VOLUME 21
1999
NUMBER 1

THE ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Editor
S. Wiqar Husain

DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH
AMU, ALIGARH

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY

A.A. Ansari

– Arrows of Intellect: A Study in William Blake's Gospel of the Imagination

Masoodul Hasan

– Francis Quarles

– Rare English Books in India: Select Bibliography

– Nineteenth Century English Literary Works: A Bibliography of Rare Books Available in India

Salamatullah Khan

– Emily Dickinson

– Milton and the Devil's Party

O.P. Govil

– Browning's Poetics

H.C. Raizada

– R.K. Narayan

– The Lotus and The Rose

A. Tariq

– Oliver Goldsmith: The Man and the Poet

Maqbool Hasan Khan

– Edward Dowden's Shakespearian Criticism

– Shakespeare's 'Pericles' and Other Studies

K.S. Misra

– Aristotle's Theory and Modern Tragedies

– A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Terms of Address and Second Person Pronominal Usage in Hindi

– The Plays of J.M. Synge: A Critical Study

– Christopher Marlowe and Renaissance Humanism

– Twentieth Century English Poetic Drama

- The Major Tragedies of Henrik Ibsen: A Critical Study

- Plays of T.S. Eliot: A Critical Study

Mohammad Yasin

- Conrad's Theory of Fiction

Z.A. Usmani

- Shakespearian and Other Essays

THE ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Editor
S. Wiqar Husain

Department of English
Aligarh Muslim University
Aligarh

VOLUME 21 NUMBER 1 APRIL 1999

The ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES is edited by S Wiqar Husain and published by him on behalf of the Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh-202002, India. AJES aims at bringing out, twice a year (April and October), critical and research articles dealing with subjects in all the main areas of English studies. Contributions, addressed to the Editor, should be neatly typed, double-spaced and with notes and references at the end. Articles in Computer floppy disk are also acceptable.

Annual Subscription:
Rs 120.00
£ 6.00
$ 10.00
Single Copy:
Rs 60.00

VOLUME 21 1999 NUMBER 1

THE ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

CONTENTS

The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, Vol.21, No.1. pp.1-59

Iqbal Ahmed

INTENSE THOUGHT BUT BEREFT OF - ISMS: BECKETT'S UBU AS ABORTED DISJUNCT; AN EXISTENTIAL GROTESQUE

On tape we hear Krapp chuckling at his younger self on stage we see Krapp laughing bitterly at his recorded laugh..... p.92

.....the laugh, the brutal burst of laughter was at the core of the playwright's vision..... p.84

And yet the play offers us more than the stark romanticization of a question mark. An alternating tempo of laughter and tears is clearly and consistently developed as we move from one "little canter" to the next. Every act of comic deflation, however, will be undermined by stage silence which can speak as eloquently on this set as any line of dialogue a character has been assigned. [*Waiting for Godot*] p.75

[Enoch Brater: *why beckett,* (London 1989)]

The actor of a later role inhabits a given space, adopts a specific physical attitude, as a self-sufficient activity because, for Beckett, that physical predicament is the figure's complete ontological condition. p.148

'... the spectacle of the actor *in extremis* is entirely original with Beckett.' p.148

Jonathan Kalb: *Beckett in performance* (1989) Cambridge University Press

x————x

Beckett is a conscious artist, notwithstanding his protests about the impossibility of expression. For, when he opts to institute Failure on stage, instead of a more artistic Feasible[1], the choice is deliberate, and the fact of the matter is that he succeeds brilliantly. Now, just how was Beckett so successful in concretizing Failure on the proscenium, is a question of the artist's commitment to his integrity of vision, as well as, of a particular dramatic technique. The world as he says, he found in a mess, and, instituted it as it was on the stage. The vision and technique have to be studied for all their worth, in order to prevent the playwright from becoming the mystery, which he is, even from very early Absurd Theatre days. However, this effort is not at a pejorative, that is, deconstruction, because though Beckett may be dead as author, he has more future than Theory. This article will preserve his integrity as artist, but the effort 'to find him out' will be serious. Just how did he succeed in instituting Failure on stage! For this, his entire repertoire needs to be put at a counterpoint. This counterpoint is not to collapse or disintegrate him, as his own counterpoint collapsed a whole philosophical tradition. For, the fact that he was an artist will never be lost sight of. Thus, he will not be 'accused' of using 'discourse', only to exploit narrative in a certain way for ideological purposes! He shall be given attention for the creative way he very consciously worked at 'the physical and language themes'[2], so that he could insist that all effort at thought has to fail, because existence itself is Futile, with no Essence either to precede or succeed it. The 'physical theme' crystalized itself as a Grotesque, or, an

Ubu, as we shall soon see, and, the 'language theme' became the creative exploitation of a trope-bereft rhetoric. This was the playwright's vision and art. But then, art has its own predilections: rein in art and it suffocates, and, allow it freedom, and, often find the human being at his or her most destructive! It is at such moments that the caveat: this far art and no further, becomes a crying necessity. Beckett cannot escape from the assessment that he wanted to be at his creative best, and, indeed 'succeed' both as playwright and director. Even in *The Unnamable*, the artist, as artist, is out to be an 'achiever'. This aspect of Beckett's oeuvre, as having become a classic even during the artist's life time itself [3], will be completely obscured, if Heideggerean, Sartrean, or Freudian cloaks are foisted on the author. Knowing Heidegger, Sartre, or, Freud, and doing one better as their exponent, is just not the point. What in effect gets completely camouflaged in this philosophical or psychological reading, is the fact, that Beckett was a deliberate artist, as well as, very sensitive. He made imaginative use of common-place language-dramaturgy, and did it as artfully as to succeed in instituting Failure instead of the Feasible on stage. Inflicting Heidegger's characterization of 'common speech' as 'chatter and ambiguity' will tantamount to committing a faux pas, vis-a-vis Beckett. Take an example from *Endgame*. This example would have done a Copernicean proud as being a significant advance on Ptolemy, for, it dislodges the homo sapien from a position of centrality in Creation. Beckett's weapon is sheer dramaturgy. It is the drama of an Ubu-Disjunct's 'mentality' at work. The End is slowly

and imperceptibly coming to a grinding halt. Hamm, with eyes bandaged and in wheel-chair, is escorted by Clov along the shelter's walls; he orders Clov back to the shelter's centre. The shelter is surrounded by all round destruction—

Hamm : (Violently) That's enough. Back!
Clov : We haven't done the round.
Hamm : Back to my place! (Clov pushes chair back to centre) Is that my place?
Clov : Yes, that's your place
Hamm : Am I right in the centre?
Clov : I'll measure it.
Hamm : More or less! More or less!
Clov : (Moving chair slightly) There!
Hamm : I'm more or less in the centre.
Clov : I'd say so.
Hamm : You'd say so. Put me right in the centre!
Clov : I'll go and get the tape.
Hamm : Roughly! Roughly! (Clov moves the chair slightly bang in the centre)
Clov : There! (Pause)
Hamm : I feel a little too far left. (Clov moves the chair slightly) Now I feel a little too far right. (Clov moves chair slightly) I feel a little too far forward (Clov moves chair slightly) Now I feel a little too far back (Clov moves chair slightly) Back stay there (i.e. behind the chair) you give me the shivers (Clov returns to his

place behind the chair). (pp.23-24)

This is the Beckett dramaturgic-destruct at a successful operation. It is sheer rhetoric and its artful manipulation: hammering the point till one dramatic play of the language-theme is conclusively played out. In *Not-I* the language-drama is successfully aimed at the personal-pronoun-I, insisting in four ritual movements that it is *a she*, and therefore a *not-I*: 'what?... who?... no!... she!'

But then, Beckett's Ubu needs explanation. It was grounded in the Artaud-Brecht split on the role of an actor on stage. Brecht wanted his actors only to demonstrate, for which the German was *zeigen*, because, he was against the Stanislavsky approach of creating an audience-stage empathy. However, Artaud followed Alfred Jarry who wished to radically transform the Grand-Actor-phenomenon, because, the Grand Actor had come to care less for the part or role he was playing, and, preferred to stride the stage like a veritable actor-collossus. For this, Jarry gave his actor a mask for the face, a carapace for an enormous waist-line, and, a specific voice articulation.[4] And, Ubu was born! This caused riots in the streets of Paris, but, as Wellwarth says, from that day onwards drama was never the same.[5] Artaud found tremendous dramatic potential in Ubu. It had wrenched the actor into two, and so, in Ubu was seen the actor's double. Artaud and the Freudians visualized primitive psychology or the sub-conscious in Ubu. The actor as actor was thought not to have had the efficacy to bring out his role's psychic truth as profoundly. Ubu was imagined to have range,

and, no limitations. And, as has already been said earlier, Beckett tended to incline towards Artaud in the famous Artaud-Brecht split.[6] In fact, Beckett appears to stay away from the Stanislavsky-Brecht split on the role of actor and stage-illusion. However, like Shakespeare, Beckett transformed what he borrowed. Earlier also, he had used the Cartesian Mind-Body debate in his own way, retaining the idea of the famous split, even as, he had transferred Descartes' liking for an omelette, beaten out of eight or nine aborted eggs, to his own preference for calling the human predicament aborted. Therefore, Jarry's Ubu, as Beckett used the idea was not subconscious or primitive psychology, but, the human grotesque's existential condition. Beckett's Ubu was a Mentality-Corporeality Disjunct with mentality-at-a-swing, and, corporeality-in-a-trap. Beckett's Ubu was not psychology but a 'mentality' that kept the Mind at intense but uncommitted thought. In fact, Jarry had coined the word *'Pataphysics* to ridicule man's effort at thought. Beckett too had the question 'what?' answered by 'not' in the novel *Watt*.[7] A Mind, appeared to Beckett, to be yoked on to a Body for no apparent reason whatever! Therefore, the Beckett Ubu was an Aborted Disjunct, an Existential Grotesque. Therefore, also, this Ubu's banal rhetoric is neither stream of consciousness, nor, surrealism. Rather, it is Beckett, artfully exploiting the potential, even in a language made deliberately trope-bereft, to situate each time on stage, his many versions of the Absurd.

