a share of his wife's invective. A dispute started with the member of the family the most overtly threatening to her persona is then swiftly extended to the entire family, who should "know better" than to fail to support her. The message is clear : a husband, at least, if not her own blood kin, should be able to "recognize" the value of her persona. Then Jane projects on others her own misrecognition; she finally flees, ostensibly to show her disapproval and indignation, but in reality in order to escape from this confrontation and save her persona. In this way a policy of "improving" hides a disturbance; the action of arguing corresponds to a discharge of energy from the subconscious, the confrontation provokes a psychic earthquake along the fault line between interior and exterior. This is how such "misunderstandings" finish, and never with an indictment of their own actions, for these people of "excessive ethics" (Jung, *L'Ame et la vie* 289-90).

This mechanism is even more strongly felt in Alice. Alice also becomes the object of an assault; rather than fleeing, she is saved by the antagonist himself, who realizes that his efforts are futile. But before coming to this juxtaposition of points of view, the reader goes through a narrative that blurs the distinctions between them, and momentarily erases the boundaries between interior and exterior. The first voice to describe Alice is ostensibly the narrator's, a voice one initially supposes neutral in its outlook. This voice describes Alice as generous and thoughtful. She announces her early departure from her mother's house "with her invariable consideration", and she tries not to be hurt by her mother's relief, "determined to be broad-minded and generous" (210-11). This descriptive voice follows Alice during the ride home with Mr. Acland, who is presented as an admirer; when he describes in indirect discourse the sort of woman he would like to find—"he wanted ideas...broadmindedness...sympathy..."—the declaration is followed by a description of his interlocutrice : "he kept his eyes on Alice as he spoke, and that was very natural, for she was very nearly a perfect specimen of her type" (215).

It is at Alice's arrival home that obviously less objective elements creep into the narrative descriptions. "She knew she had an almost perfect manner with subordinates" it explains (217); the "she knew" which starts the sentence adds this new dimension to the narration. There is at least a shared opinion between the narrator and Alice; it is not yet clear whether Alice is conscious of this second opinion. This uncertainty disappears immediately afterward; one statement proves to be the pivot between

an apparently neutral narration and a fully personal indirect discourse. "I'm the center of quite a little world here", Alice announces to her new acquaintance (248); from this moment on her point of view becomes indisputably the "center" of the narration — indeed, reveals that it has been its source. This personal point of view becomes more and more evident as the reader progresses in the narrative. The story is told in indirect, interior discourse, it emanates from the point of view of Alice's persona. This device results in the rift being additionally accented, as well as Alice's blindness. The reader proceeds from Alice's interior ideal, and arrives at the exterior where Jimmy is trying to lead Alice.

Alice's persona is free to operate solely within its perspective until Jimmy's arrival at home; this "center of the universe" fills the entire narration during its inspection of the house. Every incident is used as a pretext to exalt her qualities : when she finds a vial of medicine in Jimmy's jacket pocket, it reminds her that she considers herself "the only perfectly normal person, who never said she was ill except when she was ill" (221). After arguments with her cook and housemaid, she meditates on what seems to her their bad character, thinking, "I wonder if anyone realizes just how much it costs me to run this house in self-restraint and patience" (223). Among the remarks she makes about Madge's appearance and household, she offers that which seems to her the most effective : "Look at me!" (224). During this visit and the following one to her brother's, she comforts herself for the cold welcome she feels she receives by thinking of her perceived noble-mindedness : "Nobody can say I am tactless"; "I'm not one of those

people that bear grudges"; "It's only by chance that I was born what I was instead of like [Evie]" (227, 229). She and she alone is the one who can solve her husband's business problems (241). In all, she finds everything she does for her family a great sacrifice on her part (212, 223, 225, 236).

This attitude of sacrifice is a recurring motif in the narrative. Alice reminds herself incessantly how indispensable she is : "she hated to imagine what home would be without her"; "What would Jimmy do without her?" (212, 218, 222). Like Jane and Mrs. Pardiggle, Alice identifies fully with her inner image of perfect goodness, and sees nothing but benefit for her circle in her gestures. Just like Jane, she asks the corollary question : why is it no one else notices such perfection? Every difficulty or misunderstanding provokes this protective response in Alice. The lack of gratitutde she perceives in her mother is in response to this perceived merit as her benefactor (211). The blow that this lack of gratitude could give to the bridge of illusions is avoided by a rationalization. "Perhaps I came too soon, before she was reconciled to giving up all her pleasures for her babies, and she may have felt a grudge against me that she has never lived down" (211). Thus, for each moment of threatening incident, Alice finds a cause in the subconscious... of the other. Alice constantly projects her own psychological flaws on others. The servants are viewed as unpredictable and temperamental, Madge is unconscious, intolerant and petty, Evie is jealous (223, 225, 227, 232). When her husband comes home, she can find only one adjective to describe her afternoon, "horrid", and concludes, "Why does nobody but me want

to be happy and live in peace?" (233). In this way Alice constantly reinforces her fragile imago, reassuring it through flattering self-congratulations and "pardons" for the inconsiderations of others.

Given the fragility of Alice's imago, it is not surprising that she projects her flaws to the point where she cannot recognize any hurt done except to her; to identify the hurt of others would risk provoking a confrontation with their cause, and to designate their source in her own "benevolent" behaviour. "people have always loved being nasty to me" (253); thus she explains the conflicts that arise in her relationships with others as their efforts to do her harm. From the very first sentence of the novella, Alice represents herself through the narrative voice as victim: "She had received a bitter hurt" (210). The mother who does not esteem her (212), the horrible sister and sister-in-law (233), the impolite nephews (225, 228), constitute a group of malevolent attackers surrounding her. Even her husband, with whom she has the least conflicts, is accused of wronging her : "I couldn't bear to think you so completely misunderstood my character!" (235). Even when she notes the positive quality of their relationship, she situates it in relation to herself : "yes, you love me" (237). She never speaks of her love for Jimmy or any other person.

Alice's accusation of misunderstanding constitutes the most total and explicit projection in the tale. Alice attributes to Jimmy the fault that she is most guilty of : blinded by the false perspective created by her persona, she systematically attributes faults to others, not only in their relationship to her but in their relationships to others, to their position, to

their activities, and to their basic social values. Operating under the principle that "We're none of us perfect" (233), she attributes imperfections to everyone but herself. In this way she constructs a fictive world in which to cocoon her persona :

> Just as we tend to assume that the world is as we see it, we naively suppose that people are as we imagine them to be. In this latter case, unfortunately, there is no scientific test that would prove the discrepancy between perception and reality. Although the possibility of gross deception is infinitely greater here than in our perception of the physical world, we still go on naively projecting our own psychology into our fellow human beings. In this way everyone creates for himself a series of more or less imaginary relationships based essentially on projection. Among neurotics there are even cases where fantasy projectons provide the sole means of a human relationship. (Jung 8 : 264).

Thus, every conflict is considered to stem from some fault in the opponent. The servants are not only unstable, but insouciant and unprofessional (217, 221), and Godfrey and Colin are badly brought-up (225, 228, 234). If Madge must dismiss the gardener, it is obviously because she does not know how to manage the household budget (218, 223-24). Alice's mother seems particularly boring and wearisome at the beginning of the story, depicted through the false objectivity of the narration (213-14). Even her beloved husband is accused of hypochondria (221).

Of course, such projections are not invariably negative. It is only from the moment when the relationship enters into conflict that Alice makes negative projections. She finds Mr. Acland very nice, and particularly very patient and tolerant towards Mrs. Anglesey (213-14). He is particularly represented as being very satisfied to accompany Alice (216), in the same way that Jimmy is represented as very content that Alice takes care of his wardrobe (221). As will be explained below, in the case of Jimmy reality is far from being in correspondence with these representations: but in the case of Mr. Acland, it is interesting to point out once more the narrative game of the beginning of the tale. This young man's reactions are evoked at the point in the story when Alice's subjectivity in the narrative viewpoint is beginning to become clear, and he leaves soon after. As a result, his commentaries are left in a state of ambiguity for the reader: do expressions such as "he wanted... broadmindedness", "can you find people fit to be your friends?", or "there aren't enough people like you to go around" (215, 218, 219) indicate positive projections from Alice, or the beginnings of a recognition that this woman has a false image of herself? Are these remarks sarcasms, diplomatic attempts to wake Alice up to her pompousness, sincere admirative comments from someone who does not know her enough yet, or imaginary expressions that Alice has inserted into the dialogue, a supposition of the man's agreement? The text never resolves this dilemma, and the subtle play leaves richnesses of speculation.

The difference in perspective of the Dodsons and their entourage produces the same sort of misrecognitions;

just as for "The Salt of the Earth", misrecognition forms the central conflict of *The Mill on the Floss*. The fissures that appear in the family unity are one piece of evidence : "no individual Dodson was satisfied with any other individual Dodson" (45; bk. I, ch. 6). In spite of the common ideal of their collective persona, each person in the persona carries a "personal persona" which finds all the other individuals deficient. For example, Sophy is criticized by Jane in regard of one of the most pronounced family ties, that of locking away their belongings. The paradox in this commentary is that Jane finds that Sophy locks too much; it is therefore conceivable that a Dodson could be "too Dodsonish" (512-13; bk. VI, ch. 12). But for the most part, disapproval is based on a tendency to fall below the Dodson standard. Susan Dodson Deane, who has a greater fortune and more central social position through her marriage than the other sisters, (whereas the Dodson in general band together outside social circles, which is another way to protect the family persona), starts to abandon Dodson habits, "a change which had caused an occasional coolness...between her and Mrs. Glegg, who felt that Susan was getting 'like the rest'" (229; bk. III,ch. 3); elsewhere, Bessy is accused of succumbing to the Tulliver influence (57; bk. I, ch. 7). Thus a Dodson who becomes an "other" receives reproaches, as the other is a person to be mistrusted:

> It is the same for the primitive : anything strange is hostile and evil. This line of division serves a purpose, which is why the normal person feels under no obligation to make these projections conscious, although they are dangerously

> illusory. War psychology has made this abundantly clear : everything my country does is good, everything the others do is bad. The centre of all iniquity is invariably found to lie a few miles behind the enemy lines. Because the individual has this same primitive psychology, every attempt to bring these age-old projections to consciousness is felt as irritating. Naturally one would like to have better relations with one's fellows, but only in the condition that *they* live up to *our* expectations — in other words, that they become willing carriers of our projections. Yet if we make ourselves conscious of these projections, it may easily act as an impediment to our relations with others...(Jung 8 : 271-72).

If it is so scandalous to fall below the Dodson standard within the family, how much more so is it to be totally foreign to the Dodson ideal? This judgement forms the core of the novel, the struggle between Maggie and the traditional society in which she grows up, most amply represented by the Dodsons (Hardy 47). Instead of finding in this girl's imagination and energy a living force, Jane finds a wanton being, a destructive force — destructive indeed for her persona, if Maggie ever found a way of realizing her dreams of intellectual pursuit. This desire to learn marks her as "other". Bessy sees in her "a mistake of nature", and Sophy an incorrigible pest (45, 9, 240; bk. I, chs. 1, 6; bk. III, ch. 3). Their misunderstanding of Maggie's character is inherited by Tom, the most Dodsonish of the children; through him, all of Maggie's actions in adolescence are blackened, seen through the distorting family persona (228,

262, 382-83, 545-46; bk. III, chs. 2, 5; bk. V, ch. 5; bk. VII, ch. 1). She is forced to live a "negative life" (Caraes 163-64), imposed on her by the negative projections of her aunts, her mother, and finally her brother.

This sort of disjunction appears considerably less in the opinions of Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle; preoccupied as they are with questions of sermons, circulars, lists, and Borrioboola-Gha, they do not take the time to voice, or even to form, opinions of others. The few they do express are invariably linked to their own charitable activities. Both these women find Esther, the most innately good character in *Bleak House*, egotistical and inferior because of her lack of charitable activity (40, 99; chs. IV, VIII). Moreover, Mrs. Jellyby considers Caddy, another kind and gentle character, a degenerate deserter and a naive fool lacking in compassion because she chooses to marry (315, 316, 317; ch. XXIII). This illustrates precisely the situation that Jung describes : "A man cannot get rid of himself in favor of an artificial personality without punishment...As to his selfless altruism, his children have decided views about that" (7:194). However, the most ironic example of disjunction is presented by Mrs. Pardiggle, who considers Mrs. Jellyby not charitable enough of all things because she does not enroll her family en masse for her cause.

IV. Consequences and Conclusions

"Just as outwardly we live in a world where a whole continent may be submerged at any moment...so inwardly we live in a world where at any moment something similar may occur, albeit in the form of an idea, but no less

dangerous and untrustworthy for that. Failure to adapt to this inner world is a negligence entailing just as serious consequences as ignorance and ineptitude in the outer world" (Jung 7 : 204). In each of the three narratives in this study, a moment comes when the disjunction between the perceptions of the self and the other constructed to protect the persona and perceptions of the society so ruthlessly "protected" or "served" by the character become evident to the reader if not to the character. At this point, the destructive qualities of the persona begin to work their "serious consequences" : all the "falsely charitable" persona's efforts result in degeneration.Whether this contribution to the general cataclysm is "positive" — active, the product of blind determination — or "negative" — passive, the result of turning one's energies away from society to the point where that society crumbles, left empty of force — the result is the same: a shattering, an "earthquake" along the fault lines that separate the persona from reality. The world falls to pieces or finishes its final decay.

This decay is the final stage of *Bleak House*, as Miller has indicated. The lack of real virtue in the falsely virtuous Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle has been delineated from the beginning of the narrative. John Jarndyce sums up their disjunction each time he speaks of the "east wind", his euphemism for displeasure, disappointment, or anger. What brings the wind to the east most often is the behaviour of the Jellybies and Pardiggles of the world : "We observed that the wind always changed when Mrs. Pardiggle became the subject of conversation; ...Mr. Jarndyce...had remarked that there were two classes

of charitable people : one, the people who did a little and made a great deal of noise; the other, the people who did a great deal and made no noise at all" (95-96; ch. VIII). The image of air indicates the emptiness of the persona that evokes it, and the force of the air the frenzy with which the illusion is maintained. The substance of the metaphor is in the incapacity of those concerned to reconstruct a single one of the lives they try to save.

Since the mission of these ladies is "global", touching on all institutional charities, the cataclysm they provoke is "global" : everything that has held up against the ruin of society during the novel finally succumbs at the novel's end, burying the tatters that had fallen before. Mr. Jellyby goes bankrupt, revealing Mrs. Jellyby's incapacity to save her own family, reducing her efforts to save the faraway Africans to ironic futility. Mr. Jellyby is at a point in his misery where he wishes his children were dead, so as not to live through such conditions : "the best thing that could happen to them was, their being Tomahawked together" (396; ch. XXX). Nor does Mrs. Jellyby's friendship for Jarndyce and Esther incite her to save Richard from his fatal obsession with the family lawsuit, if only by offering him a trip to Borrioboola-Gha. Certainly, Esther's lack of interest in Africa is equaled by Mrs. Jellyby's lack of concern for illegitimate orphans; thus she offers no "professional "aid to Esther, or eventually Lady Dedlock. Amid the problems and needs that surround her in London, Mrs. Jellyby keeps her imperturbable eyes steadfastly fixed on Africa. In this world of degeneration, there can only be one result to even this project: Mrs. Jellyby does not even succeed in saving Africa : "She has been disappointed in

Borrioboola-Gha, which turned out a failure in consequence of the King of Borrioboola wanting to sell everybody...but she has taken up with the rights of women to sit in Parliament" (836; ch. LXVII). As an ultimate irony, she sends her missionaries, her saviours by proxy, to a fate of slaves.

As for Mrs. Pardiggle, the hollowness of her ideal is revealed as soon as she leaves Bleak House : her children torture Esther, trying to extort money from her and vehemently protesting their situation : "What does she make a sham for, and pretend to give me money, and take it away again?" Esther confides her reaction to the reader : "I have never underwent so much... as from these unnaturally constrained children" (100-01; ch. VIII). This passage is followed immediately by that of the bricklayer's house, and the hostile reaction of the bricklayer to Mrs. Pardiggle's arrival. The futility of her efforts is made plain immediately, as he anticipates her speech and announces he has no intention of ceasing to drink or to beat his wife, two changes that would form part of the "improvement" that Mrs. Pardiggle is trying to inspire. The two good deeds that need to be done are not: the child dies in its mother's arms (Mrs. Pardiggle never having bothered to so much as notice it was ill), and the wife continues to be terrified by her husband, which stops her from keeping Jo in her house (sending him to Bleak House, to transmit his illness to Esther), and from telling Esther of lady Dedlock's visit. When Esther finally finds her mother after having followed the false trail created with this woman's complicity, Lady Dedlock is already dead from exposure (103, 774; chs. VIII, LX).

Tulliver's perception of the disjunction between Jane's perception of herself and his of her has already been mentioned. Here the attitude of St. Ogg's as a whole can be added : "it was only a wonder that there was no tinge of vulgarity about [Maggie], considering what the rest of poor Lucy [Deane's] relations were... It was not agreeable to think of any connection...with such people as the Gleggs and Pullets" (Mill 448; bk. VI, ch. 6). Moreover, Weissman's description of the degenerative influence of the Dodsons has already been remarked : the level of illusion has been situated at that of the family, and so the disaster is in the family. Jane participates in Tulliver's ruin as much as his endless lawsuits do. It is after the argument referred to, and at the end of which Jane abruptly leaves the Tulliver home (78-80; bk. I, ch. 7), that Tulliver stubbornly decides to have no more debts towards her ; he sells his loan to someone outside the family in order to reimburse Jane. The debt involves a mortgage on the mill's furniture (146, 217; bk. I, ch. 13; bk. III, ch. 1), which thus becomes one more thing to lose at the time of the ruin and illness of Tulliver.

However, the direct effects of Jane's "help" fall on Maggie. Jane has announced since the beginning of the novel, "I've said it over and over again...that child'ull come to no good. There isn't a bit of our family in her" (240; bk. III, ch. 3). She is regularly and solidly seconded by her sisters, even Bessy, who considers Maggie a judgement of God against her (26; bk. I,ch. 4). This condemnation of Maggie's "badness" — of her imaginative character — contributes to her fall : by failing to nurture Maggie's gifts, Jane has left them uncontrolled, and Maggie's exacerbated thirst to develop them leads her to her clandestine meetings

with Philip Wakem and her infatuation for Stephen Guest. Tom, schooled by Jane, shuts his door to Maggie when she comes back to the family, a disgrace that Maggie tries to redeem by saving Tom in the flood during which they drown (583-88; bk. VII, ch. 5). Jane does defend Maggie when she returns to St. Ogg's, but it is too late; one gesture of real benevolence cannot erase the effects of an entire life of false (561-63; bk. VII, ch. 3).

Finally, the case of Alice presents the only sustained effort to confront her with the falseness of her ideal. Jung warns that it is a difficult task:

> Yet if we make ourselves conscious of these projections, it may easily act as an impediment to our relations with others, for there is then no bridge of illusion... The individual is then faced with the task of putting down to his own account all the iniquity, devilry, etc. which he has blandly attributed to others and about which he had been indignant all his life. The irritating thing about this procedure is the conviction, on the one hand, that if everybody acted in this way life would be so much more endurable, and a violent resistance, on the other hand, against applying this principle to oneself. (8:272).

The agent of this confrontation is the person whom Alice misrecognizes the least, her husband Jimmy. "He always tries to spare me things, he is always kind" (242). At the end of the narrative, she starts to find just how much he has spared her. However, if Jimmy is the only one to struggle so forcefully against the persona, he is not the first to try. Madge attempts it as well, during Alice's visit, when she

contradicts her opinions on their mother and daughter(225-26). The cook, more from malice than a wish to cure her mistress, blurts an exact description of the persona and the threat hanging over it."If you was a lady with a nagging tongue, always finding fault with everything and making trouble where there's only kindness meant, then I suppose we might all be wanting to drop poison in your food. But you aren't like that, are you, mum?"(232). However, the persona is too strong to succumb to such brief attacks. At any rate, a response is ready in the form of a projection: "What was the reason for this madness that affected one and all of the servant class?"(232).

Jimmy's assault is more prologned. It starts immediately after his return, and by modulated, tactful references, aimed at dissuading Alice from ridiculing her mother's story-telling penchant and from meddling in her nephews' and nieces' upbringing; all these commentaries are swept away by Alice under the pretext of her duties to civilization. When Jimmy ties to make Alice promise to "leave Madge and Walter, and Leo and Evie alone for a bit"(235), the persona is staggered, suddenly and momentarily exposed; Alice defends herself with tears, and laments being "misunderstood". Jimmy responds by joking about the situation, and Alice promises, but insouciantly (236). Dominated as she is by her imago, Alice cannot take such a request or such a promise seriously. The assault is interrupted by dinner, which Alice finds successful and Jimmy ruined. He tries to make his wife understand that her dominating character had overwhelmed their dinner guest, whom he hopes to gain as a client, adding,"Its odd how people don't come to me. Its almost as if one of us were

'unpopular in the country"(241). This comment is too subtle to strike the persona: Alice responds by calling the people of their neighborhood "clods".

While getting ready for bed, Alice starts to create plans for "saving "Madge again, and Jimmy realizes that her erstwhile promise is of no consequence to her. He therefore begins his final direct assault on the false image that separates him from his wife, and separates his wife from the world. Jimmy explains to her all the misconceptions she has of her "benevolence", and all her wrong ideas about her family — that Madge is not a bad housekeeper, but has to make do with a ruined fortune resulting from a bad investment, that she is not slovenly, but ill; that Leo suffers the side-effects of the gassing he received in the First World War, that little Betty is becoming intolerable in her imitation of Alice; and finally that all these problems had been hidden from her precisely because of her negative, accusing way of "correcting " these people, which would lead them into fatal depression (244,247,251,252).

These revelations alternate with descriptions of the outer Alice that attempt to pierce the armor of her idealized self and confront her with her own imposture." You couldn't possibly give up such a good opportunity of ordering somebody about, of making them feel inferior to you, of making their destiny seem so that if it worked out well they'd have you to thank for it, and not themselves"(247). Instead of the sacrificial saint that Alice regards from within herself, Jimmy depicts Alice from outside the persona, more harpy than saint, more damning than redeeming. Instead of a thoughtful woman, who always finds the best

and most selfless way of helping others, he describes an assailant, an assassin who always knows where to strike, what weak spot will feed her imago : "you hurt people... You find out everybody's vulnerable point and you shoot arrows at it... and from time to time you give them a twist...nobody likes having salt rubbed into their wounds, even if it is the salt of the earth" (249). The "salt" that Alice offers tastes more like gall to others.

But Alice cannot and will not taste this bitterness herself. In the figurative mirror that Jimmy holds up to her personality she sees only the shortcomings of others, just as in her actual dresser mirror she sees only Jimmy's face. Starting with Jimmy himself — "what's the matter with you tonight, Jimmy?" (248) — Alice deflects all his accusations on others. She calls Madge disloyal, Evie traitorous, Mrs. Anglesey an unnatural mother, and all others cruel. "People are always so nice to me at first...but afterwards when I get to know them something hateful happens to them and they turn around and are cruel to me" (254). Alice notices the "sudden transformation" of her interlocutors, but cannot link that transformation to any element of her self. The persona, concerned, adds to these accusations yet another evocation of "family duty" (255), thus reinforcing its attempts at self-protection with an appeal to the perceived universal ideal that contributed to forming it.

Alice's cataclysm is personal, corresponding to her personal ideal of perfection ("look at me!"). By being the only one to suffer the consequences of her own overheated persona, Alice can be said to fulfill a prophecy contained in the biblical passage: "if salt has lost its taste... [it] is no

longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men" (Mt. 5:13). Ironically, Alice is "trodden under foot" — put under ground — by the one who suffers the least from her "devotion". Equally ironically, Alice is lost by the very zeal which renders her death necessary.

At this point Jimmy finds himself before the same problem he was facing before the beginning of the story, a moment hinted at in several ways. He must decide whether he will watch Madge, Walter, Leo, and Evie die under the "care" of Alice... or kill Alice to stop her from destroying the others. It is thus at this time that the full image of the destructive force of Alice is clearly presented. Before making that decision, Jimmy receives a confidence from Alice; she tells him what the nightmares she has been having are about. "...something comes nearer and nearer to me...and I know in the end it's going to destroy me utterly...I could perfectly well stop this awful horror coming at me. Only for some reason I can't" (258). Jimmy (and the reader) immediately identifies in this dream the subconscious signaling the existence of the persona, crumbling under the strain of the disjunction between it and reality, its bridge of illusion slipping, it is calling out for help, either in reinforcing the imago, or in giving way to reality. At the same time, Jimmy recognizes Alice's inability to consciously acknowledge her dual state, and thus to resolve the dichotomy by a painful reexamination of her self. He then proceeds to his final, necessary act. To accomplish it, he makes use of the very persona that is threatening his world, turning it against itself. Jimmy uses Alice's obsessive habit of constantly "training" her servants.

After the cook brings Alice her nightly glass of hot chocolate, Jimmy asks, "Why has Cook gone down the passage to the spare rooms instead of going upstairs to her bedroom?" (261). While Alice slips into the hallway in an attempt to catch the cook in an act of transgression, Jimmy pours the liberating poison in the hot chocolate.

Alice incorporates the fullest articulation of the false perspective created by an idealized persona filtering or refracting the different aspects of human relationships, while the Dodsons, Mrs. Pardiggle, and Mrs. Jellyby reveal more fully the ideal itself, and the principles that form it. All of these women illustrate the destructive capacity or constructive incapacity of this false and fissured psychological edifice. This problematic of the persona, of the ideal imposed from the outside, is a phenomenon that partakes fully of its natural metaphor; salt does not acquire savor, it posseses it as an integral part of itself. A good that one strives for must have as impetus an inner sense of this good, rather than an outer social construct. In this way the metaphor that Rebecca West took to refer to Alice Pemberton applies equally to the characters of Eliot's and Dickens' novels. An ill-assimilated ideal or an ideal impossible to assimilate in a person ill-adapted to it creates an imposture whose sterility harms more than elevates. The "unsaltness" of Alice, Jane, and the ladies of charity is at the basis of their relationships to charity and to the others in each narrative.

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SAMUEL BECKETT AND "LANGUAGE-ONTOLOGY": A STUDY OF *WAITING FOR GODOT* & *ENDGAME**

A book entitled "The Feast of Language" and purportedly written on the use of language in Absurd Theatre dramaturgy, would be considered startling.[1] The simple reason would be, that of the aspects touted as the essentials of Absurd Theatre, the most characteristic, and, therefore the most significant, is one about a pervasive language collapse. Language may have been a feast for the Elizabethans, yet Flaubert downwards and Beckett, Ionesco and Pinter included, it is considered only a cliche-ridden co-agulate all through, and therefore, the French and English language could hardly be exceptions.

But a feast indeed it remains, at least in Beckett, notwithstanding his awareness of the 'Artuadian limitation' of this profoundly communicative medium. For, the fact is that in Beckett, the avant-garde of the day had a living classic author to emulate, and this is recognised by John Kalb in Beckett in performance.[2] Kalb wrote his book

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after 70 viewings of different Beckett plays. He also had interviews, not only with the author, but also with some famous Beckett actors and actresses. Kalb asserts, that Beckett, particularly the later Beckett, has a definite logocentric thrust. It shall be shown presently how *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* are also considerable logocentric exercises in themselves, the talk of a language-collapse notwithstanding. Infact, there is a drama inherent and innate to language-dynamic or "ontology" itself, that is, to the way a living language exists; it is this that is at the hub of Beckett dramaturgy.

But why use the word 'ontology' at all, for, does not it have its overtones? Thus, Fuller and McMurrin in the *Glossary* to their *History of Philosophy* define it as a science or knowledge of being as such. Would it be too much to extend it to the knowledge of the being of Language and call it 'language ontology'? Would it be stretching it far to extend this, and say, that it could also be an 'ontology' if it is a theory of the nature of Language. *The Random House Dictionary* says that 'ontology' is the study of the nature of existence of being in the abstract. Being, in the abstract of Language! *Chambers Dictionary* would have it as a discourse on being. If we treat *being* generally, could it be a *being* of language too? In all these definitions 'ontology' is that which treats of the nature and essence of things. The effort in this article then will be to arrive at an understanding of the nature of Language as gauged from two plays of Samuel Beckett. The exercise is essential, for, too many an authority is afloat trying to get away with its own understanding of the Language-Phenomenon.

The exercise should prompt everyone, infact, even an undergraduate, to give some of his or her own thought to what all this fuss about Language is about. Infact, before accepting intellectual authority, are we not duty-bound to think on our own? If this is not done, crass-authority will take the cake and we shall stand swearing, generation after generation, in the name of a Saussure, Derrida or Chomsky, as earlier, it was a Kant, Hegel, Marx, or Freud, that people swore by, in matters both of Thought and Language. Thus, 'epistemology' as defined by a Russell could, on technical grounds be foolproof as philosophy, but does it take away the power of the ordinary mind to perceive and have each its own way of looking at the world, that is, have his or her own 'epistemology'? Similar is the case of Language. We do not need a Plato or Aristotle to define to us what is Language, for, even ordinary minds could have their own perception of the Language Phenomenon, provided, they give some serious thought to it. Yes, an ordinary mind with an ordinary life-experience, even banal and crass, would too, if permitted express some opinion or the other about the profound medium he or she communicates in or with. Imagine an Englishman, an ordinary plain Englishman, behold two wooden contraptions; now, to identify them he would utter throat-sounds, 'table' and 'chair'. Next, imagine an Indian, as plain and ordinary as his or her English counterpart, and imagine him or her also behold the same wooden contraptions. The Indian would come up with different throat-articulations; this time it would be 'maze' and 'kursee'. What would these two experiences tell yet

another Englishman and Indian, who have watched all along: that a word is a mere throat-sound, having no sanctity whatever; also that, if they mull over the subject ever so slightly, they would conclude that the poor human beings that we are, we keep trying in various throat-sounds to grasp and grip at reality; but, that we go away and out of the world trying, without even barely touching, what was believed by us to be, and, what we felt so committed to call 'reality'. Do we need a Plato, Aristotle, Saussure, Derrida, Marx or Freud to confirm this for us? Of course, there is nothing against either of these scholarly names, but, trouble starts the moment one goes too far along with either of them. The price paid is in the need to swallow their terminology. Thus, 'deconstruction' is just an attitude to Language; that, it can be arbitrary; that, it can be contradictory; that, it can be artistically, critically, as well as, ideologically manipulated. Well then, hold that attitude but why fuss over the attitude and much worse, reap intellectual benefit out of it. Why seek justification in mystifying terminologies like *differance*, or *langue*, or *parole*, or, *trace*, or *absence*, or *syntygmatic* and *pragmatic*, or, elatedly talk of *aporias*, or, for that matter of the death of the author? Incidentally, *trace* need not only register *absence* for it could be the trace of a *presence* also. The term carries both a negative (ab absence), as well as, a positive (a presence)charge. Why limit it to an absence only? Why speak of a language 'there'? Why say that language gets afflicted by rhinorhicitis,[3] for, after all it is a society that is afflicted and never the medium called Language. It is, always and

only, a particular use that gets cliche-ridden. Why then blame the medium? For, is that same cliche-ridden medium, if creatively used, not able to communicate its collapse? And if a language is able to communicate its collapse, would it not be a powerful language to be able to do so? The price that ordinary minds pay by going after authorities is that they get trapped into various terminologies, out of which, each such mind thinks it a scared duty not to get extricated. Beyond that sacred terminology the power of one's own ordinary thought is lost. It gets imprisoned, suffering an elated solitary confinement; but to what avail? Does it get us anywhere on our own, suffer as it does to make us lose our own independent effort at thought? Or, is it a pleasure travelling on stilts? A language does get sick. Joyce and Shaw tried a revival in their own ways. Beckett did not, but, he had to be subtly creative to be able to communicate its collapse. Kennedy[4] does say that Beckett creatively uses language to communicate its collapse, but Kennedy does not go far enough. As for Beckett, he had to be a past-master in language to be able to communicate its collapse. He was aware, and could use the subtle beat and rhythm of the English Language to terrible advantage. Now, come to think of it, an ordinary mind like the one that now writes this article, for that matter visualizes Language, neither, as all Grammar, nor, as all Linguistics, nor as all Literature also! The essential and most fundamental nature of Language is dramaturgic. That, language 'speaks us' may be characteristically Heideggarean, but, that is hardly the whole truth. It denies the permanent potential in

Language to offer itself to creative exploitation. The entire work of Samuel Beckett, be it as novel, poetry or drama, is abundant example of a tremendous creative use. All current effort at theory is coolly trying to understand 'the process of signification' only, and that is why it suffers, because, it limits itself terribly. A language always has its grammar and its codes, in short, its system and structure. But whoever got struck by this? No, not an author ever, who is today very non-challantly pronounced dead. Was a William Shakespeare, or, was a Samuel Beckett ever balked or strangled by a language-system? It is just a coincidence that both were dramatists. However, what Ferguson[5] defines in *The Idea of Theatre*, as 'the essential dramatic' is also an essential feature of life, as well as, of Language, which as we live our lives, elated or banal, remains a profoundly communicative medium. Its essential feature, its basic reality, its nature and essence, is in the drama that is inherent in it and innate to it. It is this Language, as a 'dynamic' or the Language-dynamic that has been termed as 'ontology' in this article. Codes, systems, and structures do not give enough thought to this language-potential, or, use this potential only to theorize.

It is in this sense also, the sense of a language-dynamic or ontology that Austin Quigley's[6] position on the nature and function of language in Harold Pinter's plays will be countered, but, only to the extent of the caveat that would Quigley have considered this language-dynamic in his readings of Pinter. Now Quigley's take-off point is the position that Pinter-Criticism of the previous ten years, that is, 1965-1975, has stagnated primarily

because it took language-function as constricted to a referential exercise only, when language as language has no core-meaning, or even a boundary. Therefore, as Quigley says, the failure "to make adequate allowance for the inherent plurality of language is .....the major blind spot". Language can be used for 'infinite purposes, just one of which is the referential function'. Language has 'no final range of application and no final range of meaning'. Infact , no function is central to language, for now we have theories about its multi-functionings. Next, Quigley refers to an incident in Pinter's youth, which may help, he says, understand a central component in the language of Pinter's plays — the element of a latent threat or menace. For, as a young Jew, threatened on the streets, Pinter opted for a language-assault, delivered as a short, clipped-phrase, to transform a situation of aggressive hostility to one in which the threat was neutralized. The conversation once started super-imposes the context, giving to the initiator a kind of a coercive power to inhibit and direct response. This, according to Quigley, is the key to the puzzling dynamics of the Pinter-dialogue. There is a 'positive force' in what is said, and 'a negative side' too, for what is said by the initiator of the conversation may shut out the response options of his companion, an idea Quigley takes from JR Firth. And therefore, there is a coercive force in language to promote responses. Of course, there may be refusal to respond too, but this is left unconsidered in its detail, for the person encountered may have the stronger personality and be more clever and refuse to role-play; and , this raises questions extraneous to the phenomenon

that is given the nomenclature of Language. But then, to continue Quigley's reading of Pinter, we find the language of a Pinter play functioning primarily to dictate and reinforce relationships. Objective truth is not the compulsion. Rather, it is the need to control and shift conversation to the coherence of a desired relationship, which could even be a desperate desire for a change of attitude. Again, relationships help develop self-concepts. Others must act according to one's 'self-concept' which needs 'corroboration,' and which is till then of 'uncertain value'. Defeat may mean a return to a private reality which Pinter thinks is dwarfed because external confirmation is lacking. Therefore, relationships in Pinter become major battlegrounds as the characters strain to negotiate a mutual reality. The processes and consequences are central to this linguistic function. This effort to negotiate a mutual reality remains the central focus of the linguistic activity in many of Pinter's plays. Quigley quotes from Pinter's *The Dwarfs*, Len's protest to Mark:

> You're trying to buy and sell me. You think I'm a ventriloquist's dummy. You've got me pinned to the wall before I open my mouth. You've got a tab on me, You're buying me out of house and home. You're a calculating bastard. (Pause). Answer me. Say something. (Pause). Do you understand? (Pause). You don't agree? (Pause). You disagree. (Pause). You think I'm mistaken. (Pause). But am I? (Pause).
> (*The Dwarfs*. p.95, Faber & Faber.)

Or, Quigley quotes again a conversation from Pinter, this time from *The Dumb-Waiter*:

Ben : Go on, go and light it.
Gus : Eh?
Ben : Go and light it.
Gus : Light what?
Ben : The kettle.
Gus : You mean the gas
Ben : Who does?
Gus : You do.
Ben : (his eyes narrowing) What do you mean? I mean the gas.
Gus : Well, that's what you mean don't you? The gas.
Ben : (powerfully) If I say go light he kettle I mean go and light the kettle.
Gus : How can you light a kettle?
Ben : It's a figure of speech. Light the kettle. It's a figure of speech.
Gus : I've never heard it.
Ben : Light the kettle ! It's common usage.
Gus : I think you've got it wrong.
(*The Dumb Waiter*, p.135. (Methuen))

Language, as used here, is a medium to negotiate a mutual reality, be coercive about it, and evoke a favourable response. Language has no core-meaning, no central referential function. According to Quigley, Pinter uses no new language; he only puts Language to just one other use. But then, the particular language-use can reduce a character to a ventriloquist's dummy, or, make another shout that he was just using a figure of speech, indulging in common usage. Of course, this can never be

visualized in a Beckett play, for, this playwright has no ventriloquist's dummies, and, as to metaphors and figures of speech, they just are anathema. This is because, metaphors would mean metaphysical-systems, and, refer to philosophies, ideologies, thought and illusion, when in the Beckett ouvre, thought itself is futile. It is intense, but it is useless. It leads nowhere. The worst that Man ever did was to have thought. Lucky's schizophrenia is all that there could of 'thought', though, the human predicament in the play is so desperate that Vladimir and Estragon long to opt even for schizophrenia, as their prolonged stage-business with Lucky's hat abundantly manifests. Earlier, try as he might, Vladminir could not get even a pigeon-truth out of his own hat, even as Estragon could not from out of his boot. From head to toe, that is, the existential predicament was a manifest Grotesque. It is because of this that Beckett's plays are bereft of all illusion, including the illusions of Language and Reason, because, Language had become cliche-ridden, and the Word's meaning had totally rubbed off; and, as for Reason, the less said the better. But, then the tragedy is that the desire to express is perpetual, and therefore the 'talking-I' must go on and keep up its murmur, although, there is nothing to express, and nothing in which to express. It is an Irrational Predicament, be it that of the Universe, or of the human-being, the latter particularly being an Existential Grotesque. Man is, as it were, Hugh Kenner's Cartesean Centaur[7], an Existential-Disjunct because mentality-at-a-swing is entrapped into the corporeality of the Centaur, of which, Winnie in *Happy Days* is one profound manifestation. A disjunct it is,

because there are no Descartean 'pineals' in the brain that yoke the Mind and Body together. Consequently, the human being's torso-corporeality is compounded of ad hoc levers, and, is just a presence thrown 'there'[8] on to the world-stage. It is an entrapped impasse; it is cruel, hard, harsh, and aborted; it is futile and bereft of meaning. It tantamounts to a Waiting, a generations-old Waiting, for an Absent-Presence, who never arrives; or, an Ending, that is, a Cataclysmic Catastrophe at its tether, which is at the verge of a grinding halt, but prolongs, for, there are many dramaturgic permutations, but, the End never arrives. The human cataclysm itself is just 'there', in various states of decrepitude, be it as Hamm, Nagg, Nell or Clov, or, be it as Lucky, Estragon or Vladimir, or as Krapp, or Winnie or Willie, or, even as Not-I. This Existential Grotesque is a condition that would continue and be worse after death, as is the condition of M, W1 and W2 in *Play*. A Beckettian personae, therefore, could hardly ever protest a figure-of-speech, or, metaphor, or much less, coerce a mutual reality. Nor, would principles of 'freedom','choice' or 'responsibility' apply. Under the circumstances, language too would be plain and simple; direct and ordinary; 'crass', and even 'banal'. But, would that not be judging Beckett's language according to standards which do not apply to it, because as already mentioned earlier, trope or metaphor to Beckett was manifest anathema. That is, what is pronounced 'banal' or 'crass' is a condition or state of language that refuses to aspire either to metaphor or to thought, or ideology. Why, therefore, dub a language banal, if it deliberately excluded itself from

traditional ways of expression. Rather, is not Beckett's use of language at its profoundest simple? Yes, simple, but very discomforting, and even terrifying. Is it not a language creatively[9] used, of which, Lucky's cliche-ridden long speech is about the best example. And, what could be more close to the experience of a devastated cataclysma outside than Hamm's anxious enquiries from within a ramshackle-shelter, coaxing Clove to look at the sea, then at the ocean, and next, at 'the base' and finally at the sun to find if anything survives! Each time, Clove's reply is either 'all gone' or 'the same'. Would not tropes and figures be themselves crass interference's making the immediacy of the experience remote, away, and at so many removes? Beckett was indeed an author who had become a classic in his life time.