And so, what with no Descartean 'pineals' to boast of in the brain, Beckett downsizes human beings to

Existential Grotesques, the Mind-Body riddle of old, left still unresolved. To repeat, it is the condition of a Mentality-forever-at-a-swing, yoked on to a Corporeality-always-entrapped in a complex of levers that function adhoc. The dramatist makes it a condition of an existential impasse, which, according to him is such, that dream, illusion, story, faith, reason, and even language are non-issues, and so are repentance and hopes of redemption. What becomes more important after this is the frightening prospect of being born at all, be physically 'there', and, be born aborted!! However, the Beckett oeuvre is no agit-prop for existentialism. The drama is the work of a playwright, an artist extremely committed to his own understanding of an artist's integrity. Consequently, a point-by-point tick-off of an existentialist philosophy will only hurt a playwright very particular about his art. At the least opportunity, Beckett targets Essence, because, Failure and a *Nothing-is* are his artful objectives. Therefore, in Beckett, there is no Essence even to 'succeed' Existence, and, Existence is shown to remain what it is, a Mentality-Corporeality Disjunct, with its physical predicament the personae's 'complete ontological condition.'[7] That is, it is sheer physical existence as a Grotesque, the effort at thought only a schizophrenic's mentality like Lucky's, or Winnie's or Not-I's, the last only as Mouth on stage, ritually insisting as has been already said, possibly, on a third-person pronoun 'She' for herself. In fact, physical-reduction and disjunction becomes the deliberate hall-mark as the playwright progresses till only Sound, Voice and finally Breath, are found on stage as the characteristic grotesque

physical presences, themselves 'there'. Robbe-Grillet, an early Beckett critic, made an interesting point. It is a case of Heidegger just not being quoted for the startling statements he so fondly makes. Rather, it is the Heideggerian statement actually shown worked out in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. Robbe-Grillet starts the article thus–

> The condition of man says Heidegger is to be *there*. The theatre probably reproduces the situation more naturally than any of the other ways of representating reality. The essential thing about a character in a play is that he is "on the scene:" *there*.[8]

However, Robbe-Grillet ends concluding that the character 'there', as in *Waiting for Godot*, so in *Endgame*, also starts disintegrating. It is an 'old game lost of old'. Right up to the final image, the essential theme is 'presence' on stage: there; but, doubt sets in. In the final image, there is gradual decay of the present, which according to the critic constitutes a kind of future. This threat of the future is at once terrible and fated. The stage as the 'priviliged resort of presence' is unable to resist for long, and Gogo, and, Didi, also sink back, says Robbe-Grillet, into 'the world of dream', the 'world of fiction!'

But, Kalb finds the actor's body 'in extremis' with its physical presence on stage, however disintegrated, the dramaturg's second most important criteria in the Beckett repertoire.[9] Therefore, when it is said that Beckett's plays are not *about* something but *that something itself*[10] on stage, then, that *something* is the Ubu-

Grotesque physically present, either Waiting, or struggling with Time, or a persistent After-life consciousness; in ashbins, or urns, or ram-shackle shelters, or, in wheel or rocking chairs; or, along country-roads, or half-buried in earth-mounds! Kalb, therefore, repeatedly insists[11] that the Beckett repertoire is a 'seamless' blend of the 'representational and the presentational', where presentational is described as instituting *the present*, as it is, 'there', a presence on stage.[12] It is *the something* itself, that is, Beckett's Existential Grotesque, or, the Absurd on stage. Consequently, 'physical themes' are what Beckett thought he had in mind when directing his plays also. This makes, stage-movement in Beckett-theatre extremely studied and non-naturalistic, being what the dramatist called 'that step-by-step approach' to 'the physical theme'.[13] It is a step-and-then-the-line method as in this Walter Amus' example which Kalb quotes–

> You had something to say to me?.. you're angry...
> Forgive me.. Come Didi, Give me your hand...[14]

The movement has the element of a ballet in it and had to be done very exactly.[15] It had to have highly polished graceful gestures. One method, Beckett used as director, was to prepare *Regiebuecher* for all his productions as did Reinhardt. They contained hundreds of detailed notes for systematic physical activity on stage.[16] The movement was choreographed with a firm hand. 'Krapp speaks, fetches, fondles and slips.' Kalb does not credit Beckett with an extended theory of theatre, nor, that he established an authorized style of acting. Whatever is achieved on stage is through 'physicalization' and

'vocalization', in terms of dance and music, the latter being the music of the word-rhythm in the play.[17] Therefore, it was 'the concrete circumstance' and not abstract thought that got instituted on the proscenium.[18] Waiting, or Ending, or Time, or Identity, or After-life became each a concrete circumstance. The most powerful concrete circumstance is the Ubu-Grotesque's mentality found unhitched, and, physicality too, very burdensome. In fact, abstract concepts either get dramaturgically demolished, or, profoundly concretized.

It is this that makes stage-directions very important in Beckett theatre. It was 'the physical theme' no less than 'the mentality-at-a-swing' syndrome that had put psychology and motivation at some remove from the Beckett personae. Often, as in *Endgame*, 'the presentational was blatant'.[19] The choreograph-feature of 'the physical movement' as Existence-without-Essence is best illustrated from the pantomine with which *Endgame* opens. It deserves to be quoted entire to illustrate the physically existential nature of the Grotesque in Beckett, which had no Essence, as Estragon no rights, and, in fact, had totally got rid of Essence as had Vladimir got 'rid' of his rights. They are Disjuncts; Cartesean Centaurs;[20] Existential Grotesques: Beckett's Ubus all. It was the Absurd or the Irrational itself, minus the clap-trap of committed thought, either as ideology, or, philosophy, or even psychology. It was sheer physical existence yoked to intense uncommitted thought. Kalb speaks of the actor's physical 'agony while performing a Beckett play.[21] The actress in *Footfalls* got her spine twisted and spoke of some legacy or scar each

performance left behind. The actors and actresses often had terrible muscular spasms because of the tension. Lucky's is, in any case, the Scapegoat's Agony! The entire stage-direction in *Endgame,* as it opens, is to be staged as a tableau and pantomime, that is, as still-torso, or, physical movement. The pantomime that follows the tableau is as follows–

> Clov goes and stands under the window left. Stiff, staggering walk. He looks up at window left. He turns and looks at window right. He goes out, comes back immediately with a small step-ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window left. Gets up on it, draws back curtain. He gets down takes six steps (for example) towards window right, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it under window right, gets upon it, draws back curtain. He gets down, takes three steps towards window left, goes back for ladder carries it over and sets it down under window left, gets upon it looks out of the window. (Brief Laugh). He gets down goes with ladder towards ashbins, halts, turns, carries back ladder and sets it down under window right, goes to ashbins, removes sheets covering them, folds it over his arm. In a dressing gown, a stiff toque on his head, a larger blood-stained handkerchief over his face, a whistle hanging from his neck, a ring over his knees, thick socks on his feet, HAMM seems to be asleep. CLOV looks him over. (Brief Laugh). He goes to door, halts, turns towards auditorium. (p.1)

After the tableau and the pantomine have helped institute the Grotesque 'physically' on stage, the 'language theme' takes over, as 'mentality', and Clov speaks. It is about the cataclysma all around outside and the imperceptibly

slow advance of the End to its halt–

> CLOV: (Fixed gaze tonelessly) Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished. (Pause). Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap (Pause). (p.2)

Once Beckett has 'the language theme' take over, it is under persistent creative manipulation not as trope or figure of speech, but in a variety of ways, in which, the potential inherent even in ordinary and banal language-use, can be dramaturgically exploited. This creative use of a trope-bereft language also helps stage 'mentality' at its swing, as in Lucky's extended two and a quarter page schizophrenia in *Waiting for Godot*, or, in Winnie's long speech-deliveries that span almost the entire length of *Happy Days*. Occasional, but very summary intermissions by Willie give the Winnie-speeches a profound dialogic content. Both are classic examples of Beckett working the 'language theme', with the long extended-speech-deliveries as material. He is forever imaginatively exploiting 'banal' language rhetoric in umpteen different creative ways. How then could this be Heidegger's 'chatter and ambiguity'?

Even Brater repeats Beckett's precise directions for the mime in *Krapp's Last Tape*, and, insists that there was to be complete harmony between the visual field and acoustics, because, they are 'palpably rendered', and, in this way Proustian-memory is made 'manifest, tangible, and real'. Once the mime is over, and, Beckett has worked to satisfaction with the 'physical theme', the

'language theme' is once more put to one more, but, a different artful treatment. This time, live speech and taped articulation recorded at different times in life, are counterpointed against each other, juxtaposing the humanity of Krapp, at 27 and 39, with the decrepit Krapp at 69.

Therefore, where can there be any relief in any kind or variety of thought, or commitment to -isms, or, ideologies, or even psychologies, be it even a Freud or his later versions! Why at all apply blinkers as the one about there being hope in Waiting, forgetting that the play is about the Waiting itself, which has now gone on for centuries, generation after generation and still Godot has failed to arrive! Interpreting such a Waiting, as after all, offering a glimmer of hope would be a bending over backwards to give Beckett a religious alibi. And, bringing in a Heidegger or Sartre, or, even Freud would definitely interfere and obstruct the playwright and artist from view. Samuel Beckett was first and foremost an artist, meticulous even about the way his plays were directed, insisting that no 'colour' be imported where there was none. Beckett, whether rightly or wrongly was committed to his art, and as artist, to his own world-view, however dark. In fact, he had found Heidegger and Sartre difficult reading and insisted that he was no philosopher. Ruby Cohn begins an article quoting the playwright, and, though the article ends bringing in the Occasionalists, Logical Positivists, and Heidegger, in order to counter somewhat, the content of the quote, her quote shall be used here for what it communicates.

Beckett is quoted by Colin as saying–

> When Heidegger and Sartre speak of a contrast between being and existence, they might be right. I don't know but their language is too philosophical for me. I am no philosopher. One can only speak of what is in front of him and that is simply a mess.[22]

Now, Absurd-theatre, particularly the Beckett oeuvre, dramatizes the excruciating metaphysical anguish of an existence made bereft of ilusion.[23] It is a situation visualized when Reason cannot explain, Faith cannot answer, and Language fails to communicate. Belief, meaning, place, object, time, lose significance. Family, society, scholarship and research, nutrition and sport become inconsequential. Failure, futility, confusion and uncertainty are, instead, the crucial experiences. Fear, despair and death overwhelm existence, and, with answers supposed not forthcoming there is a deafening Silence, because what the senses apprehend is a meaningless void, a *Non-ent*, a *Nothing-is*. All this puts a profound strain on human thought, which though intense, cannot even commit itself to a trope, much less to an ideology or an -ism, still less existentialism. Beckett's versions of Jarry's Ubu, therefore, take centre-stage. For, whatever could be the 'responsibility', whatever the 'choice', whatever the 'freedom', whatever 'bad-faith', and, whoever 'the other' in a condition which according to Beckett, is a universal predicament indeed! For Beckett, the artist, the proclaimed trauma is that there is nothing to express and nothing in which to express, and still, the obligation to express is compulsive;

that is, expression is impossible. Existence is aborted and is looked at as grotesque and instituted as 'the mess' that it was on stage. The Beckett repertoire invites the audience to take a second look at its own self, individually, as well as, collectively, and laugh discomfittedly, that is, if at all it can!

To institute this aborted 'something' on stage, the playwright gets studiously at work to creatively manoeuvre 'the physical', and the 'language themes', as well as, the themes of reason and dramaturgy. These 'themes' are worked in coordination, and, with clear and specific intent, to help destroy all kinds and varieties of complacent illusions. It is this dramaturgic do-away of illusions that helps concretize on stage a series of different Existential Grotesques, as so many Mentality-Corporeality Disjuncts. The Beckett Ubu or Existential Grotesque, in intense thought, certainly needs attention and study. To read the poet-playwright-novelist as just one other convenient example of existentialist enthusiasms in particular, is rather unfortunate. For one, it baulks and blocks Samuel Beckett the avowed artist with his 'obligation to express' although 'there is nothing to express' and 'nothing in which to express', but 'the obligation to express' very forceful still; for another, it unnecessarily tags Beckett with a label; for a third, it officiously bulldozes literature using an irritant philosophy; for a fourth, it reduces Beckett to a mere footnote and illustration to Sartre, Heidegger or Freud; and, for a fifth it transforms the entire Beckett oeuvre, repertoire and all, to an unreadable mystery, which it certainly is not. Of course, Bernard Shaw had also used drama to propagate

Fabian Socialism, and there is little wrong in using art for advertizement and propaganda, only that, Beckett had no -isms to propagate, nor, any ideology to advertize.

The Grotesques of Beckett in profound mental spasms, remain uncommitted to specific ideologies. In fact, the Beckett plays themselves show these Grotesques struggle 'to think'. They are dramaturgically put at excruciating thought. In one such predicament, Ubu-Vladimir and Ubu-Estragon are in a difficult situation indeed and, after a Pause, one Ubu once again beckons the other–

Vladimir : Gogo
Estragon : What?
Vladimir : Suppose we repented
Estragon : Repented what?
Vladimir : Oh... (He reflects). We wouldn't have to go into details.
Estragon : Our being born?
[Vladimir breaks into a hearty laugh which he immediately stiffles, his hand pressed to his pubis, his face contorted.]
Vladimir : One does not even laugh any more.
Estragon : Dreadful privation.
Vladimir : Merely smile. (He smiles suddenly from ear to ear, keeps smiling, ceases as suddenly.) It's not the same thing. Nothing to be done.

(Pause) [Act I, p.11]

The contorted face of Vladimir, with its laugh

stiffled and suddenly replaced by an ear-to-ear smile, which too disappears as suddenly, is one characteristic face of the Beckett Ubu.

As the next example, consider Winnie who is waist-down-buried-in-an-earth-mound in *Happy Days*, and, despite the entrapment makes repeated efforts to smile, but then, has to grade these smiles! Udailyi finds these graded smiles of Winnie occur even as 'the swing of the benumbed desperation of an unsettled mentality' takes its traumatic course through the play.[24] It is often accompanied by 'an arrested gesture, a pungent interrogative and a Pause.' Udailyi records at least 30 stage-directions in the play for 'smile on/smileoff', and, quite a few for 'gaze front' and 'arrest gesture', and says that 44 Long Pauses and 460 odd Pauses help situate on stage the profound Winnie-Willie Grotesques as a two-some condition with stubborn returns to blissful enthusiasms and even joyous exultations.[25] Quite a few times Winnie's head is put down in despair to be propped up again either by a self-prodded cliché or platitude, or what is worse, even blatant recalcitrance. The predicament is awesome.[26] Add to this the fact that Winnie begins half-buried, her torso gradually surrendering to earth's grip, till at the end, only her head sticks out, neck-upwards, and you have the Beckett Ubu, with its mentality-at-a-swing get the profounder. Beckett has Winnie-the-Ubu, almost heroic in her effort at thought in order to justify that hers was a happy condition indeed! However, the same Beckett has dramaturgy hurl derision at the sheer thought of happiness throughout the play. Possibly, the dramaturgic rinse of the very concept of

'happy', done almost ritual fashion, earlier in *Waiting for Godot*, had left the playwright clamouring for more artful invasions into the complacent illusionist's citadel of happiness. Therefore, are the Beckett Ubus or Grotesques put at intense thought 'with fierce attachment to physical processes', and 'feverish rejection', as Cohn says, of meta-physical questions that gnaw at them: How do mind and body communicate? What is the Self? What is the World? What is God?[27]

Once the Estragon-Grotesque even despairing blurts-

What's terrible is to have thought. (Act II, p.64.)

At one stage this Grotesque is at a worse despair–

I do not know why I don't know (Act II, p.67)

Estragon is tired even of life–

I'm tired of breathing (Act II, p.76.)

Thought, for the Beckett Grotesque, is a trauma, because, though profound and even excruciating, it is futile, for, it explains nothing! Even Vladimir, who is Estragon's two-some, thinks he could have done without thought–

Vladimir : Oh, it's not the worst, I know.
Estragon : What?
Vladimir : To have thought.
Estragon : Obviously.
Vladimir : But we could have done without it.
Estragon : Quo voulez vous (Act II, p.65.)

Vladimir interrupts Estragon's Latin and the exchange continues–

Vladimir : I beg your pardon
Estragon : Quo voulez vous.
Vladimir : Quo voulez vous. Exactly.
(Pause) (Act II, p.65.)

That is, 'You would have it so. Exactly.' In the same play Lucky is asked–

You know how to think. (Act II, p.39.)

The following quotation is one more example of how the playwright dramatizes the general predicament of his Grotesques literally trapped in futile thought. Pozzo's commands are directed both at Lucky's corporeality, as well as, 'mentality'. In Beckett, to repeat once more, the 'physical theme' generally initiates the dramaturgic–transaction, and, the 'language theme' takes over later, when, as always, the rhetoric of a 'common-place' language is creatively manipulated by the playwright to show a schizophrenic Lucky demolish altogether the entire Western effort at thought. In this quotation the lines begin and end with two permutations of 'think', the last impliedly carries in its imperative, the substantive used with the first–

Think pig! (Pause, Lucky begins to dance) Stop! (Lucky stops) Forward! (Lucky advances) Stop! (Lucky stops) Think!

Silence (Act I, p.42.)

The silence that follows is one more of the speaking Silences that throughout *Waiting for Godot* offer

commentary on the pregnant point dramaturgically scored. This time the Silence was aimed at the trap that 'think' and 'thought' very consistently were. The Lucky-Speech will be considered in its entirety soon. It was the only kind of thought the dramatist deliberately made available to his Ubu-Grotesque. It has been called the schizophrenic's word-sallad. Beckett studiously exploits the stage-business of Lucky's hat to pin-point the futility of thinking. When the two-and-a-half page long Lucky-Speech is trailing, there is a shout for his hat. Vladimir grabs it and Pozzo snatches it away, tramples upon it and says–

> There's an end to his thinking. (Act I, p.45)

There are no tropes and symbols in Beckett, but the stage–business of the hat and boot, willy-nilly gets associated with 'thought'. In the scene just referred to, when Vladimir seizes Lucky's hat, Beckett makes the Grotesque peer inside, to find out if there was something in the hat that had helped Lucky's long, almost shouted, pause-spersed schizophrenia. There was precedent for this in the earlier part of the play where the stage– business of Vladimir's hat and Estragon's boot reveals itself in the stage-directions which read as follows–

> He takes off his hat, peers inside it, feels about inside it, shakes it, puts it on again (Act I, p.11)

The Grotesque, Vladimir, is both 'appalled' and 'relieved' at this. He is appalled because the hat did not deliver pigeon-truths, and, was 'relieved' that it mercifully had not! At least, for the moment, such 'pigeon-truths' were

not forthcoming![28] That was Beckett's way of exploring Truth! Elsewhere, he is at Divinity! Somewhere else—the Saviour! The playwright will be found to be using dramaturgy as his most lethal weapon of assault, in the name of art, not only at Western Thought and Culture, but also, rather bitterly, at humanity itself.[29] Paradoxically, Beckett ended up the Achiever-as-Artist, which, he never would have ever wanted to be! He succeeded in communicating Failure.

The stage directions controlling the stage-business of Vladimir's hat continue—

> He takes off his hat again, peers inside.
> (Act I, p.11.)

The hat was still empty and Vladimir finds it odd–

> Funny. (Act I, p.11.)

Again, the stage-directions read–

> He knocks on the crown as though to dislodge a foreign body, peers into it again, puts it on again.
> (Act I, p.11.)

Search and knock as he might, for the Beckett Ubu, here Vladimir, answers were foreign bodies alien to the Ubu's, or Grotesque-disjunct's Irrational predicament.