As an author, he could not resist even a language-beat, having once generated a momentuous rhythm: 'Who? Godot/Pah!/ The wind in the reeds', and, 'Dumb... /'Dumb... 'Dumb?/ Since when?' are just two examples where the rhythm could not be resisted. This, infact, was Beckett-the artist's problematic. For, there was nothing to express and nothing in which to express, yet, the obligation to express was a nagging compulsion. Rather, Beckett, as the master-artist of Language was actually aware that Language, as a dynamic, had a dramaturgy inherent and innate in it. Its range was extensive, for, it could communicate stasis, as well as, immortality! Remember Wilson Knight singling out dramaturgic exchanges barely 15-20 lines each from both *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Pericles*, as examples to

show how Shakespeare used language-dynamic or drama to communicate the feel of immortality itself. Of course, for communicating stasis and failure, Beckett is the best example. Infact, language 'ontology' or dynamic has subtle dramaturgic features, even in its so-called most ordinary and banal use. Thus, to begin with, the phenomenon that is Language cannot be an-all-at-once, one-time articulation, nor, 'as structure', 'there'. Also, its words come in sequence, and, are part of a process, be they written or spoken. There is conflict too, over-lapping also, and ambiguity. Language has drama in it; there is suspense, hint, suggestion, implication, innuendo and even non-sequitur. It has thrust in it, and , attack, parry and withdrawal. It has feeling, emotion, passion, and, is full of ideas. Language is hardly ever neutral says Burke. To say that it has only a reference capability is to stunt and dwarf its characteristically extensive range and capacity, and, practice reduction to an extreme. What is basic to Language is its own dramaturgy, its share of sound, repetition, beat, rhythm, movement, variation, and pauses and silences. Its ritual can cause gnosis, and its ritual can debunk illusions; its ritual can demean the ritual itself. Its pauses and silences may often have no meaning, and yet, those very pauses and silences can be screaming resonances. Language has counterpoint, negation and pungent interrogatives, each of which is profoundly remarkable dramaturgic material. Language has jargon also, and cliche, as well as, contortion and convolusion. But, only a trope-oriented mind can call a particular use of language banal, crass, ordinary or vulgar. Be what ever its instant function, the

central thrust of Language is grounded in its inherent dramaturgic-dynamic, and then too, not on any one function or one dramaturgic use. Language needs only to be provided a context. Infact, the human predicament, by its sheer corporeal manifestation, whether absent or present, keeps the environment sensitized to a perpetual dramaturgic context. For special purposes, an extraordinary situation may be created 'there' on stage, through pantomime for example, as in *Endgame* or *Krapp's Last Tape*, whereafter, sheer language-dramaturgy could takeover, and add with each language-exertion, concretions on stage, of such abstract phenomena as *Waiting*, *Ending*, or *Time*, or, an *After-life*. In the process, Language gets creatively manipulated, as Beckett manifestly does, to situate on the proscenium, the frightening thought of a language-collapse. Each one of these instances will be dramaturgic compulsions innate to the language-dynamic or language- 'ontology' itself. Call its impact situational or context-coloured, but Language cannot ever be bereft of its dramaturgy. It can forgo metaphor, or, figure of speech, but it cannot forgo its own drama. There is drama where Language exists, and where it does not, there is drama of a spoken silence. Drama partakes of the nature of human existence itself, be it as grotesque or otherwise on earth, or, as Beckett visualizes in *Paly*, in after-life. Wrench away the object of reference, even put Language into a suspended limbo if you please, but, it is in the dramaturgic nature of language-phenomenon to keep the drama of a 'talking-I' perpetually a-ticking. And, the master of the language-medium that Beckett is, he just has to activate

this drama, which shorn of ornamentation, is at its 'essential dramatic' and touches terrifying intensity. In these circumstances, the more banal and work-a-day the language, the greater becomes its efficiency to overwhelm, making even the laugh it generates so much more discomforting, for, what is destabilised is the comfortable complacency of illusions through this generated drama of Language. Quite plainly, it suits this playwright's purpose abundantly, because Beckett has to concretize on to the proscenium grotesque stage-images, and thereafter, let language-dramaturgy itself take over. Of course, we may trace in Beckett manifestations of vaudeville, music-hall, circus, and commedie dellarte, yet, these conventions could hardly ever have been his single interests. They suited Beckett alright, but this much and no more. Beckett's commitment was to his theme of the Existential Grotesque, be it at ordinary conversation levels, or at the work-a-day banal. Incidentally, Vladimir and Pozzo can often become poetic and, there is a Vladimir-Estragon exchange that definitely is lyrical. This was simply because a maddening language-dramaturgy could help concretize, on stage, abstraction like *Waiting*, *Ending*, *Time*, and questionable *Happiness*, 'as well as, an *After-life* at devastating levels. Even Shakespeare did this, dramatizing 'honesty' and 'thought'—

Oth. : Is he honest?
Iago : Honest, my lord!
Oth. : Honest, ay, honest

Othello Act III, Sc III.

Or, yet again:

Oth. : What dost thou think?

Iago : Think my lord!
Oth. : Think my lord!

Othello Act III, Sc III.

Or take the line from *Julius Caesar*

Caesar! (...)

Beware the Ides of March.

Julius Ceaser, Act I, Sc.II

Now, it could be anybody's guess just where an imaginative actor or director would want to begin that line from *Julius Caesar*. Will it be from the word 'Caesar', or will it be from 'Caesar the Ides', or will he choose to begin, like the hesitating sooth sayer and shout 'the Ides of March Caesar' first, and then follow it with 'Beware', repeating 'Beware Caesar' again, to anxiously climax the entire exercise by shouting out full-throatedly the whole line

Beware Caesar the Ides of March.

After all, was it not a poor soothsayer, very low down in social hierarchy, desperately trying to warn the powerful and distant Caesar, passing through the market-place, against a possible assassination attempt on him later.

Now, observe what Beckett does to the throat-sound called 'happy':

Vladimir : You must be happy too deep down if you knew it.
Estragon : Happy about what?

Vladimir : To be back with me again.
Estragon : Would you say so?
Vladimir : Say you're even if it's not true.
Estragon : What am I to say?
Vladimir : Say I am happy?
Estragon : I am happy.
Vladimir : So am I.
Estragon : So am I.
Vladimir : We are happy.
Estragon : We are happy.
Silence.

Act II.

Also, the rhythm generated by the repetitions and ritual articulations of 'happy' and 'So am I', and, 'We are happy' cannot stop at the stage-direction 'Silence', and therefore, later picks up again making the word 'happy' lose its meaning completely, and, what is terrifying, take on the colour of a futile *Waiting*. Thus, after the stage-direction 'Silence' the rhythm generated helps shape, as it continues, the play's theme—

Estragon : What do we do now that we are happy?
Vladimir : Wait for Godot

Act. II.

What Beckett does is to first install, on a sparse almost-empty-stage, as a presentational 'there', through tableau or pantomime or otherwise, a human predicament as sheer torso-corporeality, entrapped and inflicted. The stage thus supplied to his satisfaction, he lets language-dramaturgy take command. The language exercise further instils the physical theme with concretizations of *Waiting*,

Ending, or, *Time*, gathering human existence into folds of the Irrational and the Absurd, reducing it into a purposeless and meaningless impasse. Thus, despite talk of a language-collapse, it is Beckett's language, and, the dramaturgy inherent in its dynamic, that ultimately shapes the theme. The following is an example, also given earlier, of how Beckett generates a language-rhythm, and writes, as its beat and rhythm go along. In this example, the repeated use of 'Dumb' is tell-tale. After the fourth 'Dumb', Beckett could not help but complete the generated rhythm writing 'Since when?' in order to round off the rhythmic-movement he had already gathered Vladimir asks Pozzo to make Lucky sing—

Pozzo : Who?
Vladimir : Lucky
Pozzo : To sing?
Vladimir : Yes, or to think or to recite.
Pozzo : But he's dumb.
Vladimir : Dumb!
Pozzo : Dumb! He can't even groan.
Vladimir : Dumb! Since when?

Act II.

Beckett's technique is to put a small verbal-exchange which could even be just a wee-bit of whatever he wants spoken on his dramaturgic anvil, or, into his dramaturgic sieve, and thereafter, leave the rest to the activated drama within language to do what Beckett wants done. Thus, observe the thought of a 'vision' destroyed through the generated dramaturgy inherent in language itself, the challenge of which is set up through pungent interrogatives, What?, Who?, or Why?—

Vladimir : You must have had a vision.
Estragon : (twisting his head) What?
Vladimir : (louder) You must have had a vision
Estragon : No need to shout.
Silence

Act, II.

Yet another activated language-rhythm debunks the thought of Godot. In this exchange '...he/who?/Godot/ Pah!' is a rhythm that has to end at 'The wind in the reeds'—

Estragon : You gave a fright.
Vladimir : I thought it was he.
Estragon : Who?
Vladimir : Godot.
Estragon : Pah! The wind in the reeds.

Act. II.

Again, observe yet another activated language-rhythm devastate the idea of Time, as well as, Thought—

Estragon : You're sure it was this evening.
Vladimir : What?
Estragon : That we were to wait.
Vladimir : He said Saturday. (Pause) I think.
Estaragon : You think

Act. I.

Similarly, Redemption, Grace, Saviour, Heaven, Hell, and the Evangelists are all given a slight dramaturgic language appraisal, and, literally erased of and out of their meaning. The following is one more example:

Vladimir : One out of the four, of the three two do not mention any thieves at all and

the third says that both of them abused him.

Estragon : Who?
Vladimir : What?
Estragon : What's all this about? Abused who?
Vladimir : The Saviour.
Estragon : Why?
Vladimir : Because he couldn't save them.
Estragon : From hell.
Vladimir : Imbecile! From death.
Estragon : I thought you said hell.
Vladimir : Well what of it.

Act I.

Or, observe how the activated drama of a language-rhythm destroys the already contextualized 'man-in-god image', once man, once god, and at another time god-man or man-god. Also, observe the uncertainty a particular language-dramaturgy creates about both man and god, or, was the uncertainty about Godot:

Vladimir : Poor Pozzo.
Estragon : I know it was him.
Vladimir : Who?
Estragon : Godot.
Vladimir : But it ain't Godot.
Estragon : It's not Godot.
Vladimir : It's not Godot.
Estragon : Then who is it
Vladimir : It's Pozzo.

Act I.

Yet again, observe how the innocuous 'And so on' or 'until he comes', or, 'And then the day after tomorrow'

acquire sting, and destroy hope and meaning, as well as, any complacencies about them. The sting these innocuous statements acquire is because of the created context of *Waiting* for an absent-presence which has consistently failed ever to appear; observe also how language acquires tint and colour:

Estragon : He should be here.
Vladimir : He didn't say for sure he'd come.
Estragon : And if he doesn't come.
Vladimir : Well come back tomorrow.
Estragon : And then the day after tomorrow.
Vladimir : Possibly.
Estragon : And so on.
Vladimir : The point is—
Estragon : Until he comes.
Vladimir : You're merciless.

Act I.

The drama inherent in the language-dynamic is again there in Godot's decision-making, or, for that matter, all or any decision-making, or, any issue, thought, idea, or effort, and, if it is a perpetually 'waited for Godot' then worse. The entire piece is made a dramaturgic exercise; observe particularly how the rhythm concludes in the beat-full ritual 'I think it is/I think so too'. :-

Vladimir : I'm curious to hear about what he had to offer.
Estragon : That we'll take it or leave it.
Estragon : What exactly did we ask him for?
Vladimir : Were you not there.
Estragon : Can't have been listening.
Vladimir : Oh-nothing very definite.

Estragon : A kind of prayer.
Vladimir : Precisely.
Estragon : A vague supplication.
Vladimir : Exactly.
Estragon : And what did he reply?
Vladimir : That he'd see.
Estragon : That he couldn't promise anything.
Vladimir : That he'd think it over.
Estragon : In the quiet of his home.
Vladimir : Consult his family.
Estragon : His friends.
Vladimir : His agents.
Estragon : His correspondents.
Vladimir : His books.
Estragon : His bank account.
Vladimir : Before taking a decision.
Estragon : It's the normal thing.
Vladimir : Is it not?
Estragon : I think it is.
Vladimir : I think so too.

Act I.

Lucky's speech is a phenomenal dramaturgic exercise, and, shouted though it is, and, replete too with apparent cliches, it acquires, through the creative use of these very cliches, that is, by their deliberate repetitions, appropriate positioning, and rhythm and beat, a dramaturgic power that devastates the concepts of God, Heaven and Hell, Scholarship and Research, Nutrition, Physical Exercise and Sport. Though Lucky's speech sounds a schizophrenic's word-salad, yet, there is a method Beckett puts into its 'schizophrenia', so that, its final effect is comic as well as tragic. The speech tapers-off

into a predicament that becomes the crux of any effort at thought by Beckett's Existential Grotesque. This, that is, the Existential Grotesque is, according to Beckett, the perpetually aborted human-predicament 'inspite of the tennis the labours left unfinished... grave still.. abode of stones... in a word... I resume... alas... alas... abandoned... unfinished... the skull, the skull the skull... in Cinemara... inspite of the tennis... the skull alas the stone Cunard... tennis... the stones... so calm... Cunard.. unfinished.....'

And thus it is that 'man wastes and pines/wastes and pines'. This is Beckett appropriating the language-dynamic, as a process, to creatively extract meaning out of rubbed-off cliches. The cliches, thereafter stand rejuvenated, alive and stinging, and help demolish an entire culture, erasing it of all its sanctity and even reason. This apart, Beckett's language has lyricism too, the lyricism that is in the whisper of the dead voices in conversation, or, in the Pozzo or Vladimir epiphanies. However, in each case it is the drama innate to language, of which Beckett is absolute master. His plays are indeed logocentric, and the apparent language collapse is only creatively generated. Also, even the generated collapse of language situates on the proscenium, the over-whelming and intense drama of a meaningless and irrational human condition. All said and done, to any enquiry 'What is the theme, master?' Beckett's answer would have been 'Language! And, the drama which is its intrinsic feature.'

This brings us to *Endgame*; let us touch upon it

very briefly. This play, vis-a-vis *Waiting for Godot*, slightly varies the theme and adjusts technique, and once again the Absurd takes on stage a dramaturgic shape. Now, it was the 'shape of the thought' which had always inspired the Beckettian urge as author. Thought, in *Waiting for Godot* takes a circular shape, while in *Endgame* it is linear. It is to Beckett's credit that a slight variation in theme, and equally slight variation in technique makes *Endgame* appear a fresh, and infact, original dramatic experience of the Absurd, which is equally if not more tragic and terrifying than *Waiting for Godot*. In *Endgame*, the two new thrusts are as tableau and pantomime, both of which are exploited well to institute the Non-end on stage, as a presentational 'there'. This having been done, the drama of the language-dynamic again takes over. But then, in *Endgame* we do not find as much work-a-day banal conversation, or, cross-talk, or slap-stick, as we do in the earlier play. However, the theme is once more Language, but this time it is the drama inherent in long-speech-deliveries and not in short one-utterance exchanges. Instead, in *Endgame*, extended speech constructions are destructured, in various ways, but primarily through innumerable Pause-punctuations. It shows the master of language found at a different language-play altogether. In shape and construction, *Endgame* is utterly different from *Waiting for Godot*. Thus, there are no Silences in *Endgame*. Moreover, each long-speech is often required to be delivered, part by part, even bit by bit, in constantly changing voice-tones, say, part as Normal and the next as a Narrative delivery: first as Nagg's voice,

then as narration; next as the voice of an Englishman, and after that the tailor's. Hamm, too, has his extended speeches de-structured in this way. For example, in one speech he changes tone to speak as 'the rational being' does. This Hamm-delivery spreads over two and a half pages and has 6 directions for tone to be Normal, and, 7, for it to be Narrative; and it has as many as 39 Pauses. Quite plainly, the language-theme exercise in *Endgame* is entirely different from the language-theme exercise in *Waiting for Godot*. Once again, it is a master of language at work, enjoying if not its feast, then, at least the sheer creative manipulation of its dramaturgy which this playwright knew could latch profoundity on to a simple interrogative—

Have you looked?

This is because, given a cataclysmic outside, and, the temporary ramshackle-shelter from which that outside-catastrophe is peered at, observe how ominous this simple exchange becomes-

Hamm : (Gesture towards the window light) Have you looked?
Clov : Yes.
Hamm : Well!
Clov : Zero.
Hamm : It needs to rain.
Clove : It won't rain. (Pause)

(p.13)

Would not trope be an interference and jar upon the intensity of this simple exchange between Hamm and

Clov, for, their experience is overwhelming and immediate, and, only the barest minimum of the language-dynamic or the drama inherent in language would situate this condition on stage. Why call it a language breakdown then? Had Beckett not become a classic in his life-time? Was he not logocentric? Wasn't his drama more presentational than representational, or a blend of both as Jonathan Kalb argues very effectively.[10] Kalb also says that Beckett has two themes: the physical theme and the language theme. To this it may be added that each Beckett play has its own characteristic physical and language theme. That is, in each it is a different existential grotesque and also, that each play treats creatively the ways of the Language-Phenomenon in a way very specific to that particular play.

Beckett exploits language creatively, and, though his complaint about 'the obligation to express, with there being nothing to express' is persistent, yet, it is always a master of the drama inherent in, and, innate to Language who is forever at work. Beckett is acutely conscious of this. The subtle dramaturgic nuances intrinsic to Language 'ontology' itself, are, what a master-manipulator of language has, at his or her command. Therefore, instituting each time a different concretization of the Absurd Non-end on stage, he manipulates language 'ontology', or, 'dynamic' to very characteristic creative use. Beckett's language-drama is the dramaturgic shape of an artist's dilemma in the exploitation of a medium which the artist cannot escape and keep himself away from. This is all the more, because, Beckett the

language-artist has a sensitivity to his medium remarkably attuned to its basic dramaturgic quality. Beckett is aware that sheer corporeality or sheer mentality, or, both yoked to and inflicted upon each other, and, supplied each time with a different variety of the 'language-theme', even at its stark barest, is abundant material for drama of the keenest and profoundest quality. In each Beckett play, the Language-theme itself is then one of the playwright's primary themes.[11] In each play it is just one of the ways language could be made to exert a different kind of dramaturgic pressure for its theme of the Absurd. For, Language-ontology is brimful of 'the essential dramatic', and, is each time exploited with fresh creativity to overwhelm the proscenium with intensity. Therefore, scholarly enthusiasm about 'a Heideggerian language-collapse' shortsightedly reduces Beckett, even in a critical assessment, to a mere footnote to existentialism, because the slant is pronouncedly pro-Heidegger or pro-Kierkegaard or Sartre, and says very little about Beckett the playwright. The net result is that Beckett becomes the greater mystery, little having been said on Beckett the artist. All this can hardly ever help understand this dramatist of the Absurd, hunted as he becomes for existential philosophy. This hardly ever serves the cause of literature. It sadly remains only theory or only philosophy. Towards literature there is a shy-off and theoretical or philosophical compulsion takes the front seat. The literary work is named and labelled a 'text' and only seldom opened. The author is pronounced dead and 'meaning of all kinds' suffers convulsion. Names are dropped as excellent authority. If earlier, critics

pronounced absolute judgements and the binary opposition, 'I know/And you don't' ruled the roost, the texts were at least opened. Today, the same binary still remains at play, but, now theory passes for literature. The 'process of signification' does come under powerful scrutiny, but, that it must signify to 'someone' or 'somebody' is emphatically and effectively put under wraps. If the interest still remains 'human' it satisfies only the robot-intellect!

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KEATS' *ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE*: A STUDY IN KEATSIAN AESTHETICS

It is a flaw
In happiness to see beyond our bourne--
It forces us in summer skies to mourn;
It spoils the singing of the nightingale.
Keats, *To J.H. Reynolds* (1818), ll.282-85.

A Poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why.

Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*[1]

Ode to a Nightingale (1819) is commonly placed highest among Keats' odes. Not only is it considered to be subtler and finer than his other odes but to be much more than what the sensuous experience and luxurious indulgence recorded in it suggest. Critic after critic such as Middleton Murry, Arthur Symons, and A.C. Bradley have strongly supported, each in his own way, its claim to the status of a supreme order as the work of the consummate artist. However, it is F.R. Leavis who, in what is in a sense a response to those critics, most brilliantly demonstrates the beauty and richness of the ode as a unified whole in terms of its artistic qualities. It is a performance in literary criticism which,

even before the term was invented, had come very close to New Criticism.[2] Not only Leavis disagrees with Murry's elucidation, in *Keats and Shakespeare*, of the "deep and natural movement of the poet's soul" underlying his poems, for, he agrees with Symons that Keats "was not troubled about his soul, or any other metaphysical questions, to which he shows a happy indifference, or rather, a placid unconsciousness," Leavis also dismisses Murry's equation of Keats' odes with the works of Shakespeare's maturity as "extravagantly out," giving his reasons why he thinks they suffer as they do when measured against certain standards governing the actual achievement, on the one hand, and "promise and potentiality," on the other.[3] Complementing Symons' admiration that Keats "practised [ahead of time] the theory of art for art's sake," Leavis shows that Keats is a better artist than appreciation of his as an able practitioner of that theory suggests. In reference to what Bradley says of the *Ode to a Nightingale* in comparison with *To a Skylark*, Leavis comments:

> Now, if intellectual structure is what Shelley characteristically exhibits, the *Ode to a Nightingale* may freely be allowed to lack it. But the superiority of the *Ode* over *To a Skylark*, which beside it appears a nullity, is not merely a superiority of details... The rich local concreteness is the local manifestation of an inclusive sureness of grasp in the whole. What the detail exhibits is not merely an extraordinary rightness and delicacy of touch; a sureness of touch that is the working of a fine organization. The *Ode*, that is, has the structure of a fine and complex organism; whereas *To a Skylark* is a mere poetical outpouring, its ecstatic "intensity" being a substitute for realization in the parts and for a realized whole to which the parts might be related.[4]

The above is the main argument of Leavis' critical appreciation of the *Ode*. Before I turn to a detailed discussion of the *Ode*, let me take a brief look at Keats' development as a poet leading to his greatness.

Keats is commonly acknowledged as the most aesthetic and most form-conscious of all the English Romantic poets. His odes, marked by a classical sense of economy and decorum, are a record of a state of intense imaginative and aesthetic feeling. They achieve their effect through fine structural constrasts, synaesthetic and kinesthetic imagery, careful choice of words, assonance and alliteration, and a delicate balance between the body and the soul. They suggest that the Romantic spontaneity of feelings and Romantic longing for spiritual transcendence be expressed with a certain discipline and economy of form. Like Wordsworth in *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* and Shelley in *A Defence of Poetry*, Keats attempts to formulate his *ars poetica* in his letters and carries his aesthetic theories into practice as he develops as a poet.[5] His ideas of "the authenticity of the imagination, life of sensations rather than of thoughts, negative capability, truth, beauty, intensity, and loading every rift of the subject with ore," demonstrate not only his conception of life and art but also his commitment to the principle of pure aesthetic pleasure. It is perhaps from considerations along these lines that Cleanth Brooks opens his essay on "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by saying that "There is much in the poetry of Keats which suggests that he would have approved of Archibald MacLeish's dictum, *A poem should not mean/But be*."[6]

The impersonal, non-moral, and disinterested character of imagination, which he thought Shakespeare "possessed so

enormously," thrifty use of words to achieve a concentration of meaning in poetry, and intensity as the mark of excellence in art are some of his views towards the definition of his aesthetic theory.[7] Combining both the expressive and the objective modes of literary art, his later poetry, especially the odes, surprises us by "a fine excess" and fills us with "a luxuriant content." However, it also presents itself as a "well-wrought urn" (Donne's *The Canonization*) or a "storied urn" (Gray's *Elegy*), like the poet's own Grecian Urn, a finished product in itself, remarkable for its linguistic beauty and structural unity. The result is a unique aesthetic accomplishment, giving the work the status of a self-sufficient and self-sustained entity, defined by its own internal laws of contextual coherence and linguistic patterns.

Like the other major Romantic poets, Keats is highly distinctive in his attitude to and treatment of nature. For Wordsworth, nature is a powerful agent imparting profound moral and spiritual lessons, and chastening and consoling in moments of suffering; for Byron, it reflects individual force and freedom and moods of ego, despair, bitterness and cynicism; for Shelley, it becomes an inspiring power propagating revolutionary gospels of liberty and equality as opposed to tyranny and oppression; for Keats, it excites human thirst for sensuous experience, reflecting the inner world of human beings and accentuating their joys and pains. The Wordsworthian didacticism, the Coleridgean naturalizing of the supernatural, the Byronic search for an impossible perfection in what he thinks to be a ruined world, and the Shelleyan escape into an unrealistic futurist philosophy of love and beauty have no place in Keats' sensuous and aesthetic devotion to nature, expressed in concrete and pictorial images. Consistent with his aesthetic ideas of literary art, his great odes, each "uniquely rich and magical tapestry," derive their aesthetic effects from the

"inlaid beauties of image and phrase and rhythm"[8] He employs every technical means of poetic skill to gain intensity and to enhance sense impressions through passionate and meditative response to the source of his poetic inspiration.

The aesthetic beauty, which lies in its expressiveness and exaltation, reflecting man's inner world in the external form, heightens the thematic contrast between the real and the ideal, the temporal and the eternal. It intensifies the poet's joyful, romantic longing for the world of art and nature as he struggles to transcend the inevitability of that of time and flux. His imaginative participation in the ideal becomes poignant because of his acute awareness of the fleeting nature of not just the joys in life, but also of that imaginative participation itself, that is, his conscious knowledge that his imaginative attainment of the fanciful is possible only in a dream which can be sustained for a moment only and must be followed by a return to the actual world of death and disease.

Thus, Madeline in *The Eve of St. Anges* discovers the limitations of romance as she awakens from her dream not only to see that her romantic wish has come true but also to re-enter the state of human condition of "eternal woe." Reality dispels the vision of the knight in *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, leaving him "haggard" and "woe-begone." The poet discovers the limitations of art in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. The urn may turn the impermanence of the warm exciting life into permanence and may initially seem to be an imperishable source of joy, inspiring an exquisite awareness of its immortalizing power in the poet. Nevertheless, eventually it is proved to be nothing more than a mere cold shape, "no better than flesh-and-blood experience, however brief and unhappy that may be." In *Ode to a Nightingale*, the poet comes to question the means of transportation itself—

the imagination — to the ideal and natural world represented by the nightingale: "The fancy cannot cheat so well/As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf." Both in general movement and in specific parallels, the half-conscious, dreamy, sensuous reverie of the Keatsian persona in a pastoral setting, followed by a return to ordinary consciousness, anticipates that of the Mallarmean faun in relation to his two nymphs. Both *Ode to a Nightingale* and *A Faun's Afternoon: Eclogue* (1876) provide lofty discourses on the nature of art, contrasted vividly with the mundane; both are enigmatic, pastoral, and symbolic (Symbolist?), exploring the conflicting claims of the imagined and the real, twilight areas of consciousness, and the possibility of making permanent an exquisite experience.[9]

The usual movement of the poetic treatment of this typical Romantic theme is that the poet takes a Romantic flight from the real world into the world of fantasy and then returns to actuality. Watson is right in saying that "The pattern of a going-out and return is common in Romantic poetry," which he applies especially to Keats, whom he considers to be "the most self-conscious of young poets."[10] The return is not without a gain in the sense that the poet ultimately discovers that as a human being it is futile to try to escape from what is inescapable or into what is impossible — the fact of human condition and its limitations, including human physicality and human mortality. This is what Abrams calls the Romantic plot of the circular or spiral quest cast in a symbolic mode.[11] Taking the form of a pilgrimage, the journey in search of transcendence gradually leads the pilgrim back toward his point of origin in earthly reality. The spiritual journey back home may be defined as

> the painful education through ever expanding

> knowledge of the conscious subject as it strives—without distinctly knowing what it is that it wants until it achieves it—to win its way back to a higher mode of the original unity with itself from which, by its primal act of consciousness, it has inescapably divided itself off... So represented, the protagonist is the collective mind or consciousness of men, and the story is that of its painful pilgrimage through difficulties, sufferings, and recurrent disasters in quest of a goal which, unwittingly, is the place it had left behind when it first set out and which, when achieved, turns out to be even better than it had been at the beginning.[12]

The "painful pilgrimage" that Abrams refers to contains the elements of the Keatsian opposition or ambivalence between idealism and skepticism. Both the *Nightingale* and the *Grecian Urn* odes express the poet's divided self as they grow out of creative tension between pull and counter-pull. "From first to last," says Bush, "Keats' important poems are related to, or grow directly out of... inner conflicts."[13] With regard to those two odes where conflict is of central importance, Bush remarks, "Keats feels not so much the joy of the imaginative experience as the painful antithesis between transient sensation and enduring art." The *Nightingale* and the *Grecian Urn* odes are justly celebrated for their characteristic representation of the complexity of the unresolved tensions in the poet's mind. What is more interesting is that the poet seems to be contented with his imaginative discovery of the unresolvable ambiguity of his own experience.[14]

Ode to a Nightingale does in fact begin with that sense of ambiguity of experience even before the poet is aware of its paradoxical nature. The oxymoronic blending of intense pleasure and numbing pain, that is, the sense of painful pleasure conveys a

peculiar state of mind divorced from everyday reality and prepares the poet for a visionary flight. The movement is one of subtle shift from a sense of diminished life (drowsy,numb, dull, sunk) to that of full life (happy, green, light-winged, full-throated ease). The impulse to journey into the higher realm of the nightingale becomes stronger in the second stanza as the poet longs for various intoxicants, cool as well as warm, as the means for the intended flight. The complex synaesthetic imagery, involving the senses of sight, smell, taste, and hearing all together, suggests that the journey into the dim forest is to be made not by the annihilation of these senses but through their intense gratification. The reference to the mythological Hippocrene is particularly significant, for, as the fountain of the never-dying Muses, it contrasts with the earlier reference to the mythological Lethe as the river of forgetfulness and becomes a symbol of the poetic aspirations for permanence and immortality.

The third stanza takes the *Ode's* dialectic pattern further by directly putting it in the larger context of the reality of human condition —the temporal world of sorrows and sufferings. The contrast between reality and transcendence, advance and withdrawal, is brought to focus by what Leavis calls the "prosaic matter-of-fact" tone of this "completely disintoxicated and disenchanted" stanza. Fogle considers the stanza as being "low-pitch,... by itself unremarkable but functioning as an integral part of the poetic whole."[15] The enumeration of human ills resembles the note of human suffering in the third stanza of the *Grecian Urn Ode*, with both world of nature represented by the singing bird and the world of art depicted on the urn leading the poet through a series of well-structured stanzas to the same painful awareness of human reality. This is foreshadowed by "the agonies, the strife/ Of human hearts" (*Sleep and Poetry*, 11.124-25).[16] The dualities

between the poet's opposed instincts of joy and pain are developed through a pattern of progression and regression — a pattern that is evident since *Sleep and Poetry* and *I Stood Tip-Toe*.

Contemplation of the miseries of the world constitutes a familiar Romantic theme. The Romantic poets had a deep insight into the tragic aspects of life and their poetry is full of melancholy notes. Although Byron, as Abrams points out, does not fit into the commonly understood Romantic frame of mind for his cynical, satiric, or mocking tone, sometimes even the Byronic despair at the condition of being bound to "this degraded form" (CHP.3.699), "a fleshly chain" (CHP.3.685) or "dull life in this our state/Of mortal bondage" (CHP.4.41-42) finds expression in elegiac reflections about human life, very similar to those of Keats'.[17] However, Keats' presentation of the condition of human suffering is different form the lyric cries of pain in his fellow Romantics, especially Shelley, for he does not directly speak out his own plight from which he consciously attempts to disengage himself. He seems to achieve his *catharsis* by means of his "negative capability" of observing from a distance the general human lot. Commenting on his "controlled detachment," Paul de Man says:

> Suffering plays a very important role in [Keats'] work, but it is always the suffering of others, sympathetically but objectively perceived and so easily generalized into historical and universal pain that it rarely appears in its subjective immediacy...his intense and altogether genuine concern for others serves, in a sense, to shelter him from the self-knowledge he dreads. He is a man distracted from the awareness of his own mortality by the constant spectacle of the death of others. He can go very far in participating in their agony...the suffering referred to is so general that it

designates a universal human predicament.[18]

Despite his capability to maintain an objective distance, Keats' participation in the agony of others becomes deeper by his awareness of his own suffering, which in turn becomes objectified through that of others. The result is that he can devote himself wholeheartedly to an experience of a pure, intense joy, no matter how brief that may be.

That is what takes place at the opening of the *Nightingale Ode* when the poet feels himself absorbed in the happiness of the bird to the extent of being self-forgetful and numb. It is the same sensuous and aesthetic experience that the poet returns to after a survey of the suffering human community when he takes a visionary flight into the imagined ideal world of nature in the fourth stanza. If the pessimistic meditation on the human predicament delays his imaginative flight, it is a necessary momentary delay that helps to build momentum required to launch the flight and determine its nature. Echoing the "charioteer" and the "Bacchus" images from *Sleep and Poetry* (1.127 & 1.334 respectively), Keats says that he is going to use the medium of poetry, that is, imagination, not stimulants, to reach the enchanted dark green.[19] The outpouring of joy in the magic realm of starry sky and moon-lit landscape indicates that the fourth and the fifth stanzas mark the climax of the poem. Keats' keen perception, penetrating to the essence of things, provides him with intimations of immortality and transcendence. The joy and happiness felt in an abstract way in the first and second stanzas seem to be "repeated in a finer tone," to use a phrase of Keats', in the marvellously pictorial fifth stanza:

> I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
> Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
> But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet

Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eaves.

As the poet points "not to dissolution and unconsciousness but to positive satisfactions, concretely realized in imagination," there occurs a "rich evocation of enchantment and delighted senses," with "the touch of the consummate artist...; in the very piling up of luxuries a sure delicacy presides."[20]

In the stanza quoted above the music of the language created by the "s" sound and the rich texture of the synaesthetic imagery suggest that the poet is lost in a spontaneous luxuriance of feeling. In its soft, overflowing lyricism and vivid description, the stanza is astonishingly similar to Oberon's speech in *Midsummer Nights' Dream*.[21] Both Shakespeare and Keats know their flowers and know how to describe them. According to Helen Vendler, it is Shakespeare and not the living Nature, who is Keats' source for the above lines.[22] The plausibility of such a claim is not to be doubted since Keats, by his own admission in his letters as well as in his early poetry, allowed himself to be influenced by his Elizabethan predecessors, including Spenser and Shakespeare, in an attempt to avoid the eighteenth century Popian style. Making his way through his "burden of the past" (W.J.Bate) and "anxiety of influence" (Harold Bloom), he was, however, able to transform that influence into something inimitably his own. In his poetic techniques, sonnet-like stanzas, and fresh images he demonstrates himself to be so original that his lines seem to have

been inspired by his own aesthetic impulse to the beauty and variety of the immediate external nature and not to the world of literary art. Even when be turns to art, as he does in the *Grecian Urn* Ode, he is able to turn it into something uniquely his own, so much so that the readers are swayed to *his* mood and not to the physical entity of the urn itself.

When Philip Sidney in *An Apology for Poetry* (or *The Defence of Poesy*) defends poetry by saying that the poet creates another nature by endowing the earth with a variety of pleasant associations, he certainly anticipates Keats' flower stanza, which makes, in Sidney's phrase, "too-much-loved earth more lovely."[23] Art, however, reproduces the unpleasant as well, as Keats' third stanza does. Sidney's defence of poetry is, therefore, partial just as his definition of poetry as something that teaches through delight, combining both the Homeric function of pleasure and Hesiodic function of instruction, is not wholly acceptable, for the element of didacticism is conspicuous by its absence in Keats. In the realm of art everything is transmuted into the aesthetically beautiful: tragic and comic, a Shylock as well as a Portia, a Desdemona as well as an Iago, a *Mona Lisa* as well as a *Guernica*. Like Macbeth's last moment conception of life as "a walking shadow" or as "a tale told by an idiot," that of Keats' as "The weariness, the fever, and the fret" or as "a burning forehead, and a parching tongue" is clothed in a light that is never there in mere reality and that gives a certain order and pattern to human suffering. As Shelley says in *A Defence of Poetry*:

> Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that what is most deformed; it marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change; it

> subdues to union, under its light yoke, all irreconcilable things.[24]

The question is one of aesthetic experience of the beauty of reality transferred to the world of art. To an artistically reflective mind, Keats' sensuously described flowers or the ever-young lovers sculptured on the Grecian urn provide more aesthetic pleasure than the real life figures just as the "infinite variety" of Shakespeare's Cleopatra or the "serpentining beauty" of Browning's Lucrezia (*Andrea del Sarto*) seems to be more captivating than that of a real woman.

The aesthetically entranced Keats, unmistakably sounding Lawrentian, wishes to pass away as he imagines himself to be in the home of the nightingale, listening to her song in the moonlit "embalmed darkness."[25] Death is felt to be not just a release from the earthly confinements and mortal pains but also a means to perpetuate the moment of ecstasy. Hints of death-wish have been given by the state of numbness, forgetfulness, and of being faded away "into the forest dim" in the first two stanzas. That state of stasis and the sense of painful mortality summoned up in the third stanza are very different from the poet's wish for death in the fifth stanza which comes out of his sense of a higher mode of existence:

> Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
> To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
> While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
> In such an ecstasy![26]

According to Leavis, the phrase "rich to die" is the epitome of the *Ode*. This is a death Keats has been longing for since early in his poetic career. In *Sleep and Poetry*, he expresses his wish to "die a death/ Of luxury" in the midst of the intoxicating earthly pleasures. His mood of "easeful Death" and that of Shelley's at the opening

of "To Constantia, singing" are similar:

Thus to be lost and thus to sink and die,
Perchance were death indeed! — Constantia, turn!

Shelley's poem comes very close to Keats' in several poetic techniques, including vocabulary, phraseology, and alliteration As Shelley is listening to Constantia's "fast ascending number," he feels the "enchantment" of her "strain" to the extent of flying from the worldly limitations into the limitless skies:

And on my shoulders wings are woven,
To follow its sublime career,
Beyond the mighty moons that wane
Upon the verge of Nature's utmost sphere,
Till the world's shadowy walls are past and disappear.

Like Keats' nightingale[27], Constantia's music proves overpowering for Shelley:

As morning dew that in the sunbeam dies,
I am dissolved in these consuming ecstasies.

The list of similarities in diction and imaginative movement goes on.