Next, it is the turn of the stage-business of Estragon's boot and the stage-directions read as follows–

> Estragon with a supreme effort succeeds in pulling off his boot. He looks inside it, feels about inside it, turns it upside down, shakes it, looks on the

> ground to see if anything has fallen out, finds nothing, feels inside it again, staring sightlessly before him. (Act I, p.11.)

When the hat which sits the head, which is supposed the centre of all thought, did not have answers (which in any case would have been 'foreign bodies'), the boot was tried. Even though search was thorough, nothing fell out of the boot either! From head to toe, as Udailyi says, no pigeon-truths were forthcoming, no answers whatever, no truth-of-a-thought, no thought-of-a-truth.[30] It is a desperate situation. Later, Gogo and Didi try Lucky's hat also. They try to pass time in the stage-business game of donning each other's hat, with Lucky's providing the third option. The movements are visualized rhythmic.

This is choreographed corporeality–

> Estragon takes Vladimis hat, Vladimir adjusts Lucky's hat on his head. Estragon puts on Vladimir's hat in place of his own which he hands to Vladimir. Vladimir takes Estragon's hat. Estragon adjusts Vladimir's hat on his head. Vladimir puts on Estragon's hat in place of Lucky's...
>
> (Act I p.72)

The stage-business of donning hats ends when Vladimir refuses to put on his own hat preferring Lucky's–

> Estragon hands Vladimir's hat to Vladimir who takes it and hands it back to Estragon who takes it and hands it back to Vladimir who takes it and throws it down. (Act II, p.72)

The Grotesque-Vladimir turns his head coquettishly

to-and-fro, mimes like a mannequin. He asks Estragon how does Lucky's hat fit–

Estragon : Hideous.
Vladimir : But more so than usual?
Estragon : Neither more nor less.
Vladimir : Then I can keep it. Mine irked me (Pause) How shall I say? (Pause) It itched me.
[He takes off Lucky's hat, peers inside it, shakes it, knocks on the crown, puts it on again]

(Act II, p.72)

At this, Estragon expresses disappointment and says–

I am going. (Act II, p.72.)

Silence.

There follows, one more, of the many speaking Silences in the play. Pozzo, Lucky, Vladimir, Estragon are humanity. Theirs is, according to Beckett, one universal predicament, and, the situation is so hopelessly pervasive that either can be the other. Either can be the other Ubu, or, the other Grotesque. Each is a schizophrenic and each is at intense and futile thought, but the swinging mentality of each would, nevertheless, remain unsatisfied by 'pigeon-truths' of ideologies, philosophies, or, -isms, much less existentialism. The effort at Thought is a Failure, and as to 'meaning' there can be none. In fact, there is not even the deconstructionist's satisfaction of searching and finding 'aporias'. In *Endgame*, Hamm and Clov, Nagg, and Nell, are caught in the bind of the

same mentality- corporeality disjunct. The following quotation is just one permutation of a Hamm-Clov exchange on 'meaning'–

Hamm : Clov!
Clov : (Impatiently) What is it?
Hamm : We are not beginning to... to... mean something
Clov : Mean something! You and I mean something! (Brief Laugh). Ah! That's a good one. (Act p.27)

The desperate Hamm wants the frighteningly slow grind of the End to come quickly to its ultimate halt–

Old endgame lost of old, play and lose and have done with losing. (Pause): (p.15)

This, indeed, is the work of a playwright and not of a philosopher. Beckett may have been a well-read man and his Ubu-Grotesques engrossed in deep thought, yet, what is dramatized is an artfully worked metaphysical anguish of being unable to arrive at answers. Now, there was a time when technique did not get the respect due to it, because, literature was endorsed for its 'profundity' and its 'ambience'. The problem of form or technique was considered either too difficult or too naive. It is an irony that now the focus is on how the language of a 'discourse' is manipulated to acquire and sustain power: political, religious, intellectual, or emotional. Today, there is invitation to suspiciously 'deconstruct' the narrative to 'uncover' the concealed ideology. But then, like paraphrase, any argument on literature at the level of a

theory, or, an -ism only, cannot substitute for the artefact itself. Thus, there is Samuel Beckett, as one example only, to give the direct experience of a creatively wrought disintegration, if disintegration of meaning is the target. And, the dramatist does it piece by piece, bit by bit, very artfully, and with some pleasure to boot. The playwright's dramaturgy actually appears to hold the cudgels, in which, Western Thought has its most rebellious counterpoint for contender. Now, there is the deconstructionist's complain that too much significance is given to metaphysics in Western Philosophy, and, it is Metaphysics that should be dislodged in the paradigm-shift that is desired. That is some irreverence indeed. Brecht too opted for a bit of irreverence but he let Man's humanity be. However, Beckett did not even spare the humanity of the human being, opting as he did, for an artfully worked Ubu, or, Existential Grotesque.[31] In comparison, the deconstructionist would end up with debris and rubble only, never statisfied even with his last aporia. Theory is only a passing phase, and though, Beckett the playwright, and Theory, are both characteristic off-shoots of Western Thought and Culture, the dramatist can easily be predicted a longer life, as artist. Of course, though the entire Beckett oeuvre, particularly the plays, shall also be as debris and rubble of an entire cultural ethos, there shall remain a *Not-I*, a *Footfalls*, an *Endgame*, a *Happy Days, Waiting for Godot, Rockaby* and *Krapp's last Tape* for the West to boast of, given also arts's own predeliction referred to earlier.

And so, it is, as Existential Grotesques that the

Beckett-personae enter, and, on heads and knees too, because, if there ever were prerogatives, quiet Beckett-dramaturgy has them got rid off! The following is a quotation from *Waiting for Godot* on this very condition. The exchange begins after a Silence, and the Silence that follows speaks abundant commentary–

Silence

Estragon : (Anxious) And we?
Vladimir : I beg your pardon.
Estragon : I said. And we?
Vladimir : I don't understand.
Estragon : Where do we come in?
Vladimir : Come in ....?
Estragon : Take you time.
Vladimir : Come in. On heads and knees.
Estragon : As bad as that.
Vladimir : You worship wishes to assert his prerogatives.
Estragon : We have no rights anymore.
[Laugh of Vladimir. Stiffled as before less the smile]
Vladimir : You'd make me laugh if it weren't prohibited.
Estragon : We've lost our rights.
Vladimir : (distinctly) We got rid of them.
-Silence. (Act I, p.119)

After this the stage-direction reads as follows:

> They remain motionless, arms dangling, heads sunk, sagging at the knees. (Act I, p.11.)

Indeed, Ubus, or, Existential Grotesques all! That is how

Beckett looked at himself and at fellow human beings like himself! Wherefore, then a Heidegger, a Freud, or, a Saussure, Derrida, or, a Sartre? Would they too not have entered on heads and knees!

The following is one last quotation on the Beckett Grotesque's failed effort at thought. The effort breaks down into sounds and sunderings. It is Winnie from *Happy Days*–

> I used to think... (Pause)... I say I used to think they were in my head. (Smile) But no (smile broader) No no (Smile off) That was just logic... (Pause). Not yet (Pause) Not all (Pause) Some remains (Pause.) Sounds... (Pause) Like little sunderings... little falls... apart (Pause).
>
> (Act II, p.40)

If thought is futile and existence a mentality- corporeality disjunct what gets concretized on stage is Failure. The set of *Three Dialogues* between Samuel Beckett and George Duthuit reflect the playwright's firm commitment to an artist's integrity and problematic; but, Beckt had choice, and, he opted to artfully institute Failure and a *Non-ent* on stage! He expresses disgust of the Feasible and is weary of all past art. He is–

> weary of its puny exploits weary of pretending to be able, of being able of doing a little better the same old thing, of going a little further along a dreary road.[32]

This is because, the artist's problematic is of his own choosing, and, it is that there was the compulsion or obligation to express though–

> there is nothing to express, nothing in which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express. [33]

The artist, therefore, has himself caught in this terrible bind. The artist in Beckett, literally got himself skewed by the ferocious dilemma of expression and had to keep wriggling – artfully though!. At the end of the *Second Dialogue* Beckett exits weeping! [34]

The situation, as he propounds in the *Third Dialogue* –

> is that of him who is helpless, cannot act, in the event cannot paint since he is obliged to paint. The act is of him who helpless, unable to act, acts in the event of paints since he is obliged to paint. [35]

According to Beckett, the domain of the artist was till then the domain of the Feasible; the common anxiety was to express as much as possible to the best of one's ability.

Furthermore, Beckett thought that art must be made rid of occasion, be made independent of it. It should be bereft of occasion in every shape and form. Otherwise, according to Beckett, the occasion becomes the artist's predicament, because, Beckett thought that occasion had lost its way in the disquisitions on its nature. However, the relation between the artist and occasion was still subtle, both the terms in the relationship being unstable. What should be of concern is, therefore, the acute anxiety of the relationship itself, as being invalid, inadequate, as being excluding and even

blinding. The anxiety about the artist-occasion relationship being acute, why not first submit to the incoercible absence of relation, and say that to be an artist is to fail. This then is Beckett's position. He wants this Fidelity to Failure as the new occasion, a new term of relation, and 'of the act which unable to act, obliged to act he makes, an expressive act, even of itself, of its impossibility, of its obligation.'[36]

The artist's dilemma, thereafter, is that expression is an impossible act, and the obligation to express a nagging persistence. The obligation, Beckett would have persist after death also, so it seems, because consciousness of the Self too shall persist, as it does even in life, of a 'talking-I'. *Play*, a whole drama is devoted to this disturbing possibility. Therefore, it is *Failure* that gets concretized on the Beckett proscenium. It is thought; the genuine predicament of the Beckett Ubu, an Existential Grotesque, is to be always at intense thought, because, ready–made platitudinous answers by way of an ideology, or -ism, or philosophy or even psychology or, theory, do not ever satisfy. The case of Lucky's two and a quarter page, pauses-interspersed, shouted schizophrenia, is just one example from the Beckett repertoire.