It is Shelley's *To a Skylark*, however, that naturally comes to one's mind to draw a comparison with. Both the nightingale and the skylark elicit similar yet different responses from the two poets. As the nightingale "singest of summer in full-throated ease," so also the skylark pours its "full heart/In profuse strains of unpremeditated art." Both of them belong to an ideal region beyond worldy existence. Like the nightingale, the skylark's "keen clear joyance" is conspicuous by its "ignorance of pain," an absence of "langour" or "sad satiety." The skylark is, however, more aerial, more etherial, and dimmer than the nightingale, which is more

natural, more distinct, and more vivid. While both are symbolic of the soaring spirit of imagination, freedom, and lyric poetry, the skylark is conceived in a social and intellectual vein, and the nightingale in an aesthetic and sensuous vein. The skylark is implored to teach and share with the poet its lyrical gifts so that he can make the world listen to his political idealisms; the nightingale is adored for its seeming to be a pure principle of expressive joy and beauty without 'human verbal ideational content" and without the representational function of the visual arts. The lively song of the nightingale, "tuneless and timeless," to use Vendler's terms, is nonrepresentational, nonconceptual, and nonphilosophical. In both cases, it is the listener himself who gives spiritual and philosophical meaning in his own way to his nonhuman subject as he arrests the "spontaneous overflow of [his] powerful feelings" in words.

Keats' attempt to do so is made, as the line "Though the dull brain perplexes and retards" suggests, by holding his self-consciousness in conscious suppression and not by what Coleridge called "willing suspension." His reasoning faculty, hitherto held in abeyance, however, asserts itself in a moment and makes him realize that in the silence of death he would simply become a "sod," separated from his source of joy. The realization, paradoxical in nature, is that he can be "too happy" at the happiness of the nightingale so long as he remains in his mortal state; to overleap the mortal bounds is to pass into nothingness. The skepticism inherent in the situation — tendency to escape the earthbound condition and the sense of futility on the discovery of the limits of that escape— enhances the quality of the poet's aesthetic appreciation and experience of the bird's song. Thus the *Ode* "moves outwards and upwards," in Leavis' words, "towards life as strongly as it moves downwards towards extinction; [it] is, in fact, an extremely subtle and varied interplay of motions, directed

now positively, now negatively."[28]

The understanding of the fact and nature of human mortality leads Keats to reflect with confidence on the immortality of the nightingale endowed with a life of unmixed joy :

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!

His earlier desire to die and then not to die as he speaks of his becoming a sod with "ears in vain" "swells into a strong revulsion against death" in the above line. He "entertains at one and the same time the desire to escape into easeful death...and the complementary desire for a full life..."[29] He is thinking, however, not of the particular nightingale singing at the instant but of its song; in other words, he is thinking not of the "song-bird" but of the "bird-song," which, through the natural species of the bird, had been beautiful for centuries and would continue to be so long after the passing away of the poet's generation. For him, as his *Endymion* opens, "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," not subject to the flux of its worshippers. So is the nightingale, which symbolises "the principle of beauty in all things":

No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown :

The notions of temporality and timelessness put together in this stanza, which, as Gittings points out, hauntingly echoes Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper*, are brought together in harmonious relationship and do not seem to be in conflict.[30] Watson considers the stanza in its movement from the poor of the past to the ancient royalty to the mythical Ruth to "Charm'd magic casements" beyond time as "a marvellous example of the travelling imagination," showing what he thinks the influence of Claude's

The Enchanted Castle.[31] Throughout the poem Keats' imagination "reveals itelf," according to Coleridge's definition of imagination in *Biographia Literaria*, "in the balance or reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities."

Similarly, Keats' romantic longing for a transcendent home is balanced by the mythical and nostalgic Ruth's human craving for reunion with her loved ones. The sense of her ideal homely ties rooted in the common earth nicely contrasts with the remoteness of the "faery lands forlorn" and results in the combined effect of making the poet painfully aware of the increasing distance between him and the nightingale, the source of his inspiration. With such an awareness of the instant and the primordial the upward flight of imagination cannot be sustained any longer. The meditative trance with which the poem begins and which reaches its peak in the fourth and fifth stanzas starts declining with the poet's death-wish in the sixth which closes with the reflection that after death he would at best have his ears "in vain" and "become a sod" to the "high requiem" of the nightingale. The decline continues through the images of "hungry generations" and "the sad heart of Ruth...sick for home" in the seventh stanza and becomes complete with the perfect transition between this penultimate stanza and the last as the word "forlorn" closes the former and opens the latter to toll the poet back to his "sole self." His slow withdrawal from the world of fancy and the bird's slow retreat from the vicinity of the poet's physical location, widening the ever-existing gap between the two, are marked by the slow rhythm of the verses towards the close of the poem. If those verses "Past the near meadows...In the next valley-glades" — in which Fogle thinks "objective description and subjective emotion are fused"[32] — records the "process of withdrawal" in terms of physical locale and landscape, the two closing lines,

Was it a vision or a waking dream
Fled is that music : – Do I wake or sleep?

do so in terms of the poet's own mind whose spark exhausts itself down the line of denouement like "a fading coal," to borrow Shelley's image.[33] The element of ironical ambiguity and skepticism implicit throughout the poem and explicit at the end undercuts the success of his momentary transcendence but completes his aesthetic experience at the level of human perception.

Return to reality with a mature understanding of it is also accompanied with a knowledge of the limitation of the power of imagination which, the poet discovers, can deceive him only for a brief moment. The imagination is identified with the nightingale and that identification is made complete when imagination deserts the poet at the same time the nightingale does. Once he is back to his normal consciousness, the poet questions the reality of the whole experience and finds himself in a state of doubt, self-division, half-knowledge. This state of tentative attitudes is actually a common and real human state, "half-way between the *haggard* and *woe-begone* knight of *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* and the fulfilled female figure playing her part in the natural process in *To Autumn*."[34] Keats' experience – aesthetic escape into and return from the world of the nightingale – broadens his sane and sympathetic understanding of the realities of life, time, and space.[35]

According to Yeats, Blake's pictures and Keats' odes are symbolic in the sense that in them colors, sounds, and forms combine to evoke "an infinite emotion" and "a perfected emotion."[36] The finely wrought imagery of the *Nightingale Ode* is appealing to the senses of hearing, smell, and sight, and usually to more than one sense at a time. This synaesthetic image-making has the effect of producing a greater intensity of the imaginative experience

recorded in the poem. Keats is always careful to enhance the sense impressions, reinforced by melodious assonance and alliteration. The simultaneous repetition of vowel and consonant sounds, of compound words and epithets, along with superb inversions, is intended to contribute to the desired poetic effect. Yeats also distinguishes between Blake and Keats by saying that while Blake celebrates the energy of "eternal delight" and makes his poetry out of his passionate identification with everything he sees, Keats gives us a poignant sense of separation from what he presents in the form of romantic longing for "otherness." Keats' is an aesthetic experience of the tensions between identification and detachment or, in Burkean terms, self-preservation and self-propagation, the beautiful and the sublime.

It is interesting to note that the Keatsian conflicts between idealism and skepticism are strikingly similar to the Yeatsian ones in *Sailing to Byzantium* and *The Wild Swans at Coole*. Yeats also wishes to escape from the actualities of the biological world of birth, decay, and death into the permanent world of art where he would assume the shape of a golden bird. He only half-consciously suppresses his knowledge that he would then simply become a cold "sod" or mere artifact but still singing of the pulsating, throbbing process and flux of the world of the living. Like Keats' nightingale, the fullness of life of the "wild swans" makes him aware of his growing old age and with it possible poetic decline. The symbolization of the faculty of imagination by the abundance of life embodied in the swans implies that their disappearance from the sight of the poet is going to signal a loss of his creative powers just like the nightingale's fading away signals the break of Keats' spell of imagination.

Keats' nightingale is the "objective correlative" for his

emotions and feelings. As Elcio defines the term, the object of nature acts as a medium through which the poet attempts to objectify his subjective impressions about the process of life fraught with tragic consequences. Of the "three voices of poetry," identified by Eliot in the essay by the same title as the meditative, the dramatic, and the didactic, Keats' poem combines the first two with the total exclusion of the last. The meditative content, however, gives in to the dramatic in the form of a symbolic debate as the poem progresses through a process of "advance and withdrawal," giving an impression of a living speech and a need for discourse. There is a sense of rhetorical urgency and intimacy in the form of lyric "I – You" address.[37] The "I" of the poem is a poetic persona, a poetic mask, not the poet's own self, which is thus not directly involved in the debate between the listener and the object of his listening. As de Man says:

> One never gains an intimate sense of Keats's own selfhood remotely comparable to that conveyed by other Romantic poets. The "I" of the nightingale ode, for instance, is always seen in the movement that takes it away from its own center. The emotions that accompany the discovery of the authentic self, feelings of guilt and dread as well as sudden moments of transparent clarity, are lacking in Keats....He moves away from the burden of self-knowledge into a world created by the combined powers of the sympathetic imagination, poetry and history, a world that is ethically impeccable but from which the self is excluded.[38]

"The burden of self-knowledge" that de Man refers to is actually at the center of Keats' aesthetic experience. He is troubled by his knowledge of human mortality and that of his immediate family members, including his own, as we see when we take his biography

into account. It is this knowledge from which he wishes to distance and dissolve himself in the "otherness" of aesthetic sensuousness as he proceeds from the center to the circumference. When the process is reversed, that is, when he is back to the center at the end of the poem with a maturer understanding of it, he questions the idealist and aestheticist tendencies of his desire. Yet (and this is precisely the point I wish to make) his aestheticist impulse is more gratified than not in his descent from the ideal to the real. That is why he seems contented with the unreasonable ambiguity of his experience. Since the green nature in which he finds the joyful sensation that he seeks is also real, it can be said that Keats is aestheticizing the real as well, not just the ideal after ideal — this idea is implicit in Vender's analysis. This is as much an escape — an unintended irony perhaps — as his desire for reaching the state of the bird's song or that of the figures on the Grecian urn.[39]

Keats' nightingale is an aesthetically perceived object in much the same way as Robert Frost's tuft of flowers in his poem by the same title. Unlike Keats, Frost, however, never leaves the earth, always letting his practical sense prevail over the Romantic tendency to give in to fancy. Although Frost is a Romantic in his characteristic ways, he does not yield to the temptation of the music of the thrush — *Come In* — nor does he linger to contemplate the sensuously inviting landscape nearby — *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,* — preferring to attend to the distant obligations and responsibilities. While Keats discovers the limitations of his imaginative quest after having plunged into an "idealized, trance-like condition" and ultimately becomes better equipped to confront both the real and the ideal with a far-reaching vision, Frost seems to be armed with a foreknowledge of the dangers of imaginative dallying and therefore is refrained from full participation in the romantic flight. The result is a characteristic

Frostian earthy didacticism whose literary quality lies in its irony, ambiguity, and paradox — something that Frost shares with Keats.

Keats' aesthetic and sensuous passion for the beauty of nature precludes any moralism and didacticism. After having pointed out his passion for what Keats described as "the mighty abstract idea of Beauty in all things," Matthew Arnold rightly observes that "in one of the two great modes by which poetry interprets, in the faculty of naturalistic interpretation, in what we call natural magic, [Keats] ranks with Shakespeare."[40] Despite his certain degree of indebtedness to the literary tradition of the past,[41] Keats establishes an Emersonian "original relation" with nature, independent of his knowledge of history and human society, just as he creates his own stanza-form out of the tradition of two sonnet forms.[42] As Emerson says, "Nature will not be Buddhist; she resents generalizing, and insults the philosopher in every moment with a million of fresh particulars."[43] Keats experiences many emotions in contact with "fresh particulars" of nature in the form of its sights and sounds. He belongs to that school of Idealist Aestheticians who hold that spiritual element is introduced to the phenomena of nature not by God but by man's own consciousness. Beauty, in their view, is merely a particular condition of the human mind. And Keats as a poet shows a remarkable acumen for such conditions in which he captures the beauty and variety of natural sights and sounds with a sense of the immediate as well as the primitive in aesthetically satisfying form and style.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, sixth edition (1993), vol. 2, p. 758. Shelley wrote his *Defence* in 1821, which is also the year of Keats' death and Shelley's

Adonais, an elegy on that death. Perhaps the above lines from the *Defence* were intended as a tribute to Keats, whose *Nightingale Ode* was first published in July 1819 in *Annals of the Fine Arts*, just as the *Defence* itself as a whole was written as a response to Thomas Love Peacock's ironic and satirical essay, *The Four Ages of Poetry*. As their letters indicate, both Keats and Shelley were in touch with each other at the time, writing about their recent poetical compositions.

2. Defined, simply, as a close reading of the text, New Criticism leaves out elements of biography and literary history, which are albeit important in interpreting a literary work. Instead, it focuses on the linguistic, rhetorical, and other internal aspects (irony, ambiguity, paradox) of a work of art to show that it stands on its own, independent of everything else and unified by its own laws and patterns.

3. F.R. Leavis, "Keats," *Scrutiny* IV.4 (March 1936). Reprinted in *Revaluation* (October 1936). Also see *English Critical Texts*, ed. D.J. Enright & Ernst De Chickera, (OUP: London 1962), p. 312. Henceforth, *ECT*.

4. *ECT*, p. 315.

5. His early poetry, with its problems and procedures, luxuriating in the external beauties of nature and documenting his developing views of poetic art, myth, and reality is, like Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and *The Prelude*, a record of the Keatsian parallels of the stages of poetic growth.

6. *The Well Wrought Urn : Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (Harcourt, Brace and Co: New York 1947), p. 151.

7. For excellent critical analyses of Keats' aesthetic and poetic ideas, see W.J. Bate's 1963 essay "Keats' *Negative Capability* and the Imagination" in *The Romantic*

Imagination, ed. John Spencer Hill (Macmillan, 1977), his 1957 essay "Keats's Style : Evolution Toward Qualities of Permanent Value" and Douglas Bush's 1957 essay "Keats and his Ideas," both in *English Romantic Poets*, ed. M.H. Abrams (Oxford Unversity Press: New York 1960).

8. Douglas Bush, "Keats and His Ideas," *English Romantic Poets*, ed. M.H. Abrams (Oxford University Press: New York 1960) pp. 333, 334.

9. For English translations in prose of Mallarme's poem, see *The Penguin Book of French Verse*, Vol. 3 (The Nineteenth Century), ed. Anthony Hartley (Baltimore, Maryland, 1967), p. 190, and *French Poetry from Baudelarie to the Present*, ed. Elaine Marks, the Laurel Language Library Series (Dell Publishing: New York 1962), p. 89.

10. J.R. Watson, *English Poetry of the Romantic Period* 1789-1830 (Longman: London and New York 1992) p. 365 and p. 34 respectively.

11. Meyer Howard Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism : Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (Norton: New York 1971).

12. Abrams, p. 190.

13. Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry* (Harvard University Press: Massachussetts 1937), p. 82.

14. The doubts and conflicts of these two odes are reconciled in *Ode on Melancholy*, in which the poet asserts the inseparability of joy and pain, followed by *To Autumn*, in which there is a sense of calm acceptance of and serene resignation to the natural, cyclical process, and which is regarded to be artistically superior to the *Nightingale* and the *Grecian Urn* odes.

15. Richard H. Fogle, "A Note on *Ode to a Nightingale*," *English Romantic Poets*, p. 381.

16. Keats was an admirer of Wordsworth. In that sense, perhaps the *Nightingale* Ode's third stanza, particularly its "The weariness, the fever, and the fret," may have been influenced by the Solitary's sufferings in *The Excursion* (1814) in general which was among Keats' favourite readings and *Tintern Abbey* ("the weary weight/...the fretful stir/...the fever of the world") in particular. Robert Gittings quotes the following lines from *The Excursion* as resembling Keats' lines :

> While man grows old and dwindles and decays;
> And countless generations of mankind
> Depart and leave no vestige where they trod...
> (*John Keats*, Penguin, 1985, p. 464)

This stanza, along with the third stanza of the *Grecian Urn Ode*, anticipates "Love's sad satiety" in Shelley's *To Skylark*.

17. We wither from our youth, we gasp away—
Sick-sick; unfound the boon—unslaked the thirst
Though to the last, in verge of our decay,
Some phantom lures, such as we sought at first
Love, Fame, Ambition, Avarice—'tis the same,
Each idle – and all ill – and none the worst—
For all are meteors with a different name,
And Death the sable smoke where vanishes the flame.
Childe Harold, Canto IV, 11.
Our life is a false nature — 'this not in
The harmony of things .....
Disease, death, bondage— all the woes we see,
And worse, the woes we see not – which throb through
The immedicable soul, with heart-aches ever new.
Childe Harold, Canto IV, 11.

18. Introduction to the *Selected Poetry of Keats* (The Signet

Classic Poetry Series, 1966), p. xxiv.

19. Watson (*English Poetry of the Romantic Period*, p. 362) oberves the influence of Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* on Keats' expressions in *Sleep and Poetry* and *Ode to a Nightingale* ("Away! away! for I will fly to thee,/Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards...").

20. Leavis, *ECT*, p. 317.

21. I know a bank where the wild theme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine.
There sleeps Titania, sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight.
A Midsummer Night's Dream, II.i.249-254.

22. *The Odes of John Keats* (Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 84. Gittings, on the other hand, traces Keats's source to Dryden's *The Flower and the Leaf*, which is a modernization of a medieval poem and which, Gittings claims, was one of Keats' favourite poems. See *John Keats*, p. 463.

23. *The Norton Anthology*, Vol. I, p. 483. See also *ECT*, p. 8.

24. *The Norton Anthology*, Vol. I, p. 763.

25. D.H. Lawrence, who, like Keats, died of tuberculosis at the age of forty-four in the south of France whose vitality is evoked in Keats' poem, invoked his end, just before his death, using deep-rooted elemental images of sensuousness like those of Keats':

> Give me the moon at my feet
> Put my feet upon the crescent, like a Lord!
> O let my ankles be bathed in moonlight, that I may go
> Sure and moon-shod, cool and bright-footed
> Towards my goal.

26. Like the flower stanza above, the source of this expression of death-wish may be traced to Shakespeare. After their reunion at Cyprus following a severe storm at sea, Othello is happy and thankful to Desdemona who has brought tranquillity to his tempestous life :

> O my soul's joy!
> If after every tempest come such calms,
> May the winds blow till they have waken'd death!.....
> If it were now to die,
> 'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear
> My soul hath her content so absolute
> That not another comfort like to this
> Succeeds in unknown fate.
> *Othello*, II.i.187-195.

In both cases, Othello and Keats, it is the excess of happiness that culminates in the thought of death. Ironically, we know, what a painful and protracted death was in store for both of them! Another Shakespearean moment that we may recall in this connection is when Antony, following the assassination of Julius Caesar, also wishes to die a particularly meaningful death : There is no hour so fit/As Caesar's death hour....'Live a thousand years,'I shall not find myself so apt to die:/ No place will please me to.../As here by Caesar... *Julius Caesar*, III.i.154ff.

27. The nightingale is a small brown bird, which has been popular, free or caged, for its song in the West as far back as the Roman Empire. It has had a number of roles in Western culture -- from a wood spirit to a symbol and messenger of love to a harbinger of spring. At one time and then it was used in "love potions and in nostrums for improving the voice." Richard Mabey, one of Britain's famous nature writers, reports that in 1924 there was a live outside broadcast of "a duet between a nightingale and Beatrice Harrison,

Britian's leading cellist at the time, which the BBC transmitted from her woodland garden."Richard Mabey, "May, Month of Nightingales," *Reader's Digest*, May 1997, p. 7.

28. Leavis, *ETC*, p. 315.

29. Leavis, *ETC*, p. 318.

30. *John Keats*, p. 464.

31. *English Poetry of the Romantic Period*, p. 365.

32. Fogle, p. 383.

33. In *A Defence of Poetry*, Shelley writes : "the mind in creation is as a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness..." See *The Norton Anthology*, p. 761.