For, whatever is Lucky's effort at thought if not an 'artificially' demonstrated Failure! Beckett deliberately makes his Ubu-Grotesques, only question and destabilize, and, not construct and institute, counter-pointed as they are at all Western Thought and Culture. In Lucky's long speech, it is 'language-theme' once more in creative

employ. The clichés used, acquire the sting to destroy and destruct, and, take on after their artful use, the added power of descriptive clauses that serially demolish and debunk. Of course, divinity is forever a fixation for the playwright. So, he first has the clichés target the Christian God. Beginning with the eight 'quaquas' sounded against the divinity's 'being', the derision has its range span between a child's displeasure and an adult's anger. The insulting throat-sound apart, its Latin means 'as being', and has all the implications of 'a pointing in all directions'. It is a personal God, and the authority is in public works! Each addition to Lucky's extended 'speech' is an artful addition. The tone set is deliberately negative to which each cliché adds its own clever negative. 'It is outside time', and, 'the time is without extension.' And, it is supposed at divine heights but that is deliberately countered with strong accusatory substantives: apathia, athambia and aphasia. Therefore, the divinity's divine heights notwithstanding, it lacks feeling, is imperturbable, and, without speech. After that, the cliché-speak has just to consolidate the destruction wrought. The playwright is a clever artist. The following five expressions out of cliché-speak, Beckett seems to think are like nails to a coffin:-

- loves us dearly;
- with some exceptions;
- for reasons unknown;
- but time will tell;
- and suffers.

There is a method in the use of the clichés. In the

immediate context the clichés become alive. The tone being set, 'Redemption, and 'Heaven and Hell' are targetted. 'For reasons unknown', but, 'but time will tell', precede 'plunged in torment', and, 'plunged in fire'; 'who could doubt it' follows the description of Hell. The calm of Heaven is next focused. The three repetitions of Heaven's calm bring it to sceptic scrutiny. That the calm is intermittent shows it at a worse. That the calm is at least 'better than nothing,' makes deliberate artful derision an achievement. This is a 'banal' language's creative rhetoric, ultimately used as 'theme'. This is not a language at a collapse. It has, a master of the medium, work at his artful rhetoric of negative persuasion. It is an imaginatively worked disintegration. Rhetoric, from its inception, was a creative practitioner's art. That very apologia, is being studiedly used to counter and debunk, which earlier, had helped hold religious mythology in awe! In the name of Failure, the playwright, as a skillful practioner, set out to be an achiever! It is necessary therefore, that 'he be found out.' Or else, philosophy and -isms will consecrate him a mystery! It was dramaturgy that the playwright cunningly and effectively used to destroy illusions, and, generate despair, fear, helplessness and dread. But this hardly qualifies him as a philosopher or ideologue, for, he insisted that he was philosopher none.

Lucky is next made to target Scholarship and Research. The ritual of the child's 'caca' and 'popo' in Acacacacademy and Anthropopopometry hurls voiced derision at them. After that the cliché-speak again takes over. First, only the following three, are used to firm up

the doubt. These three, too, had earlier been mere apologia. The clichés, are also cleverly placed to make the transition from one dramaturgic debunk to the next appear easy and smooth–

- considering what is more;
- that as a result of;
- the labours left unfinished.

Beckett even uses proper names, in which Fartow, Belcher and Testew are very denigrating. However, what in effect, really debunks is the creative placement of just the right erstwhile apologia, at the proper place, with a slight variation or repetition, or, one more language permutation, beat, or, rhythm so as to damage most. The cliché-speak even acquires overtones. 'Considering what is more' begins the scholar's downward tumble, with 'as a result of' and 'labours left unfinished' providing perspective. 'Established beyond all doubt' is again derision and is made to work with 'all other doubt than that', both of which merge in 'the labours of men', which in any case were 'left unfinished.' This being the situation, 'established hereinafter' sounds comic. Labours were 'left unfinished for reasons unknown'. Something was thought established, but then, many deny it! The public works were there that 'established beyond doubt', but, 'labours of men were left, unfinished', and that too, 'for reasons unknown'!!

And so, on go the clichés, whose very repititious circularity is profoundly destructive. This is rhetoric to institute Failure and Futility. Now, for the Beckett Ubu,

the Existential Grotesque, 'Essy', that is, 'to be,' and 'Possy', that is, 'to able to,' are the essential questions left unattended by Scholarship and Research. Not that the Grotesques themselves have any answers. Otherwise, a few would not have kept waiting for Godot. These Grotesques are shown more concerned about questions of existence and ability, than of Scholarship and Research. Yet, it was clever cliché-dramaturgy that helped Beckett destruct the illusions of Scholarship and Research. That is, it was a deliberate exercize in dramaturgic debunk to portray the Disjunct-Ubu's Failure.

Man's being and ability, that is, 'Essy' and 'Possy' later become 'man in short', 'man in brief', when Nutrition and Health are targetted, as are Sports. Appropriately manipulated clichés reduce the exercizes in physical culture to a nought, which leaves Man to 'waste and pine' in spite of the Nutrition, Health and Sport 'for reasons unknown'. The strides of physical culture have the clichés 'concurrently' and 'simultaneously', literally hurled at them, and, Sports are made fun of by naming them at breath–

tennis football running cycling swimming flying floating riding gliding conating camogie skating...
(Act I, p.43)

There were Sports of all kinds, of all sorts, in all seasons-autumn summer winter... (Act I, p.43)

Beckett continues relentlessly and so does his Ubu, who here is Lucky–

In a word I resume.... (Act I, p.43)

The 'success' Beckett achieves in the effort to hue, cut, and, destroy all around, is because of the destructive language rhetoric. This cannot be lost on attentive minds. Therefore, resuming, Beckett has Lucky make man 'shrink and pine' despite Nutrition and Sport, for, it was there that the playwright's effort was single-mindedly directed from the very outset. Man shrank and pined–

concurrently simultaneously for reasons unknown to shrink and dwindle... (Act I, p.43)

To the Beckett Ubu-Grotesque, a stay to its intense thought is impossible. Therefore, explanation of any kind, and, commitments of any sort are unwarranted. This Grotesque cannot explain either to itself, or to other Grotesques, the Irrational World around it, nor place, nor time, nor object, nor body, nor mind, nor truth, nor belief, nor redemption, nor repentance, since each Ubu, when its turn comes, has Beckett, dramaturgically destruct these illusions through sheer language rhetoric. This is the essential Beckett experience, of witnessing Beckett the playwright, at work, as dramatist. As the Lucky-Speech reaches its shouted crescendo the clichés come faster with subtle implication, and earlier reminders, till only clichés remain, but what now accompany them are the plains, stones, skulls, and, mountains. The Lucky-Speech is very representative. All Hamms, all Clovs, Not-Is, Vladimirs, Estragons, Willies, Winnies, and Krapps, Pozzos, are, at similar excruciating thought. For indeed, nothing is shown achieved but a futile mental intensity, a

platitude or two, some clichés, and the spectre of Failure, the latter persistently haunting the Ubu-Grotesque. It was always the Scapegoat's Agony! The tragedy according to Beckett, is that the Grotesque is the victim of a predicament in which Mentality and Corporeality work at cross-purposes and the Grotesques begin and end as Disjuncts. Therefore, though thought is shown persistent, intense and perpetual, all its effort is deliberately concretized on stage, very artfully, a miserable Failure. It is a failure to express with the nagging obligation to express, persistent nevertheless. Would then, the search in Beckett, for -isms, or, labelling him as of one ideology or another, be the proper approach to Beckett-the-playwright, who, in fact, also wrote fiction and poetry?

In *Waiting for Godot* Beckett has Vladimir persist obstinately, over why, only one of the two thieves was promised forgiveness. The language-permutations of this questioning has the Logic of Redemption, the Bible, the Evangelists, as well as, Saviour, derisively dismissed. These language permutations deserve to be quoted. Vladimir begins only to pass time, that is, Beckett is, once more, very casually, at one more dramaturgic demolition! Vladimir begins; this is how the idea of Redemption is introduced–

> Ah Yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?
> (Act I, p.12)

The thought, after a Pause, next puts on variation and accretion–

Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One–
(Act I, p.12)

Next, the same thought gets a new language-dramaturgy; the small variations and accretions continue. Vladimir is still at the Logic of Redemption–

> Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other.. (he searches for the contrary of saved)... damn it. (Act I, p.12)

Vladimir, thereafter gets more enquiring and inquisitive, and, the 'shape' of the proposition in language, is therefore, a different thrust. The veracity of the Evangelists come under scrutiny–

> And yet.. (pause)... how is it... this is not boring you I hope.. how is it that of the four Evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved. The four of them were there- or thereabouts- and only one speaks of a thief being saved. (Pause). Come on, Gogo, return the ball, can't you, once in a way?
> (Act I, p.12)

In the fifth language permutation the thought gets extension, through the ever-present potential in language for dramaturgic variations, with the Beckett operation-debunk still poised at the Evangelist–

> One out of the four. Of the three two don't mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him.
> (Act I, p.13)

These variations in language-use and dramaturgic play, on a thought or concept, are a characteristic feature of Beckett's repertoire. In the present context, the next dramaturgic variation is shorter and now returns to Redemption–

> The two of them must have been damned.
> (Act I, p.13)

Beckett's artful manipulations of both thought and theme is manifest throughout his work. One thought can always take several dramaturgic language-shapes. Vladimir now has two more 'shapes' forthcoming; it is of course, Vladimir's worry about Christianity's Logic of Redemption, but this time, both Redemption and the Evangelists are dramaturgically targetted—

> But one of the four says that one of two was saved. (Act I, p.13)

Finally, it is the veracity of the Evangelists that Beckett has Vladimir challenge, and, there has to be one more language permutation. It is–

> But all four were there. And only one speaks of a thief saved. Why believe him rather than the other? (Act I, p.13)

This, even Estragon, is made to question. Drama now has all Christianity lodged in its sieve: the Evangelists; their versions of the Bible; the Logic of Redemption; as well as, Saviour! Estragon agitatedly questions the reliance on an Evangelist–

Who believes him?

Vladimir's last language-permutation is focused on the Evangelists. Drama has their veracity doubted, and helps Beckett finally challenge Christianity to the core–

Everybody. It's the only version they know.