34. Wolf Hirst, *John Keats* (Twayne: Boston 1981).

35. Quite in contrast, Byron's understanding of the imperfections of the human lot seldom leads him in the direction of Keats'. It gives rise, instead, to the Byronic moods of cynicism, desperation, exasperation, and bitterness. In the words of Abrams, Byron stands single, among the English Romantics, in his "ironic counter-voice" and "a satirical perspective." However, at times he too comes very close to Keats in his aesthetically conceived transcendental dream of achieving "ideal beauty" (*CHP*, Canto III, 1. 740) in the creations of the poet's mind :

> 'Tis to create, and in creating live
> A being more intense, that we endow
> With form our fancy, gaining as we give
> The life we image.....
> *CHP*, Canto III, 11.46-49
> The Beings of the Mind are not of clay :
> Essentially immortal, they create

And multiply in us a brighter ray
And more beloved existence....
CHP, Canto IV, 11.37-40

36. W.B. Yeats, "The Symbolism of Poetry."

37. For an interpretation of the "I-You" form in lyric poetry, see W.R. Johnson, *The Idea of Lyric : Lyric Modes in Ancient and Modern Poetry* (University of California Press, 1982), pp. 1-23. Watson (cited above) discusses elaborately the function and mechanism of "thou" in Keats' Ode (*English Poetry of the Romantic Period*, p. 364).

38. de Man, p. xxiv.

39. It should be mentioned here that the pattern of Keats' aestheticism that I present here changes in his last poems. There is in the *Hyperion* poems a clear indication that he knows that he ought to be writing another kind of poetry, a poetry that will not be a mere fevering of himself but will begin with a knowledge of the pain and suffering of human hearts and will be a consolation to readers. And to prepare for that, as he says in his letters, he needs knowledge and philosophy — a step away from mere aestheticism.

40. *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series, ed. S.R. Littlewood (Macmillan, 1960) p. 71. Arnold continues to say that for the faculty of "moral interpretation," in which Shakespeare equally excels, "Keats was not ripe". Arnold, however, is quick to say that in short literary works such as Keats' poems, in which "he is perfect," "The matured power of moral interpretation and the high architectonics...are not required." See p. 72.

41. I have mentioned above some of the possible sources and analogues of the poem. The nightingale itself as a subject is old in literature. Apart from the anonymous Middle English lyric, "The Owl and the Nightingale," it had been used by

Milton, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. It is long since it had been pointed out that "the conception of the happy nightingale, a conception unknown to the old poetry, came perhaps from [*Coleridge's*] *The Nightingale.*" (See Dorothy Hewlett, *A Life of John Keats*, London : Hutchinson, 1937, Third revised edition, 1970, p. 317). Gittings mentions the same connection between Coleridge's and Keats' nightingales (*John Keats*, p. 463). Coleridge's *The Nightingale* is a seminal conversation poem by Coleridge in the launching of the Romantic Movement, containing the simple but haunting line, "In Nature there is nothing melancholy," written perhaps in response to Milton's melancholy bird in *Il Penseroso*, and taken to be defining Romanticism against Neoclassicism.

42. Gittings thinks that it is a Shakespearean quatrain followed by a Miltonic sestet (*John Keats*, p. 454). Watson thinks that it is a variation of the Shakespearean and the Petrarchan patterns combined (*English Poetry of the Romantic Period*, p. 362). Watson gives a detailed picture of Keats' adaptation of the form.

43. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nominalist and Realist," *Essays and Journals*, ed. Lewis Mumford (Nelson Doubleday, 1968), p. 357.

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HOPKINS' CONCEPT OF MORTAL BEAUTY

Gerard Manley Hopkins deals with a similar theme in three poems: *Morning, Midday and Evening Sacrifice* (1879), *The Leaden Echo and The Golden Echo* (1882) and *To what serves Mortal Beauty* (1885). They may be treated as a trilogy on Hopkins' concept of mortal beauty.

While reading *The Morning, Midday and Evening Sacrifice,* the reader is struck by the fact that Hopkins deals with the transitory beauty of man from a theological point of view. "Morning", "Midday" and "Evening" (the last of which gives way to night signifying death in Hopkins' *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*) are obviously metaphors of a process of transition in man's physical beauty. As for the poet's insistence in stanza 1 on consigning human beauty to God before it dies away, the poem seems to be no more than a piece of poetic sermonizing. Hopkins tries to reinforce its effect on the linguistic level by using such expressions as "dappled die-away cheek", "wimpled lip", "gold-wisp" and "airy-grey/ Eye".

As a Jesuit priest and poet, Hopkins firmly believed that man is endowed with the divine attribute of beauty to be dispensed with in the form of a voluntary sacrifice to

God. A similar notion of sacrifice seems to permeate through his "terrible" sonnets where he struggles to attain divine grace by giving his self back to God because it originated from Him.

The first stanza of *The Sacrifice* demonstrates, to a considerable extent, the sharpness of Hopkins' powers of perception. The image of the "wimpled lip" signifies the bow-like curve in the upper lip which reminds one of Cupid's bow. The image evokes, on the one hand, carnal overtones with regard to physical beauty and highlights, on the other, the idea of its transience. The word "wimpled" has a close association with the transitory character of the ripples on the surface of a river. It is also reminiscent of "wimpling wing" in *The Windhover* and "the wimpled-water-dimpled" in *The Golden Echo*. This mode of perception explains the significance of the remark T.S. Eliot made about Dante: in his verse "the intellect is at the tip of the senses."[1] It applies to Hopkins as well inasmuch as he tries to comprehend the curved beauty of the upper lip and, by extension, its transience (suggested by "wimpled") through the agency of the visual sense. Similar is the case with the image of the "gold-wisp" which most probably suggests the spiralling locks of golden hair. Moreover, Hopkins has integrated the image with the theme inasmuch as the spiralling of golden hair in the wind creates the verisimilitude of the "fuming" of physical beauty. It is difficult to clarify the real significance of "airy-grey/ Eye" except that the image suggests a certain kind of correlative between the grey of the eyes and the one in the atmosphere produced by rising winds.

A hortative undertone characterizes the following lines of the poem:

> This, all this beauty blooming,
> This, all this freshness fuming,
> Give God while worth consuming.

In the foregoing lines, Hopkins tries to give the idea of beauty a divine orientation. Believing that beauty is originally the attribute of the Godhead, he urges us to give it back to Him in its "blooming" form so that it may be perfected through a reunion with its origin. The meaning further crystallizes itself with reference to Hopkins' penchant for the etymology of English words. The verb *consume*, the gerundial form of which has been used in the first stanza, has its root in Latin *cōnsūmère*. It can be split into *con-* and *sūmère* which signify the idea of *completeness* and the act of *taking* respectively (*Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*). If one takes into account the etymological division of the verbal form of "consuming" (st. 1, 1.7), it suggests the idea of attaining completeness or perfection.

In the second stanza, the poet deals with the "thought" and "thew" of manhood which pass through a norm of development prescribed by nature. The meaning of the word "Tower", which is slightly obscure because of the absence of any grammatical link in line 2, seems to receive semantic support from the rhyme "power". It may be treated as a metaphor of physical strength and stature which a man gains till youth in the same way as a tower gains physical strength and height in the course of its

vertical structuring. Hopkins likewise tries to highlight the idea of physical strength and stature in line 3 of *The shepherd's brow*: "Angels fall, they are towers, from heaven —…" The use of "Tower" is also reminiscent of Milton's description of Satan in *Paradise Lost* I 581-91: "He above the rest/ in shape and gesture proudly eminent/ Stood like a tower."

Hopkins focuses on — or rather inscapes — the youthful human figure in all its totality in the following lines: "Head, heart, hand, heel and shoulder/ That beat and breathe in power". One is reminded here of Hopkins' *Harry Ploughman* in which he deals with a similar totality of physical strength. The foregoing lines of *The Sacrifice* suggest, through a kinaesthetic mode, the meaning with which Hopkins wants to stuff the word "thew". He urges us to apply the dynamism of our minds and bodies to the service of Christ whose glorification is the Alpha and Omega of Hopkins' poetry. Youth —the "pride of prime's enjoyment" —is, according to the poet, not a "toy" to play with in a puerile manner but a "tool" to be used in "Christ's employment". Throughout his poetic career, Hopkins was fully alive to the functional value of this tool which he never wanted to dwindle. He expresses a keen desire for its furtherance in the following lines of *Spring*:

> … Have, get, before it cloy,
> Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
> Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
> Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning.

The second stanza of *The Sacrifice* demonstrates

some of the finest examples of Hopkins' use of alliteration, assonance and consonantal chiming: "thought and thew", "Head, heart, hand, heel, and shoulder", "beat and breathe in power" and "pride of prime's enjoyment". The last of these examples shows the influence of the Welsh *cynghanedd* on his verse. His use of alliteration in this stanza not only furnishes instances of the repetition of the initial consonant sounds but also of the unfolding of a unifying principle which governs the human body. It invests his language with a sense of kinaesthesis which is so conspicuous there.

A highly evocative language is used in the first four lines of the last stanza where Hopkins talks about the maturity of mental powers in old age:

> The vault and scope and schooling
> And mastery in the mind
> In silk-ash kept from cooling,
> And ripest under rind —

The word "vault" is associated with the ideas of storage and safe-keeping. It also has a plausible association with the bony framework of the human head housing the brain. Hopkins compares the "scope" (range of action and observation), "schooling" and "mastery" of an old man to a treasure stored in the repository of his mind. The neologism "silk-ash" may be treated as a metaphysical conceit for the soft, grey hair on the head inside which lies the store-house of the training and maturity of the old which the poet urges us to employ (while they are still hot) for the furtherance of the cause of Christ. He likens the maturity of

age to a fruit "ripest under rind". It substantiates the idea of divine consumption in line 7 of stanza 1.

The beauty, vigour and maturity of youth, manhood and age, which correspond to "Morning", "Midday" and "Evening" respectively in the title of the poem, make up, according to Hopkins, the sum total of our "offering" to God. The idea that the wisdom and intellectual powers of man are doomed to destruction in the temporal world is expressed in the following lines of the last stanza:

> What death half lifts the latch of,
> What hell hopes soon the snatch of,
> Your offering, with despatch, of!

The Sacrifice, which is highly canorous in sound effects, basically treats of the idea that God bestows His gifts, intellectual and physical, on people belonging to each age group. The gifts should be "transferred back to the donor", through an act of sacrifice and worship, for the sake of their transformation into a "spiritual equivalent". Man's failure to do so is a negation of the Pauline injunction to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God."[2]

The theme of the evanescence of the physical beauty of man is given a slightly different kind of treatment in Hopkins's *The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo*. The basic problem tackled in *The Leaden Echo* is "How to keep .../ Back beauty, ... from vanishing away?" The "waving off of these most mournful ... stealing messengers of grey" has been the common concern of humanity for ages. Hopkins, in this part of the poem, is in quest of some

"bow or brooch or braid or brace, lace, latch or catch or key" – different possible ways to arrest beauty's decay with the passage of time.

The language of the poem, which shows a restless effort to stabilize beauty, is animated by the stress pattern of common speech which characterizes sprung rhythm. The locution patterns illustrate the significance of Hopkins' definition of poetry: "Poetry is in fact speech employed to carry the inscape of speech for the inscape's sake and therefore the inscape must be dwelt on."[3]

Sturge Moore tried to improve Hopkins by rewriting the first two lines of *The Leaden Echo* in his *Style and Beauty in Literature*[4]:

> How to keep beauty? Is there any way?
> Is there nowhere any means to have it stay?
> Will no bow or brooch or braid,
> Brace or lace
> Latch or catch
> Or key to lock the door lend aid
> Before beauty vanishes away?

A comparison of Moore's rewriting of the lines with those of Hopkins' highlights the fact that Hopkins chose every word with utmost care. The element of "physical constraint", implied in Hopkins' lines by the word "Back", is deplorably missing in Moore's version. James Milroy remarks: "So great was the care that Hopkins bestowed on every word he wrote that this rewriting seems almost sacrilege."[5]

In the first line of *The Golden Echo*, "brooch" and "braid" echo the consonantal *br* sound while "latch" and "catch" simultaneously furnish examples of internal rhyme and assonance. The patterns arising from the interplay of consonant and vowel sounds seem to mimic, on the phonic level, the variety of physical beauty which Hopkins strives to "keep/ Back ... from vanishing away." Moreover, the words from "bow" to "key" in the line have, on the level of associations, much in common with the acts of fastening and clasping things.

A repetitive locution pattern is noticeable in line 5 of *The Leaden Echo*: "No there's none, there's none, O no there's none". It is here that the speaker reaches the conclusion that physical beauty cannot be kept from decay and all human efforts "To keep at bay/ Age and age's evils" inevitably end in despair. Beauty has to undergo various transitions in the temporal world: "hoar hair,/ Ruck and wrinkle, drooping, dying, death's worst, winding sheets, tombs and worms and tumbling to decay". The last four lines of this part of the poem are in rising rhythm accentuating the strain of despair which is echoed and re-echoed through a careful juxtaposition of locution patterns. Since both parts of the poem are characterized by a variety of verbal fireworks, Hopkins wrote to Richard W. Dixon: "I never did anything more musical."[6]

In *The Golden Echo*, the speaker ultimately finds a "key" to the perpetuation of physical beauty, although it works "not within the seeing of the sun". In other words, the area of the operation of this key is beyond the influence of the "sun" which exercises a "singeing" and "tingeing"

effect on human beauty. The "flower" and "fleece of beauty" (line 11) attain an everlasting "loveliness of youth" through the agency of the Resurrection if they are proffered in one's lifetime to God Who, according to Hopkins, is "beauty's self and beauty's giver." Beauty, which is not given back to God and thus becomes a source of human pride, is designated by the poet as "beauty-in-the-ghost". Hopkins takes an integrated view of human beauty when he insists on its reunion with God:

> Come then, your ways and airs and looks, locks,
> maiden gear, gallantry and gaiety and grace,
> Winning ways, airs innocent, maiden manners,
> sweet looks, loose locks, lovelocks,
> gaygear, going gallant, girlgrace –

The poet alludes to Luke 21:18 and Matthew 10:30 in lines 20-21 of *The Golden Echo*: "See; not a hair is, not an eyelash, not the least lash lost; every hair/ Is, hair of the head, numbered." In these lines, Hopkins highlights the biblical truth that God is an unerring reckoner of the particular measure of physical beauty which He bestows on every human being in the temporal world.

As explained by Hopkins in a letter to Robert Bridges[7], lines 22-25 of the poem dwell on the idea of a seed that we sow carelessly in the soil and then forget it. It sprouts, the seedling grows into a tree and begins to bear fruit in a large quantity. Beauty that we proffer to God through an act of sacrifice and worship and then forget it in our temporal life analogically grows in an enormous measure through the agency of the Resurrection. The

Christian doctrine of the Resurrection is characterized, in the poem, by a magical fecundity in regard to those on whom God bestows His grace. St. Thomas Aquinas dwells on this aspect of the Resurrection in his *Summa Theologica.*

Hopkins believes that beauty, which we "forfeit" as a sacrifice to God, is kept by Him "with fonder a care, / ... than we could have kept it". The query "Where kept? Do but tell us where kept, where" signifies a "difficult and urgent" state of the speaker's mind. The use of "Yonder", with four subsequent repetitions, resolves the query with a sense of emphasis on Heaven.

In several lines of the poem, Hopkins' "way of using the body and movement of the [English] language" are reminiscent of Shakespeare:

...not-by-morning-matched face.

***

...so care-coiled, care-killed, so fagged, so fashed,
so cogged, so cumbered.

F.R. Leavis, therefore, comments: "We cannot doubt that he [Hopkins] knew his Shakespeare well, but if he profited, he was able to do so because of his own direct interest in the English language as a living thing. The bent of his genius was so strong that we are forced to believe that his experimenting would have taken much the same lines even if there had been no Shakespeare. The similarities arise out of a similar exploitation of the resources and potentialities of the language."[8]

To what serves Mortal Beauty is more or less a poetic scholium on the following passage from the "Principle and Foundation" in St. Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*:

> Man is created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and by this means to save his soul. All other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him fulfil the end for which he is created. From this it follows that man is to use these things to the extent that they will help him to attain his end. Likewise, he must rid himself of them in so far as they prevent him from attaining it.[9]

Hopkins deals with two aspects of mortal beauty in the beginning of this poem: the negative which is "dangerous; does set danc-/ ing blood" and the positive which "keeps warm/ Men's wits to the things that are; | what good means". The first aspect is coupled with a carnal implication of which man must beware because it prevents him from attaining the "end for which he is created." The second, which has moral overtones, is related to St. Ignatius' passage (quoted above) implying that we should look at beauty as one of "All other things" which "are created for man to help him fulfil the end" of his creation. The basic question Hopkins tries to answer in the poem is of an ethical nature, though he does not altogether dismiss the contemplation of what Keats, in the *Ode on Melancholy*, calls "beauty that must die". For centuries, Christian theologians have tried to find a via media between their fascination for the objects of the physical world as reflectors of God's grandeur and the biblical injunction:

"Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."[10] Hopkins' basic outlook on mortal beauty seems to be quite close to that of St. Augustine of Hippo who wrote:

> We have wandered far from God; and if we wish to return to our Father's home, we must make use of this world rather than enjoying it, that ... by means of what is material or temporal we may attain to what is spiritual and eternal.[11]

The end of the creation of man was, according to the poet, fulfilled by Father Gregory (later Pope Gregory the Great) who, having glanced at the beauty of the young English prisoners of war in the Roman Forum about 587 A.D., ejaculated: "Not Angles, but angels". The word "angels" evokes associations with the concepts of physical chastity and God's moral good. Gregory's act of looking at the beauty of the English prisoners, which reflected a fraction of God's beauty, induced him to send Augustine (later Archbishop of Canterbury) to Christianize England. Hopkins affirms in *Mortal Beauty* that if the physical beauty of the prisoners had not been glanced at by Gregory, he would not have "gleaned" the greater beauty of God and decided to send Augustine to preach the Word in England:

> Those lovely lads once, wet-fresh | windfalls
> of war's storm,
> How then should Gregory, a father | have gleaned
> else from swarm-
> ed Rome? But God to a nation | dealt that day's
> dear chance.

Christianity, as the poet believes, enjoins its followers to love "love's worthiest .../ World's loveliest – men's selves" (1.10). Self, as Duns Scotus expounded in his theory of *haecceitas* which exercised a seminal influence on Hopkins, "flashes off frame and face" of man and gives him his individuation. Christ's self animates the self of man in the same way as the human features reflect Christ's beauty in Hopkins' prose and poetry. St. Paul says to the Galatians: "I live, now not I; but Christ lives in me" (2:20). Christ, according to Christian doctrine, is the God-man who was crucified many centuries ago, but he survives in his members at all times. Hopkins beholds Christ in the "limbs" and "eyes" of human beings (*As kingfishers catch fire*) inasmuch as they are, according to St. Paul, members of his Mystical Body. Hopkins, in the beginning of *Mortal Beauty*, finds himself beset with a sense of dichotomy on account of two conflicting aspects of beauty which have already been referred to. In line 12, he returns to this problem in a state of mental urgency: "What do then? how meet beauty?" The problem is resolved when he urges his readers to give beauty a "Home" in their hearts as "heaven's sweet gift" and "let that alone". The physical beauty of man, the archetype of which Hopkins finds in Christ, is a means, in the poem, of attaining "God's better beauty" in the form of His grace so that the human self may achieve perfection. Hopkins further clarifies the idea in his spiritual writings:

> For grace is any action, activity, on God's part by which, in creating or after creating, he carries the creature to or towards the end of its being ... It is as if a man said: That is Christ playing at me and me playing at Christ, only

that it is no play but truth; That is Christ *being me* and me being Christ.[12]

The Sacrifice, The Echoes and *Mortal Beauty* are characterized by a thematic uniformity with certain variations of treatment. The underlying idea in these poems seems to be that God condescended to bestow a fraction of His beauty on human beings. Here lies the significance of the biblical doctrine that man was created in God's image. The divine attribute of beauty in human beings became subject to mortality (as a consequence of the Fall) in the temporal world. The poet's insistence on giving beauty back to God through an act of sacrifice and worship, is inspired by "God's promise" to immortalize it. The transformation, as already stated, will be effected through the Resurrection. It is, therefore, of no avail to "freeze" our physical beauty and be unduly attached to it because it leads ultimately to "despair".