(Act I, p.13)

But, Beckett, having generated a 'mentality-swing' cannot resist a round off and has it coming through Estragon's irritated comment–

People are bloody ignorant apes. (Act I, p.13)

This was a Beckett Ubu's 'mentaity', shown once more at work. Also, it was Beckett, creatively working 'the language-theme'. The stage directions then shift attention to the 'physical-theme'. It is Beckett again: he has Estragon rise painfully, limp, halt, and gaze, into the distance, once, from the right of the stage, and, once from the left. Vladimir watches him and indulges in a little bit of stage-business. He goes and picks up Estragon's boot, peers into and drops it hastily, shouts a disgusted 'Pah!' and spits.

Now, as his practice abundantly shows, Beckett deliberately excluded from his work the general penchant for trope and opted for the rhetoric of a language which trope-conditioned minds consider 'banal' and 'trite.' However, Beckett found the rhetoric of such a language full of dramaturgic potential and possibility also. Beckett worked upon the various permutations and combinations, rhythms and beats of 'common-place ordinary language'

and created scintillating drama. This playwright is generally applauded for working with a collapsed medium; but, it has yet to be fully appreciated that subtle dramaturgy inherent even in such a language-use, could be imaginatively worked, and often produced effects, just because, it was the language-medium at its profoundest simple! The language-instrument was creatively made to appear worse and worse to help 'achieve' the effects of Failure, Futility, and, Meaninglessness on stage; and yet, the conscious creative manipulation of the medium became better and better artistically!! The greater the artfully worked language-collapse looked, profounder was the concretization of the Absurd on stage. An ordinary phrase is varied, ever so slightly, time and again, adding often a permutation here, or, erasing a beat, or, rhythm there, as in the following Clov speech, and the effect is found profound. Clov wants to go away and leave Hamm in the ram-shackle shelter, but then, there is no-where to go–

> I say to myself... sometimes... one day... I say to myself... sometimes... one-day... Then one day suddenly... I say to myself... (p.51)

Often repetitions work to dramaturgic advantage. Pauses and Silences too have subtle drama in them if imaginatively placed. Pungent interrogatives strike at illusions instantly, and in fact, are amongst the first volleys shot.[37] Throw a What?, Why?, How?, or, Where? at the most complacent illusion, and feel the cracks appear immediately. There is little that the pungency in these forthright interrogative spares. Be it Dream, Vision, Story,

or be it Belief, Time, Truth or, Place, or, Object, or, Reason, or Guarantee! Add to these creative exploitations of commonplace language, the various permutations and combinations of the banal throat-sound called 'word', and, find subtle drama waiting to be used for its infinite dramaturgic variety.

Now, if one corollary of such a creatively generated language-collapse is that language is an efficacious medium, another is that a language made trope-bereft, out of deliberate choice, must needs have an appropriate context, and, in Beckett, what could best suit the artificially-generated, language– breakdown, but, an Ubu— Existential Grotesque, a Mentality– Corporeality Disjunct, or a Cartesean Centaur, call it what we may. Or, conversely, these Ubu-Grotesques could be taken to have only a creatively worked 'collapsed' instrument as medium! What gets situated each time on the Beckett proscenium is, therefore, an Ubu-Grotesque in profound thought, who, because of its disjunct predicament is unable to subscribe to any certainty whatever, be it of Action, or, Reason; or, be it of Redemption, the Evangelists, the Bible, or, Purity; or Thought, or Language, Faith, or, Ideology. Neither is the Past worthy, nor the Future, nor is Waiting, nor Ending, nor an After-life. It is, in fact, too late even for suicide. One representative Grotesque, that is, Vladimir, would vouchsafe to that. There is a manifestation of the characteristic Beckett Disjunct also in the story of *Mercier and Camier,* once again, a two-some in which Cohn says, Mercier was for Mind and Camier's preference was for the Body. Somewhere in the story the

two started drifting apart till Camier entered hospital, for a skin-ailment while Mercier remained away watching the shadows.[38] However could, a Mind-Body Disjunct, commit itself to any kind of certainty, much less the complacent where-withal of an ideology, still less an -ism, a Sartre, a Marx, Derrida, Saussure, Freud, or Heidegger? In play after play, a different Grotesque is found entrapped in this existential impasse. It is forever *the something itself*, the Grotesque 'there,' and, not its be-littling propaganda.

Possibly it was Sartre, the existentialist-litterateur who had set a precedent of sorts, by making his plays in particular, a point-by-point illustration of his existentialist philosophy. Thus, *No Exit* has its characters trapped in Hell, primarily because, despite 'freedom' they had 'in bad faith' made 'wrong choices', during lives lived in 'irresponsibility' on earth, where 'the other' was also quite a problematic. Again, in *The Flies,* Orestes ends 'lonely' and overburdened with 'freedom' and, the suggestion is that Zeus, the god-head is no less 'lonely' in his 'infinite freedom'. This apart, there is Martin Esslin's pertinent observation on the dramatization by Sartre of the Absurd, where Esslin remarks that both Sartre and Camus dramatize on traditional lines, that is, with the concept of character as having each a 'core' or 'soul' to respond from.[39] On the contrary, the *dramatis personae* in Beckett, are each one more version of the Mercier-Camier disjunct, with 'mentality' permanently at a swing, and 'corporeality' perpetually entrapped, but, both yoked together and suffering always. Such Existential Grotesques are repeatedly shown in deep and intense

thought just because pigeon–truths that slip out of hats and boots in the form of ideologies or -isms, are found extremely unsatisfactory and unconvincing. Sartre's tendency was to use art for propaganda, and this, therefore, makes Sartre's plays so much the less powerful as art, when compared to the Beckett repertoire.

The past century will be listed in history as a hundred years that got excessively embroiled in Literary Criticism. The author, at a moment of tremendous discovery, was pronounced dead, and, what for hundreds of years was appreciated as 'literature' the world over, demeaned into 'discourse'; also, literary criticism became a search for 'sign', 'signifier', and 'signification'. However, Beckett, or, for that matter, the likes of Shakespeare in the 'erstwhile' world of literature, did not write ordinary discourse. They cannot be dismissed off-hand, a plethora of *aporias* notwithstanding. The work of such authors cannot be written-off as 'discourse', similar to, say, a First Information Report lodged at a police station or a lawyer's affidavit filed in court. Shakespeare's, Donne's, Keats's, Eliot's or Beckett's is not just any other use of language. Language is announced by Theory, a slippery medium, about which it is possibly thought, the less said the better; though, that does not prevent the Theorists from doling out very confidently, volumes after volumes of Theory. May be, the apologia repeatedly put in, as 'performers', or 'doers' of Theory is to get over their own caveat against language, and, appears to them, justification enough after that to go on 'writing'. And, it is a kind of writing, which, had it qualified even as good 'prose',

would too have made amends! There is a remark in Kalb's *Beckett in performance* which in this context deserves attention. Kalb writes–

> Unfortunately, semiology has never overcome the fact that a huge segment of the population stops reading or listening the moment it perceives the words 'sign' and 'signifier' in the same clause, and a dramaturg, if he is to be useful in production, cannot employ terms that make his collaborators stop listening.[40]

Kalb tries to avoid the use of specialized language as much as possible 'in order to remain useful to practitioners, in addition to critics and others interested in Beckett as a literary figure.'[41]

Unfortunately, interest in the text as literature, was lost long ago, because academics supported by publishers had taken over, and, it was thought enough, if one knew barely how to explain a text's meaning. Literature, as one significant hub of human creativity and aesthetic pleasure, was the obvious casualty. And, though *The Poem is*, held fort for half a century or more, the journey from *The Poem is*, to *The Poem is not* became inevitable. In the name of change, and wanting, in fact, a paradigm shift the shape of literature got distorted into a search only for modes of signification. Not that *The Poem is*, is not debatable, but so is the *The Poem is not*. However, the demand for a paradigm shift in the interest of variety and change, is not to allow the applecart to stay on its wheels at all. In any case, art has always been the better instrument to help perceptions change; but, it should be art, not the sanctimonious

sermons upon its Theory, because, that scales down its sheer variety to mere discourse. Thus, if Theory wants Western Metaphysics with its penchant for Origins, Absolutes, Being, Truth, and Time, under severe philosophical strain, it is invited to discover Beckett, the creative artist at work, and, not Derrida. The Beckett arte-fact, in a variety of ways flaunts Failure, Futility and an Existential Grotesque, with all Essences and Illusions destroyed by the dramaturg's more subtle and more perceptive artistic ways. Neither Theory, nor Literary Criticism can ever play proxy for the creative artist who is very particular about an artist's integrity, and, who deliberately puts himself at a counterpoint to all the twenty five hundred years of Western Thought and Culture, and, literally dismantles the entire edifice piecemeal, bit by bit, be it in poetry, fiction or drama. However, Beckett does this as a compulsive artist, with no ideological axes to grind, and, remains firmly committed to what he thought was his integrity as an artist.

Therefore, the journey to *The Poem is* is more human and direct, than the journey to *The Poem is not*, that is, if literature is permitted its identity as an art-form, and also, is not shred of its significance to the human being. Furthermore, *The Poem is not*, for all its value and worth as a valuable support to the understanding of a piece of literature, should not interfere and obstruct access to the significance of the art-form as an arte-fact. Fortunately, there are reputed names, of whom Hillis Miller, is one example, who do not shy off words like 'literature' and 'interpretation', and, as in *The Linguistic*

Moment are very sparing in the use of the clichéed term: discourse! Of course, there can be other and very valid objections to Hillis-Miller. Thus, in *The Linguistic Moment*, while reading Wordsworth, much is made of the poet's fondness for epitaphs, particularly because they were after all a *form of writing*, and, that too *etched on stone*! Now, this is certainly something new to have been said about Wordsworth, which, for a change is different from the *mantra* about egoistical sublimes; however, it could also be a case of stretching a point too far, just because, being the true disciple that Hillis Miller appears to be, the 'concept' of *arche-writing* had to be accommodated. Again, this ardent theorist did not visualize, even as the critical effort later entitled *The Linguist Moment* progressed, that the 'search' for linguistic moments in eight poets would end up in a book! This was because projects in literary criticism were so uncertain, what with *aporias* lurking all over and all around. In fact, the dutiful disciple is met with in the *Preface* itself, because, though the *Preface* happily remains in place, there are arguments against a *Preface* in the *Preface.* For, is not the fuss about language being an uncertain and self-contradictory medium also part of a theorist's perception, and regular references to this have to be made however oblique, implied, or, even as innuendo. Yet, this critic's confidence about using language to satisfaction is not shaken, despite the religiously maintained caveats; and, whatever gets to be said about the eight poets in *The Linguistic Moment* covers a good four hundred and more pages! What Hillis Miller ends up flaunting are Catachresis, Nietzsche, and, Time, and

not 'literature'. At p.419, Hillis Miller says that Catachresis is 'the violent, forced or abusive use of a word to name something that has no literal name?' In short, Theory wants to be found very literal. Its obsession against trope appears as old as the Russian Formalists. At a counterpoint to this attitude to, and, treatment of language, is Beckett, the language artist, his work called a classic in his life time, determined to situate Failure on stage, and, 'succeeding brilliantly,' what with all his concretized Existential Grotesques, and, their 'banal' language's remarkable rhetoric! Each Beckett play is a profoundly different artistic treatment of the 'physical and language themes'. These themes are creatively worked to institute Mentality-Corporeality Disjuncts, on stage 'there', in a 'seamless presentational-representational blend'; that is, the Ubus, *the something themselves.*

One very important fact that escapes attention about Beckett is that he actually succeeds in instituting Failure and Futility on the proscenium. The words *Failure* and *Futility* get so much the better of perception, while reading or watching Beckett, that it is forgotten that *Failure* and *Futility*, as a *Nothing is* and, a *Non-ent* communicate themselves very effectively on the Beckett stage. Beckett the playwright, as artist *does not, in fact, fail at all.* Rather, his art is an overwhelming success.

The many Grotesques in the Beckett repertoire are successful creations, and, the creatively generated collapse of the language also reaches across to the reader and audience, each time as a very 'genuine' collapse. Of course, it has to be an artificially or artfully worked

breakdown. Does anybody escape the logocentric trap, opting vociferously for graphocentricism, out of a self created unnecessary binary in phonocentricism/ graphocentricism? Theory's technique is to first create, very casually, an artificial binary, and, follow this up with a shrill complaint against binaries altogether. Next, even as people are drawn to the artificial binary, the Theorists get away hijacking one binary, proclaiming, for whatever reasons, that, it was the better option. This, to say the least, is not fair. On the other hand, Beckett does not in the final count, choose to escape 'the logocentric trap,' artistic creativity remaining the principle. Rather, to repeat, he cuts and hues away beat after beat, rhythm after rhythm, permutation after one more permutation, combination after one more varied combination; adds an accretion quietly, and, withdraws another. And, he does all this treating language itself not as trope but 'theme', in order, not to work the Feasible art more feasibly, but, to 'achieve' the target of situating Failure and Futility on stage. The playwright was caught in a much-protested, and therefore, a self-created paradox. He very cunningly gets away with it, for, although his theme was Failure and not the Feasible, he had as artist, to show not only to himself, but to the world, that he was *actually succeeding* in instituting *Failure* on stage. And, to say the least, he was an over-whelming success, as playwright, as well as, director.

Philosophy and Theory are hindrances and interfere if used overmuch, to understand such a committed artist of the Absurd, as Beckett. They obstruct and block the

author from view and little is gained through the pre-emptory and perfunctory announcement that the author is dead. 'Find the author out', for what he or she does; do not kill him or her off-hand, just because, he or she appears an interfering nuisance to neatly worked intellectual perceptions. Beckett understood what was intentional-fallacy but only wanted that the issue of 'the author's intention be not so summarily discarded in production.'[42] Beckett only asked that the texts be not dismissed out of hand.[43] On the contrary, what Theory does is to base itself on suspicion rather than aesthetics. It appears suspicious of the author; suspicious even of a particular meaning and suspicious throughout of the language medium itself, as being arbitrary and manipulative, and, only a code or structure. Consequently, that language can be creatively used is suppressed, and what is 'foregrounded' is the fact that language can be appropriated to manipulate power! This is made to sound a discovery, when Rhetoric, as practice, has been there since ancient times. Athens and Rome were past masters of this art, and the Elizbethans enjoyed its thrust and parry, so much so, that their clowns made occasional mirth at its cost. Later, Burke held the attention of the British Parliament for hours just because of Rhetoric. Modern politicians and advertizers would hardly spare a thought for the harm their Rhetoric would cause their unwary listeners and viewers.

But then, *The Poem is not* is not being grudged at all, because, it is often of tremendous help in understanding literature, or, *The Poem is*. However, *The Poem is not* can only help provide the where-withal of

reference, which should never be made to replace or substitute the arte-fact arrived at creatively. Literature, music, architecture, sculpture and painting and even pottery have fascinated the human being for centuries. But, the fact of the matter is that today, even the arte-fact stands discredited and is best to be scrutinized only for its 'signs', 'signifiers' and 'signification'. What earlier was thought 'significant', and therefore, was given due 'significance', has been relegated from view, and is permanently being kept out of focus. Maybe, today, nothing is thought 'significant', except Theory, and the theorizing that it helps ensure!

Now, obviously inclining more towards *The Poem is*, and still trying to respect *The Poem is not.*, let us see how new branches of awareness, say philosophy, and, particularly Heidegger help understand Beckett better, not as a point-by-point illustration of philosophical enthusiasm, but as a playwright and what the artist professes his art to be. Therefore, the focus shall be art and not philosophy, nor, for that matter politics, psychology, economics, or, linguistics. Thus, there is Heidegger's concept of thought *unterwegs*, or, underway, that is, thought as in process, or what Beckett would term as taking 'shape,' that is, the drama of thought and not any particular commitment it carries. This in Beckett, the artist or playwright's context, will be quite interesting, because, each Beckett's art-manouvre is a different thought-dramaturgy of the Absurd. Each play is a different, in fact, brilliantly 'successful' version of an artistically situated Failure on stage. The thought dramaturgy is appropriately varied to suit the thought-

variation, providing each time a different and new way to view the Absurd. The Absurd is creatively made to take on different variations: once it is a generations-old Waiting, then, an Ending imperceptibly grinding to a halt, and, next, it is Time as in *Krapps Last Tape*, or After-Life as in *Play*, or Mouth in *Not - I*, or Voice in *That Time*, or often only as Sound, or, only Breath, but, always as a different Existential Grotesque, with its own extraordinary Language Rhetoric to display 'mentality'.

In fact, in a deliberate effort to make the 'clear-headed' and 'knowledgeable' Beckett into a mystery, critical appraisals are often left only as tantalizers.[44] One such tantalizer[45] is, that in Beckett, 'content is form and form content,' and this is repeated by critics, almost as a ritual, without the least effort made to work the statement out in a whole Beckett play. Again, Beckett is said to be extremely fond of 'concretizing abstract concepts onstage'. But, however is this done. This is left unanswered. A *Waiting*, an *Ending*, *Time*, *After-life*, *Failure*, *Futility*, *Meaninglessness*, *Word*, *Voice*, *Sound*, *Breath* are profoundly difficult to institute onstage. No detailed study, till date, has been done on the art for its artistic worth in critical studies, except for an unpublished thesis by Khalid Udailyi.[46] Sundry quotations from Beckett only provide a glimpse to the Beckett oeuvre, and, are a mere tip of the trauma that each play as an iceberg has in store. Now, the Heideggerian concept of thought *unterwegs*[47] would definitely help understand Beckett, the playwright, because the dramatist had himself[48] 'caressingly' remarked about a quotation from

St. Augustine that it had 'a wonderful shape.' This quotation too is an oft-quoted favourite of critics writing on Beckett, but, there is no follow-up or work-out except by Udailyi, be it only textually based, to help show, whatever is in this quotation that Beckett put into actual creative practice in his oeuvre. The quotation is as follows—

> Do not despair; one of the thieves was saved
> Do not presume; one of the thieves was hanged

To help discover for ourselves as to how the playwright 'shaped' thought dramaturgically, in play after play, we must for once refrain from calling the language of his plays 'banal,' 'trite,' and 'commonplace,' because, what is meant to be communicated, creatively and out of *deliberate choice*, by the playwright, is the language-collapse itself. Taking the cue from Kennedy's suggestion [49] about the collapse of language being creatively generated, it is necessary to concentrate, on just how, is Beckett creatively able to manipulate this apparent disintegration of the medium. Unfortunately, Kennedy too has left his assessment of Beckett's language quite unexplored. The corollary to a creatively worked collapse of language, is that, it may indeed be a powerful medium to be able to help communicate also its collapse! [50]

Each Existential Grotesque being different in Beckett, each needs a different thought-dramaturgy, and therefore, a different 'shape' of the language-rhetoric, to situate its mentality-at-a-swing on stage. Here, a reference to Heidegger's thought *unterwegs* could, after

all, help. One other piece from Heidegger that helps understand the playwright Beckett better, is the one, referred to earlier, and made by Robbe-Grillet as early as in 1957. The aborted Beckett Grotesque was a predicament 'there' on stage; as 'a presence' which theatre could communicate very effectively. Add to this, and say it was Man flung 'there', on the stage of the Absurd's Irrational Universe; that too should help understand Beckett, the artist, quite considerably.