Hopkins' early poems, which are characterized by extreme sensitivity to the beauty of the physical world, show a marked influence of Keats. One such peom is *A Vision of the Mermaids* (1862) in which Hopkins proves his amazing capacity for the projection of "beauty that must die" through sharply defined sense-impressions. Although Hopkins' *The Habit of Perfection*, written at Oxford in 1866, basically celebrates asceticism, it is no less characterized by an acute awareness of sensation. Hopkins thought it necessary, after joining the Society of Jesus in 1868, to evolve a definite attitude to mortal beauty in order to justify his credentials as a Jesuit poet. One may conjecture that one probable reason behind his burning the

finished copies of his poems on May 11, 1868, which incident he designates as "the slaughter of the innocents", was that his attitude to beauty, which he had formed till then, interfered with his Jesuit scrupulosity. The germ of the spiritualization of beauty is found in Hopkins as early as 1865 when he wrote *On the Origin of Beauty: A Platonic Dialogue* at Oxford for his tutor Walter Pater. After formulating the aesthetic premise that "beauty ... is a relation, and the apprehension of it a comparison", one character, representing a particular viewpoint in the Platonic dialogue, makes a significant statement:

> I am either convinced or I really do not know what to say to the contrary; but I am sure there is in the higher forms of beauty – at least I seem to feel – something mystical, something I don't know how to call it.[13]

While reading the Dialogue, one feels that Hopkins' sympathies are behind the foregoing proposition. His attitude to beauty as "something mystical ... something beyond" or as an attribute of the Godhead, reflected in the physical world, subsequently crystallized itself in such poems as *The Wreck of the Deutschland* (1875-76) and *The Windhover* (1877). His theory of inscape further clarifies his mode of aesthetic perception. The "ideal, consummate moments" of inscape diffuse a gnosis of the Godhead in his 1877 nature sonnets.

Hopkins had the good fortune of being one of the pupils of Walter Pater at Oxford. He does not share much with Pater's theory of aestheticism. Pater was an agnostic and his views on beauty did not take into account any

"eternal absolutes". Hopkins' relationship with him cannot, however, be underestimated because it was he who apprised Hopkins, during his Oxford days, of the fundamental relationship of beauty with art and life. Pater's dictum, "Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end", applies to Hopkins with a difference. Hopkins was keenly interested in the projection of experience in his poetry. But experience was meaningless for him unless it bore "fruit": the instress of God in the "world's splendour and wonder". Hopkins agrees with the emphasis of the Aesthetic Movement on "stylistic subtlety", "high artifice", and crowding "one's life with the maximum of exquisite sensations". His most exquisite sensations are those of the immanence of God and Christ in the physical universe. He tried to give a new orientation to the motto of Aestheticism: "Art for art's sake". Hopkins' mature poems are undoubtedly pure art but for God and Christ's sake.

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INITIATION AND QUEST— R.K. NARAYAN'S *WAITING FOR THE MAHATMA*

The great theme of Indo-English literature in the years before and after 1947 was the independence movement. Some of the Indo-English novels about the heroic struggle of a people and their fateful encounter with forces beyond the control of individuals are Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1955), R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955) , Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Bhabani Bhattacharya's *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960) and Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964).

R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*[1] begins with Gandhiji's visit to South India shortly before the 'Quit India' movement of 1942 and ends with the Mahatma's assassination at the prayer meeting in the grounds of Birla House, New Delhi, on 30 January 1948.[2] Gandhiji's death is the climax of the novel - the end of the waiting for the Mahatma - condensed in the two short final paragraphs with staccato, matter-of-fact statements, devoid of pathos.

Waiting for the Mahatma, as all other novels by Narayan and most of his stories, is set in Malgudi. The

author's imaginary town flourishes on the banks of Sarayu, one of the seven sacred rivers of Hindu mythology.[3] Situated near the foothills of vast primeval jungle, the Mempi Forest Range, Malgudi is connected by train, bus and bullock-cart to Trichinopoly and the rest of the country and was, from the beginning, conceived by the author as his 'miniature version' of India.[4] An important aspect of Narayan's oevre is the topography of this small South Indian town which permeates the five parts of the present novel also. Part One, occupying one third of the slim book,[5] describes details of Gandhiji's visit to Malgudi and the startling changes brought about by the Mahatma's presence in a tradition-bound, placidly content society.

Facets of the independence movement, particularly Mahatma Gandhi's call for civil disobedience, are included in other Malgudi novels also, from *Swami and Friends*[6] onwards. The special characteristic of *Waiting for the Mahatma* is the wealth of mention of historical events: World War I and World War II, the Satyagraha movement of the early 1920s, the march to Dandi Beach, the Mahatma's preaching *ahimsa*, the conflict between non-violence and terrorism as a means to end British rule, the 'Quit India' campaign, the activities of the Indian National Army and Subhas Chandra Bose, the Mahatma's firm refusal to approve the proposed division of India into Hindustan and Pakistan, Hindu-Muslim riots in East Bengal and other parts of the country, and Independence Day 15 August 1947.

All these events figure in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, as brief background narration, as flash-back to illuminating

details and as part of the structure of the novel, like the protagonist's terrorist activities in the central Part Three and, towards the end of the novel, his train journey from South to North, across the strive-torn country.[7] In this connection, it is of interest to recall what Narayan observed about the art of the novelist shortly before the publication of *Waiting for the Mahatma*:

> Between the era of British rule and the present we might note a middle period when subject matter became inescapably political. All of India's energies were directed to the freeing of the country from foreign rule. Under this urgent pressure the mood of comedy, the sensitivity to atmosphere, the probing of psychological factors, the crisis in the individual soul and its resolution, and above all the detached observation, which constitute the stuff of fiction, were forced into the background. It seemed to be more a time for polemics and tract writing than for story telling.
>
> Since the attainment of Indian independence in 1947 this preoccupation is gone, and the writer can now gather his material out of the great new events that are shaping before his eyes. Every writer now hopes to express through his novels and stories the way of life of the group of people with whose psychology and background he is most familiar, and he hopes that this picture will not only appeal to his own circle but also to a larger audience outside.[8]

Thus, the subject matter of this novel was 'inescapably political', but as always in Narayan's fiction there is comedy, sensitivity to atmosphere, probing of psychological factors and detached observation. For Narayan, the independence movement and other historical events are the backdrop for the coming of age of his protagonist, young Sriram who stands for the many thousands whom Mahatma Gandhi met and talked to on his tours through the hamlets and villages, the towns and cities of India.

The novel preceding *Waiting for the Mahatma* had ended with the theme of the continuity of life: when faced with financial ruin, chaos and humiliation, Margaya, the old 'financial wizard' had assured his son that a new beginning was possible by returning to their roots. Speaking with the authority and assertiveness of his early days, the father had once again shown his true self, had been the one who shows the way.[9] *Waiting for the Mahatma* takes up the motif of the quest for the right path, blending the initiation into life of a whole generation with the transitions in the life of a nation. The author's aim to show the influence of Mahatma Gandhi on Indian society is brought into focus in the fate of Sriram and Bharati: orphans both, the Mahatma is father to them, their guide on the path of *ahimsa* as the means to gain freedom and economic independence of the country.[10] It is not the heroic aspect of the freedom struggle as a life devoted to a higher cause that is portrayed in Narayan's novel. Rather, it is the incongruity between the dream of freedom and harsh realities, between non-violence and terrorism as the way to reach the goal. Moreover, with Sriram the author

created one of those people in whom the heroism of the age of transition is reduced to the average in the sense of the mediocre.[11]

The protagonist had been 'a tiny speck' in the crowd when Gandhiji spoke to the people of Malgudi on the banks of Sarayu about his vast army of 'non-violent soldiers marching out to cut the chains that bind Mother India'.[12] Nothing in Sriram's uneventful, aimless existence had prepared him for the upheaval in his life under the impact of the Mahatma's charismatic personality. Belonging to an old, well-to-do orthodox Brahmin family, Sriram had never become aware of the tragic side of his fate to have been orphaned at birth: his grandmother and the family's spacious old house in Kabir Street[13] had been home and all the world to him. In Malgudi's idyllic timelessness, the ties to the past meant security and assurance of the continuity of life.

The security and comfort of a quiet life are taken for granted by Narayan's protagonists. Never feeling the necessity nor the inclination to do something with his life, Sriram is an introvert dreamer until he falls in love at first sight with Bharati, the Sevak Sangh volunteer collecting money for the Mahatma's fund. There is much slap-stick witticism in the scenes around the young fool being completely swept off his feet, for all his dash and impetuosity thunderstruck by the fact that a girl took notice of him. Their first meeting in the crowd at the Market Fountain, Sriram's sudden desire to join the freedom struggle and his following the girl into the hut of the Mahatma are light-hearted comedy.

As in other novels by Narayan, in *Waiting for the Mahatma* the human comedy is linked with the Malgudi theme. Humorous details create atmosphere and evoke the image of places and times; detached ironical statements reveal the chasm between appearance and reality.

Malgudi's Reception Committee, assisted by the District Collector and the District Superintendent of Police, had considered carefully all aspects of the arrangements to be made in connection with the visit of the eminent guest - *Mr.* Gandhi and not *Mahatma* to the Collector, 'the custodian of British prestige'. The Municipal Chairman had vowed to have built his palatial house, Neel Bagh in the aristocratic Lawley Extension for the sole purpose of the Mahatma's visit, his speech had been applauded and he spent weeks effecting suitable alterations in the house - substituting khaddar hangings for gaudy chintz, portraits of national leaders for pictures like George V's wedding. He also 'discreetly managed' to put up a picture of Krishna in discourse with Arjuna, to secure khaddar clothes for his family, complete with white Gandhi caps for himself and his son, and to display a few spinning wheels in the mansion: 'No film decorator sought to create atmosphere with greater deliberation'. However, the Chairman was to realize with dismay that 'Mahatmaji's presence had the effect of knocking down the walls of a house, and converting it into a public place'. Dazedly, he watched the reception turn into a children's party, ending abruptly with the Mahatma's decision to take an unwashed, ragged urchin home,[14] and to Malgudi's consternation the Mahatma chooses to stay with the untouchables in

their dismal cluster of huts on the banks of Sarayu, beyond Nallappa's Grove, i.e. outside the town limits:

> When they got over their initial surprise, the authorities did everything to transform the place. All the stench mysteriously vanished; all the garbage and offal that lay about, and flesh and hide put out to sun-dry on the roofs, disappeared. All that night municipal and other employees kept working, with the aid of petrol lamps: light there was such a rarity that the children kept dancing all night around the lamps. Gandhiji noticed the hectic activity, but out of a sense of charity refrained from commenting on it. Only when it was all over did he say, "Now one can believe that the true cleansers of the city live here.'[15]

For the sake of Bharati, the young Brahmin Sriram went and stayed in this camp in the hovels of Malgudi's sweepers. He walked with her across the heat-scorched countryside on Gandhiji's tour through the famine affected villages near Malgudi. At the end of the tour, the Mahatma let Bharati stay behind in Malgudi as Sriram's *guru*: the disciple, whose name 'Daughter of India' had been given by Bapuji himself, was asked to guide the new Congress volunteer in his quest for a meaningful life as a true follower of Mahatma Gandhi. Sriram worked hard at mastering the art of spinning, the ancient craft which was a daily task of vital importance in Gandhiji's vision of independent India, as the first step toward self-development:

> Finally he did emerge a victor, nearly twelve

> weeks after Mahatmaji had left. Sriram had stationed himself for his noviciate at one of the spinning centres, about fifty miles from Malgudi. Bharati was perfectly at home there and proved herself to be a task-mistress of no mean order; she did not let go her grip on Sriram until he had spun enough yarn free from entanglement for a dhoti and short shirt. (...) Sriram suddenly felt that he was the inhabitant of a magic world where you created all the things you needed with your own hands. (...) He sat down and wrote to the Mahatma, 'Burnt my old clothes today. Spun 40 count.Bharati satisfied.'Mahatmaji immediately wrote back to him: 'Very pleased. Keep it up. God bless you.'[16]

In the structure of Narayan's novel, Bharati stands for the future, for free India as envisioned by the Mahatma. Sriram's orthodox grandmother represents the traditional Indian value system which draws strength from ancient myths. In *Waiting for the Mahatma* there is no meeting between India's future and the past, but there are links between them: Bharati and Sriram meet for the first time because the grandmother sent Sriram to fetch jaggery and jasmine for the puja to be celebrated on the Tamil New Year's Day in spring; the Mahatma and Bharati remind Sriram of his duty to ask for his grandmother's blessings before leaving home in order to become a freedom fighter;[17] having obeyed the Mahatma's call to court arrest, Bharati had been lodged in a make-shift women's jail in Malgudi's Old Slaughter House, yet she hears about the grandmother's illness

and manages to send a message to Sriram - meanwhile a member of the terrorist underground - asking him to visit his old home.

As a follower of Gandhiji, Sriram had chosen a life of austerity and solitude in the deserted ruin of an ancient temple on a slope of the Mempi Hills, overlooking Sarayu valley:

> This place seemed to have been destined for him, built thousands and thousands of years ago by someone who must have anticipated that Sriram would have a use for an abandoned building. (...) There were stately pillars in a central hall, with bricks showing; there were walls without a ceiling, but from which exotic creepers streamed down; one of the stubborn, undisturbed pieces of sculpture was a Bull-and-Peacock[18] over the large portal, which had very large knobbed wooden doors that could not be moved at all on their immense hinges. This was no great disadvantage for Sriram since no one came this way, and even if they did, he did not have anything to lock up.[19].

Through Bharati's visits Sriram had kept in touch with the independence movement during the 'Quit India' campaign. Assailed by doubts in the Mahatma's ability to lead the country to freedom, Sriram had refused to give himself up to the police, together with Bharati. Their separation turned into alienation when Sriram fell under the spell of one Jagadish and drifted into the terrorist movement.

Sriram's quiet, idyllic life in 'the most comfortable ruin a man could possess'[20] had been disrupted by a dark stranger, a photographer from Malgudi who professed to be a national worker with 'a formula for paralysing Britain in India'.[21] Unaware that the terrorist in the disguise of khadi was the tempter[22] out to usurp the remains of the temple for the powers of darkness, Sriram had not detected the fallacy of the stranger's claim 'I used to know Bharati also. We are all doing more or less the same work.'[23]

In custody under the Defense of India Rules in Malgudi's Central Jail, Sriram will repent having left the path shown by the Mahatma. On his release, walking into Malgudi 'as in a dream', Sriram looked for concrete signs of freedom:

> The trees were as usual, the road was not in the least improved, and policemen still rode on the footboard of highway buses. He felt tired and hungry. (...)
>
> It was dusk when he got into the Market Road. Nobody seemed to notice him. Here and there he saw buildings hung with the Tri-colour flags, the *charka* in the middle. He saw that there was less traffic than formerly. Shops were lit and crowded as ever. He felt a pang of disappointment. (...) He sat on a bench of a small park that had been formed at the traffic junction of New Extension and the Market Road. (...) He felt hurt at first that the pedestrians went by without noticing him and the traffic without pausing to say,

> 'Hallo, hero!' But he soon realized the blessedness of being left alone after all the years of being hunted and looked for everywhere.[24]

Without Bharati, Sriram feels homeless in free India, even in Malgudi where strangers live in the old house, Kabir Street No. 14, ever since his grandmother left years ago, waiting for her death in Benares, on the banks of the sacred Ganges.[25] Sriram is so disoriented that he turns to the antagonist for news about Bharati. The poignancy of this is heightened by Narayan's irony: the former accomplice in crime is easy to find; the instigator to vandalism flourished in the terrorist underground and rose to the surface in the garb of the chronicler of the independence movement: 'As a photographer, I am proud of this. Future generations can never blame me for being neglectful. I have done my best. Here is a complete history of our struggle and the final Independence Day Celebration'.[26] Implicit in this situation that the dreamer Sriram needs the help of the selfish opportunist to find his bearings in independent India is the fact that Gandhiji's vision of freedom is exposed to many perils. At the end of the novel, the everpresent danger of violence and hatred is shown in the image of the crowd at the prayer meeting, where the assassin has the opportunity of 'brushing against Bharati'[27] before firing the fatal shots.

Narayan chose to write about Gandhiji in the evening of life. With the title of the novel, the metaphor of time is taken up and carried in many variations to the end, where the motif of the pendulum - the

Mahatma's pocket-watch, swinging on its chain in the hand of his 'conscience-keeper'[28] - shows the relentless passage of time and the premonition of a tired, old man that his end is near. Admidst the signs that time is precious, after long years of waiting, Bharati and Sriram receive a father's blessings to marry.

The final farewell at the time of the evening prayers had been foreshadowed in the scene depicting the end of Gandhiji's visit to Malgudi. With poetic insight, Narayan here pays tribute to twentieth century India's Great Soul by showing that Mahatma Gandhi's ultimate legacy is his unwavering faith in the future and absolute trust in the innate strength of his people:

> Gandhiji's tour was drawing to an end. He was to board a train at Koppal, a tiny station at the foot of the Mempi Hills.(...) The crowd dispersed and the stationmaster waved his flag. Gandhiji told Sriram: 'Write to me often. I'll also promise you a fairly regular correspondence. In the future you know where lies your work. Become a master-spinner soon. Don't be despondent.'
>
> 'Yes, master,' said Sriram; the parting affected him too much. Bharati merely said in a clear voice: 'Namaste, Bapu.' Bapu smiled and put out his hand and patted her shoulder. 'You will of course keep up your programme and write to me often.'
>
> 'Yes, of course, Bapu.'
> 'Be prepared for any sacrifice.'
> 'Yes, Bapu,' she said earnestly.

'Let nothing worry you.'
'Yes, Bapu'.

The sky became redder and darker, and the seven down moved away, taking the Mahatma to Trichy, and then to Madras, Bombay, Delhi and out into the universe. Night fell on the small station, and the little stationmaster proceeded to light his gas lamps and signals.[29]

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2. Ibid., p. 14 ff.; p. 173.
3. cf. Renate Sarma, 'The River and the Land Beyond - Symbolism in R.K. Naryan's Novels', in: *The Aligarh Journal of English Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, October 1997, pp. 85-95; see also the novels *Swami and Friends, A Novel of Malgudi* (London 1935), *The Bachelor of Arts* (London 1937), *The Dark Room* (London 1938), *The English Teacher* (London 1945) - published in the United States under the title *Grateful to Life and Death* (Michigan State University Press: East Lansing 1953), *Mr. Sampath* (London 1949) - published in the United States as *The Printer of*

Malgudi (Michigan State University Press: East Lansing 1957), *The Financial Expert* (London 1952), *The Guide* (New York 1958), *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (London 1962), *The Sweet-Vendor* (London & New York 1967), *The Painter of Signs* (New York 1976), *A Tiger for Malgudi* (London 1986) and *The World of Nagaraj* (London 1990).

4. cf. R.K. Narayan, *A Story-Teller's World*, With an Introduction by Syd Harrex (Penguin Books India: New Delhi 1989), p. 12.

5. *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Part One, pp. 1-57; Part Two, pp. 58-95; Part Three, pp. 96-127; Part Four, pp. 128-148; Part Five, pp. 149-173.

6. cf. R.K. Narayan, *Swami and Friends, A Novel of Malgudi*, (Indian Thought Publications: Mysore 1970) in particular Chapter XII, 'Broken Panes', pp. 93-106.

7. cf. *Waiting for the Mahatma*, pp. 159-160.

8. R.K. Narayan, 'The Fiction Writer in India. His Tradition and his Problems', in: *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 1953, pp. 119-120. A slightly changed version of the article appeared under the title 'The Problem of the Indian Writer' in: R.K. Naryan, *A Story Teller's World*, pp. 14-19.

9. R.K. Narayan, *The Financial Expert*, With an Introduction by Graham Greene, (Indian Thought Publications: Mysore n.d.), cf. p. 1, pp. 177-178.

10. cf. Sushila Gosalia, 'Sarvodaya: Mahatma Gandhis Modell der "Sozialen Marktwirtschaft von unten" fuer Indien" in: *Indien in der Gegenwart*, Band II, Nummer 3, 1997, pp. 65-80, published by the Indian

Council for Cultural Relations; see also Harish Raizada, 'Gandhian Thought in Indo-Anglian Fiction' in: *The Aligarh Magazine*, 1969, pp. 24-40.

11. It is intriguing that *Waiting for the Mahatma* remains the least quoted by readers and critics alike, half a century after its first publication. In fact, this novel is one of the very few works by R.K. Narayan that some critics found flaw with. While recalling that *Waiting for the Mahatma* had been labelled "a muddle - ought to be withdrawn from circulation", K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar praised P. S. Sundaram for setting the record right in his assessment of Narayan's oevre; cf. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, 'Man, Novelist and Humanist' review of P.S. Sundaram, *R.K. Narayan* (Arnold Heinemann, Rs. 13.50), in: *The Sunday Times* (New Delhi 10 February 1974).

12. *Waiting for the Mahatma*, p. 15 ff.

13. Kabir Street and Kabir Lane are used interchangeably in the present novel, whereas these names refer to two different roads in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi.*

14. cf. *Waiting for the Mahatma*, pp. 24-25, pp. 28-33.

15. Ibid., pp. 33-34, see also pp. 23-24.

16. Ibid., pp. 65-66.

17. See also the following account of the life of young volunteers of the "1942 Movement" with details that remind of Narayan's protagonist:

> (....) for six months the youth might have wandered about the country, sleeping anywhere, eating almost nothing, seldom or never writing to his parents, doing the "Jimmy Higgins" work of the "National movement".

He would distribute handbills, serve as an usher at meetings, do a little agitation himself. There was a vast amount of trivial detail, such as running errands, operating multigraphing machines, going to the printer to collect handbills, which such boys and young men did. The bolder ones, or those who fell in with the bolder, might be drawn into the terrorist section of the Civil Disobedience Movement. They would be set to cutting telephone wires, destroying a section of railway track or a railway signal box, or burning a post office. At the end of six months or a year, the police would catch up with them. Then they would be sent to prison, where, being classified in a high grade, they would be allowed to read books. in: Edward Shils, *The Intellectual between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation* (Mouton & Co. : the Hague 1961- Comparative Studies in Society and History, Supplement-I), pp. 99.

18. Shiva, the destroyer, and his son Kumara.
19. *Waiting for the Mahatma*, p. 63.
20. Ibid., p. 63.
21. Ibid., p. 96.
22. Narayan had dealt with the theme of the antagonist as the tempter in *The Financial Expert;* see Renate Sarma, 'The River and the Land Beyond - Symbolism in R.K. Narayan's Novels', pp. 92-93.
23. *Waiting for the Mahatma*, p. 96.
24. Ibid., pp. 149-150.
25. Ibid., pp. 138-139.
26. Ibid., pp. 154.

27. Ibid., pp. 173.
28. Ibid., pp. 171.
29. Ibid., pp. 61-63.

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Narain Prasad Shukla

THE QUEST FOR THE IDEAL: JANE AUSTEN'S MORAL CONCERN IN *MANSFIELD PARK*

Mansfield Park, in many ways the most uncharacteristic, difficult and pessimistic of Austen's novels, is also the work which first expresses the apprehension connected with the moral issues of modern age. According to Lionel Trilling, Jane Austen was the earliest explicator of what Hegel termed "the secularization of spirituality" in modern life, and the first writer to represent "the specifically modern personality and the culture in which it had its being."[1] In her fourth novel, *Mansfield Park*, especially in her depiction of Mary Crawford, Austen isolates an essential tendency of that "specifically modern personality" and reveals both an essential tendency of that "specifically modern personality" and the moral danger that this tendency poses to the individual. The idea of "personality", which began to take on its current meaning early in the 19th century, was, as Richard Sennett has documented, almost completely dependent on its manifestation in appearance: "One is what one appears; therefore, people with different appearances are different persons."[2]

So basic to the 19th century concept of self, the emphasis on personality and the signs meant to proclaim it provide important insights into the self-conscious, sometimes obsessive interest in appearance that marks the characters of the novel. Austen understood that imposed and interposed between the essence of a personality and the appearance and manners meant to testify to its uniqueness, were objective, standardized cultural forms that determine those appearances. Mary Crawford is in bondage to the idea of person she thinks she ought to, or would like to be, but this circumstance more saliently represents her bondage to the idea of what society instructs her to believe she should be. Her imagination exists in an unchanging, flat landscape in which everything and everyone is as static and rectified as the fantasy woman who dominates its centre.

Mary's distorted imagination and the limited vision it fosters nullifies the possibility of her living a fully "spiritual" life, spiritual in the secular sense Trilling suggested. One can, of course, discern in Austen's work a system that governs right moral conduct; her moral system, however, does not depend on a traditional Christian definition of "spirituality". Rather her idea of spirituality, crucial for understanding her work, suggests that she sees spirituality as the animating and vital essence of existence, the foundation of which is a relatively free and uncorrupted psyche. The greatest danger posed before that freedom is the imagination that might enslave it, much as the imagination itself has been enslaved.

In her fiction, Austen confronted the new social reality which Trilling described as predominantly

> the ever more powerful existence of the public, that human entity which is defined by its urban habitat, its multitudinousness, and its ready accessibility to opinion. The individual, who lives in this new circumstance, is subject to the constant influence, the literal in-flowing, of the mental processes of others, which, in the degree that they stimulate or enlarge his consciousness, make it less his own. He finds it ever more difficult to know what his own self is and what being true to it consists in.[3]

However independent an individual wishes or supposes himself to be, he is nonetheless subject to the ubiquitous influence of a collective imagination, even in his most intimate conjectures about himself. Such a collective imagination proves potent; in Marx and Engel's words; "it creates a world after its own image."[4]

Some degree of independence from the mental processes of others affords the single hope for some kind of spiritual existence, for it allows one to see things as they are. One's ability to "see" becomes a moral yardstick in all four novels; the perception of obscured realities serves as the difficult but necessary first step in the moral education chronicled in each of the works. Henry and Mary Crawford come to the calm and ordered world of Mansfield Park from London. Occupying the manor house are Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, their two sons, Tom and Edward, and their two daughters, Maria and Julia. Living with them is Fanny,

the eldest daughter of Lady Bertram's sister. The novel's events mainly document the various relationships that emerge among the young people. Henry Crawford flirts with both Maria and Julia, and both welcome and return his attentions. Mary considers Tom, with interest, but finds herself unexpectedly drawn to Edmund, destined for the clergy. Edmund, in turn, falls in love with the sophisticated and worldly Mary. Henry decides to flirt with Fanny, whose coolness challenges him but, instead, finds himself deeply in love with her and proposing marriage. To the surprise and chagrin of her relations and of the Crawfords, Fanny rejects him. She has secretly loved his cousin Edmund for years. Henry's sudden elopement with the married Maria precipitates the novel's climax. The dangers to the way of life at Mansfield Park — represented by the Crawfords' world view and the susceptibility of all the Bertram children to the Crawfords — are only narrowly escaped. The novel's climax and conclusions fully reveal the nature of its major characters, weaken the harmful influences of the eldest son, eliminate the two "false" daughters, unite Edmund and Fanny, and most important, elevate Fanny to the major position at Mansfield Park which she alone has earned by her steadfastness, courage and integrity. More than anything else, however, *Mansfield Park* is actually about the confrontation between Mary Crawford and Fanny Price. The intensity of the opposition between their world views provides the novel with much of its drama, and Austen with the occasion for her most profound meditation on the possibility and nature of the spiritual life that survives in secular society.

What Trilling describes as "the woman she thinks she ought to be" influences most of what Mary says and does. The imaginary woman does not emerge from an ardent, overly responsible adolescent imagination seeking self definition. Rather, she evinces a complete acceptance of cultural models, a total immersion in the collective representations of a rather corrupt society that has transformed and mystified those representations into what Roland Barthes calls "universal nature."[5] In his Preface, Barthes states that he hopes "to account *in detail* for the mystification which transforms petit-bourgeois culture into a universal nature". Edmund Bertram leaves Mary not when he realizes her worst traits, which he sees fairly early, but when he recognizes that she will never change because her rigid and narrow sense of reality – which views the worldly and amoral city she knows as a microcosm of the world – will protect her from the wider spheres where improvement would be judged necessary. Mary believes her desires and activities to be natural and universal, part of the universal nature that accepts Henry and Maria's adultery as "folly". Her mind belongs completely to the society that has found it, and that society is the most corrupted urban environment Austen can envision.

Mary's reliance on generalizations does not signify an intellectual so much as a spiritual laziness. She accepts the cynical maxims of her society as useful categories with which to classify people and experience; her sophisticated axioms comprise a world view of sorts, one that allows her to suspend more considered thought and judgment. She asks Edmund if his cousin Fanny is "out"

or not. He attempts to answer by relating something of Fanny's unusual position. Mary, hearing that Fanny does not dine out, abruptly ends the conversation: "Oh, then that point is clear. Miss Price is not out."[6] For Mary the most trivial or the most profound aspects of life can be translated into social conventions and expectations. Her education in the house of her debauched Admiral uncle and among her fashionably cynical friends influence not only her manner and tastes – she claims she has no eye for nature because it was not part of her "education"[7] – but direct her most private thoughts as well. Her feelings for Edmund may be the single, unexpected emotion of her life, and it confounds her. She had expected to "fall in love" with his elder brother. Instead she falls in love with Edmund only to feel the chagrin of an attachment to a clergy man, and to hope for something better. Fanny's rejection of Henry's proposal stuns Mary who, quite sincerely, cannot fathom someone rejecting "the glory of fixing one who has been shot at by so many."[8] The opinions, aspirations, and desires of others dominate Mary's consciousness and possess it entirely. She has been rendered by the culture and society in which she has been immersed incapable of originality or true independence. This lack of independence negates the possibility of a fully conscious, fully active moral life. Although Austen was the daughter of a parson, she never confined her definition of "morality" to traditional, Christian terms. Certainly in *Mansfield Park*, morality is closely connected to the ways in which individuals see themselves, their way of perceiving their relationships to others and to the world

around them, and their ability to temper independent judgement with a keen awareness of what lies outside themselves.

It is difficult to imagine Fanny Price supplying the novel with the imagination or moral independence the Crawfords lack, but that is, in fact, what she does. Trilling insists that by rejecting the Crawfords and elevating Fanny, *Mansfield Park* praises stasis instead of freedom.[9] The intention of the novel, however, is to reject "vitality" – like Mary Crawford's – that makes moral and imaginative paralysis, and to show that paralysis as part of, and fully reflective of the society in which it appears as vitality. The crucial house party at Sotherton, during which almost everyone in the novel reveals an essential aspect of his nature, affords Austen the opportunity to more fully expound on the ambiguities of Mary's "vitality" and Fanny's stillness.

Trilling believes that *Mansfield Park* "does not confirm our characteristic modern intuition that the enlightened and generous mind can discern right and wrong and good and bad only under the aspect of process and development, of futurity and the interplay and resolution of contradictions .... the only moment of judgement it acknowledges is now: it is in the exigent present that things are what they really are." Actually, *Mansfield Park* not only confirms but insists that the enlightened and generous mind determine right and wrong with consideration to time and process. The novel, however, attempts an audacious reversal; it seeks to locate that kind of generous mind Trilling describes in

Fanny Price, who impresses us as passive and physically still, and to present its antithesis – a mind fixed by narrow social considerations and incapable of recognizing wider spheres, including those in time — in the Crawfords, and in their agile movements and intellectual liveliness no less.

The Crawfords seem to have a worldly generalization to cover every new possibility of experience. Fanny, who appears so rigid and flexible, must nonetheless perceive the unhabitual and different. She more fully understands the Crawfords than either of them finally understands her. The Crawfords insist always on seeing her in their own terms, oblivious of her even as they pay her attention. However much her perceptions of judgements isolate or pain her, Fanny never relinquishes her powers of perception or loses her freedom of judgement. Travelling with a "great dislike" for "anything resembling a permanence of abode or a limitation of society", the Crawfords ironically transform every place into the same place, another replica of their London habitat. "Mansfield Park will cure you", promises their sister, but they come closer to destroying Mansfield Park than being changed by it. Fanny, of all the characters in the novel, must appear in new environments with the fewest defences, the most vulnerable to change. The grand orderly world of Mansfield Park intimidates and frightens her when she first arrives there from her shabby disorganized home. Eventually she came to esteem and even depend on the differences between her past and present home as she does on her cousin Edmund, who wins her with kind words and actions.

When at eighteen she returns to her chaotic, paternal home, her initial response to her house and family is distaste and a desire to escape. But Fanny stays, questions, even agonizes over her judgements, finds faults with her conclusions, makes excuses for her parents, and most important, seeks exceptions to that first response. She differentiates between her brothers, makes a friend of her oldest sister, and becomes of use to the household. Perhaps, because she is so vulnerable, Fanny, whom her cousin Edmund describes as intolerant to anything new, is most sensitive to change, and in certain ways, the most adaptable. She silences her worst premonitions about the Crawfords and forces herself to accept their friendship. At her ball, she wears Edmund's chain carrying the cross her brother William gave her – the presents that represent the most precious part of her life – she fully recognizes the forces that compel her to wear what she likes least in conjunction with what she loves most.

By refusing to marry Henry Crawford, Fanny risks losing not only what she would most gladly give up — acquaintance with the Crawfords — but what is most dear to her as well. Fanny cannot finally betray herself through insincerity. Unlike Mary, who could charm every person at Fanny's ball by telling him what he wanted to hear, Fanny angers Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, Mrs. Norris, even Edmund; she is accused of disloyalty to her immediate family who would, of course, benefit from her advantageous marriage. But Fanny cannot be anything other than herself. However much the influences of Mansfield Park have prevailed upon her consciousness

and judgement, they remain completely her own faculties, and she risks losing Mansfield Park and everyone there that she loves before she agrees to compromise them. She has urged the Crawfords, her own Plymouth home and family, and even Mansfield Park and its inmates, but her judgement remains independent of all of them. Unlike Mary, who never finally has the courage or mental ability necessary to examine or question the judgements of her brother, her friends or the society that has educated her, and risks losing – even Edmund, who more than anyone or anything, has formed her heart and mind.

"I could not act for anything if you were to give me the world", Fanny tells her companions. She cannot be anything but herself, and there is no respite from that self – not because she is rigid and others flexible, she single-minded and simple and they wide-ranging and complicated, but, on the contrary, because her judgement and understanding remain independent and active. If there is an 'escape' from the burden of consciousness, it does not lie in the safe, acceptable opinions of others. She finds relief only in a closer observation of the reality that seems to escape the others, a reality often made palatable to them in representations:

> All that was solemn and soothing, and lovely appeared in the brilliancy of an unclouded night, and the contrast of the deep shade of the woods. Fanny spoke her feelings. "Here's harmony!" said she. "Here's repose! Here's what may leave all painting and all music behind, and what poetry only can attempt to describe. Here's what may tranquilize every

> care, and lift the heart to rapture! When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world, and certainly would be less of both if the sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene."[10]

To be carried outside one's self, to find relief for that self outside the controls or interests of identity or ego in the vastness and wonder of the natural world constitutes a brave and solitary act in *Mansfield Park*. Even as Fanny speaks her thoughts aloud to Edmund, he is drawn back to the gay group singing around the piano. Fanny remains incapable of defining or projecting an authoritative version of "Fanny". Incapable of asserting an identity, Fanny, neither beautiful, nor well-born, talented, witty, extraordinarily intelligent or articulate, becomes vulnerable to the interpretations of others; everyone attempts to explain to her, to fill in the missing social blank she presents. Nonetheless, free from many of the exigencies of a well defined public identity imposing its demands on her, Fanny deals with the exigencies of reality as no one else at Mansfield Park does – not Sir Thomas or his sons, too well protected and defined by their secure Mansfield Park connections, not Maria and Julie stunted by selfishness and indulgence, not Mrs. Norris armed with delusional images of herself, or Lady Bertram wrapped in material comforts and undisturbed by mental processes altogether.

The conclusion of *Mansfield Park* seems almost vulgar in delivering its rewards, Pamela-fashion, to the patient and virtuous heroine. But Fanny's fairy-tale triumph at the end of *Mansfield Park* should not distract us from the complexity of Austen's treatment of her. Conceivably, we do not like Fanny initially any more than the Bertrams do because we are not meant to. In the "exigent present", Trilling describes as the only moment of judgement in *Mansfield Park*, no one likes Fanny Price and everyone enjoys the Crawfords. Considered in the moment of judgement, she falls short in everything that might inspire admiration. But the moment of judgement cannot, Austen insists, remain in the present — it must yield to the evidence that only time and process can supply. More than any other character in *Mansfield Park*, Fanny recognizes and responds to change — in her contemplation of time and memory, in her delight in the small, seasonal changes of nature for which "her perceptions and pleasures were of the keenest sort."[11] Not surprisingly, more than any other character in the novel, she changes. As the others become more fixed in their clearly outlined identities, Fanny, unfettered by any overwhelming and crippling consciousness of herself or her appearance before others, can observe, judge, and act. Her mental freedom leaves her open to possibility and experience. If things happen to her at the end of *Mansfield Park*, it is partially because she is capable of genuinely experiencing them.

Nonetheless, we read *Mansfield Park* at Austen's burdening her novel with so schematic an equation —

endowing the passive, acquiescing Fanny with active imagination and independent morality, and the far more interesting and personable Mary with automatic, even dull obedience to the moral and imaginative representations of her society. In her respect for a traditional, modest life governed by order and quiet and reverence for nature, Fanny appears as an eighteenth century counterpart to Mary's restless, egocentric urban and hyper-conscious, nineteenth century self. The message of *Mansfield Park* seems a stern, recactionary warning: a life of good sense and good breeding, of values that discourage preoccupation with the self by insisting on cheerful, useful activity, will ultimately provide its possessor with the mental and spiritual agility modern, urban life will rob him of. The major interest of *Mansfield Park*, however, does not reside in a nostalgic impulse embodied in the heroine; Fanny Price is as much part of the modern world as is Mary Crawford. She is its marginal figure but her peculiar character and history result from the same forces that have shaped Mary Crawford. Fanny represents the figure who cannot establish an immediately identifiable social identity through appearance or connections, who is subsequently barred or resists integration into the cultural hegemony, but who is finally liberated from the tyrannies of society by those failures. In *Mansfield Park*, the battle for the modern soul takes place in the imagination, which appears as something closely akin to Wordsworth's broad definition of the imagination in *The Prelude* as "but another name for absolute strength/and clearest insight, amplitude of mind, and reason in her

most exalted mood."[12] An unfettered imagination is the first and most important prerequisite of a free, moral and spiritual life — without it one is incapable of true discernment and judgement.

Is it possible, then, *Mansfield Park* asks, to escape the encroaching hegemony of a culture and the inevitable violations it imposes, through its collective images, on individual imagination? What kind of person, and at what cost, can best preserve his imaginative integrity and the moral and spiritual freedom that depend on it? In *Mansfield Park,* in her renunciation of a character who seems to exemplify wit, talent and even brilliance, Austen equates a corrupted imagination with a corrupted spirit: she attempts also to envision the kind of character who escapes the ubiquitous influence of culture and society. The writer who created Elizabeth Bennet, Emma Woodhouse, and Anne Elliot surely understood the deficiencies she details so plainly in Fanny Price. But that, of all the characters in *Mansfield Park*, Fanny should be the least corrupt and also the least talented, interesting and assertive suggests the essential insight *Mansfield Park* offers about the nature of modern society: the very attributes most likely to promote social participation and success in this darkest of all Austen novels, are also most likely to insure the corruption of their possessor – precisely because of the participation and success they allow. The more involved with society a person, through will or talent, becomes, the more society will inevitably corrupt him. There is no escape from the culture that spoils Henry and Mary Crawford – touched by it, all the Bertram children, even

Edmund, are tainted. Only what we consider her deficiencies protect Fanny; she escapes society's overwhelming influence by her isolation, by being insignificant and uninteresting enough to be overlooked, and by lacking a will to assert a view of her personality on others. Her imagination seems small and insufficient, almost straightened – the cost, *Mansfield Park* suggests, for its independence and clear-sightedness.

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