However, Heidegger's characterizing common speech as mere 'chatter and ambiguity' *must* needs be questioned, what with the entire Beckett repertoire providing evidence to the contrary. Language, at its profoundest simple can be as awe-inspiring as the most subtle trope of a creative master. With only Heidegger in our heads, the creative-use Beckett makes, of even what apparently appears banal and trite, as a medium, will put the playwright-artist at so many removes from his audience and readers. Again, with Beckett as a very recent classic example of the creative language-artist, do we still remain in a position to say, with Heidegger, that language 'speaks us'. Yet again, the use of Heidegger's German expression *andenkendes denken*[51] which literally means 'thinking which recalls as it thinks', if left to its German, and not shown to be working out practically, play after play, in the dramatist's repertoire, will only leave Beckett the greater mystery. A worse prospect is that the name that will quietly get substituted in place of Beckett's will be Heidegger's! This will be an unfortunate situation for art! Similarly, expressions like *zeigen* and *verfremdung*, if not shown working themselves out

practically in a critical study of Brecht, leave one more artist to be worshipped only for his mystery. *Zeigen* means demonstration, that is, the actor should demonstrate the role he plays, and, not Stanislavsky-fashion lose himself in the role he performs. Similarly, *verfremdung* means an all-out attitude of alienation, from the stage-illusion in particular. Leaving the German terminology to its own, can create misreadings. Thus, Kalb is quite sure that Brecht's technique is different from Beckett's,[52] and, to go further than Kalb, *verfremdung* is no umbrella-term to help accomodate quite a recalcitrant Beckett. In any case, Brecht is always out to destroy stage-illusion and uses epic-theatre technique of masks, music, song etc. to destruct stage-empathy, thus 'alienating' and distancing the audience from the illusion on stage. On the contrary, whatever has the Beckett Grotesque, or for that matter, its audience to get alienated from, the Ubu-Existential Disjunct being, according to its creator, a Universal Predicament!! In Beckett, there is no 'threat', no 'menace' from 'the other'; nor, even from 'society', because, the impasse of an Existential Disjunct Condition is not specific, but general. There is Fear, Dread, and Despair, no doubt, but it is of the excruciatingly frightening Silence of an Emptiness, a Void, a <u>*Nothing is*</u>. This is in fact, the Universal Irrational Condition. Estragon, Vladimir, Not-I, Pozzo, Lucky, Winnie, Krapp, Hamm, Clov, Willie, W_1, W_2, as Existential Grotesques, could exchange places, being, what according to Beckett, is all that there is to humanity!

Therefore, if <u>*The Poem is*</u>, does need <u>*The Poem*</u>

is not to better understand a piece of literature, the use made of *The Poem is not* should be sparing, and the value of an arte-fact, particularly of 'literature' should not be squandered away, for an easier recounted philosophy, psychology, politics, economics or linguistics. In any case, a playwright like Beckett must not be allowed to be reduced to a footnote to the many academic disciplines that mushroomed this century, particularly, Literary Theory. In these circumstances a lesser waste of time, since a playwright is the subject, would be to talk of the Stanislavsky-Brecht, or, an Artaud-Brecht split discussed earlier. Rather, it is time to put Derrida's own use of language under serious scrutiny, because, there is his claim made to some identity with Beckett![53] In fact, Derrida himself puts on record his inability to write on Beckett![54] Just why! The jostle of 'concept' and 'word' may, for Derrida, have been confirmed in Nietzsche, but, was Beckett, who wrote with equal facility in French, an early and a fascinating inspiration? Most of Beckett's work is also in French. He wrote the poem *Whoroscope* in 1929, and kept publishing in French till at least 1970. A study of Derrida's Beckett -encounter in the former's formative years, should be a rewarding experience. In any case, Mauthner's call for an indictment of language should not turn trigger-happy, and be made into a lacklustre vocation. It should surprise nobody if, after close study and scrutiny, Derrida is discovered a failed litterateur! Be that as it may, there is excess of an awkward dependence, in Theory, on lexicons and thesauruses! The odd justification could be the 'jostle' of 'concept' and 'word' as thought they are in Nietzsche,

but 'the rhetorical play' fails to be sufficiently creative, and, even the philosophy fails as profoundly debated thought.

Should Beckett be approached as an artist-playwright, or, should we insist with Cohn that Beckett's work cannot escape man's metaphysical situation, after saying, with Cohn that—

> In the two works that Beckett published in 1961, there is existential *reduction ad absurdum*. Sartre's viscosity becomes ubiquitous mud in How it is and scorched earth in Happy Days. Heidegger's Dasein becomes east-ward crawling through the mud in How it is, and burial in the earth in Happy Days. [55]

Of course, Ruby Cohn has written extensively on Beckett, and on Modern Drama, and, shying off from philosophy is not the purpose. Reading a one-page Cohn article in Modern Drama entitled *Acting For Beckett*,[56] it is felt that Cohn restores the balance very perceptively. She says that as in fiction, Beckett pares away the narrative garb 'to zero in one man narrating'; so also in drama, the playwright concentrates 'down to man acting', examining the 'building blocks' of drama– entrances, exits, monologues, dialogues, tableaux, movements and stillness. Later on she says, 'Beckett's drama draws us to its roots: *dran* - 'to do, to perform.' In fact, she finds Beckett 'radicalizing all aspects of performance,' and, 'thus underlining and even undermining his problematic opening: "Nothing to the done".

But, Philosophy, on its own, cannot see beyond

itself, its premises and its labels, its history and its tradition; that appears to give it self-confidence! Therefore, 'to find the artist Beckett out', we have to encounter him only as a playwright-artist, that is, encounter the way he looks at the world and the dramaturgy he uses to give to that world-view, specific dramatic forms.

REFERENCES

1. Beckett, Samuel and Duthuit Georges *Three Dialogues* in: *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed., Martin Esslin (Twentieth Century Views, New Jersey). pp.16-22.
2. Kalb, Johnathan *Beckett in Performance* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.3, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 42 and 153.
3. Kalb, Ibid., pp.4, 15, 157 and 162.
4. Spingler, Michel K. *From the Actor of Ubu: Jarry's Theatre of the Double*, Modern Drama, V., XVI, 1973, Nos.1,2, & 4; No.1. p.73.
5. Wellwarth, George, *The Theatre of Protest and Paradox*; (New York University Press, 1972), p.1; p.3.
6. Kalb, op.cit., p.148.
7. Kalb, op.cit., p.148.
8. Roppe-Grillet, Allain, *Samuel Beckett or 'Presence' in the Theatre* (Tr. Barbara Bray) in *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, op.cit. pp.108-116; p.110.
9. Kalb, op.cit., p.148.
10. Kennedy, Andrew K, *Samuel Beckett*, (Cambridge 1989), pp.11-12.

11. Kalb, op.cit., pp.35-36.
12. Roppe-Grillet, op.cit., p.108; Kalb, op.cit., p.47.
13. Kalb, op.cit., p.33.
14. Ibid., p.33.
15. Ibid., p.33.
16. Ibid., p.34.
17. Ibid., p.39.
18. Ibid., p.29.
19. Ibid., p.40.
20. Kenner, Hugh *The Cartesean Centaur,* in *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays,* op.cit., p.52-61.
21. Kalb, op. cit., p.147.
22. Cohn, Ruby, *Philosophical Fragments in the Works of Samuel Beckett* in *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays,* op.cit., pp.169.
23. Esslin, Martin, *Theatre of the Absurd* (Penguin Books, 1968), p.24.
24. Udailyi, Khalid Rifat, *Samuel Beckett: A Study of His Dramatic Technique.* An unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Aligarh Muslim University, 1996, p.14.
25. Ibid., p.14.
26. Ibid., p.14.
27. Cohn, op.cit, p.174.
28. Udailyi, op.cit., p.35.
29. Ahmed, Iqbal, *Brecht and Beckett: Two Irreverences in the Name of Art* in– *Twentieth Century European Drama,* ed.,

Pronoti Sinha, (Shanti Niketan 1997) p.152. This paper was read at a Seminar in Shanti Niketan in 1994.

30. Udailyi, op.cit., p.35; also Ahmed, Iqbal, *Samuel Beckett and 'Language Ontology': A Study of Waiting for Godot and Endgame*. This paper was read at Rajasthan University Jaipur at a Conference in 1995. It is published in *The Journal of English Studies*, ed., S.Wiqar Hussain, a publication of the Dept. of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh Vol. 20, 1998, No. 2, p.48.

31. Ahmed, Iqbal, op.cit., p.152.

32. Beckett and Duthuit *Three Dialogues* op.cit., p.34.

33. Ibid., p.34.

34. Ibid., p.19.

35. Ibid., p.19.

36. Ibid., p.21.

37. Ahmed, Iqbal, *Beckett and Language Ontology*, op.cit., p.48.

38. Cohn op.cit., p.170.

39. Esslin, Martin, *The, Theatre the Absurd*, (Penguin Books 1968) p.24; Udailyi's unpublished Ph.D. thesis op. cit., also refers to this.

40. Kalb, op.cit., p.3.

41. Ibid., p.3.

42. Ibid., p.151.

43. Ibid., p.151.

44. Udailyi, op.cit., pp.9-11.

45. Kennedy, Andrew K., op.cit., pp.11-12.

46. Udailyi, op. cit.,

47. Mehta, J.L., *Philosophy of Martin Heidegger,* (Harper Torchbooks, New York 1971), p.1.

48. Doherty. F., *Samuel Beckett*, (Hutchinson University Library, London 1971), p.88.

49. Kennedy, op.cit., p.2.

50. Ahmed, Iqbal, *Beckett and 'Language Ontology,'* op.cit., p.48.

51. Cohn, op.cit., p.176.

52. Kalb, op.cit., p. 176.

53. Royle, Nichoius, *After Derrida*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, New York), pp.163.

54. Ibid., p.162.

55. Cohn, op.cit., p.177.

56. Cohn, Ruby, *Overviews: Acting For Beckett*, Modern Drama, 1996 (December) Vol. 9, No. 3, p.237.

Department of English
Aligarh Muslim University
Aligarh-202002

The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, Vol.21, No.1. pp.60-83

M.M. Adnan Raza

THE POETRY OF A.E. HOUSMAN

Most readers of the poetry of A.E. Housman are attracted by its lexical and syntactical simplicity, although it occasionally seems to border on naivety. As one gains an insight into the procedure of his poetic communication, one is struck by his suggestive use of language and sensitivity to the objects of the physical world. The presentation of the various aspects of nature in his poems is usually a means of the confirmation of his personal moods. The thematic and emotional range of his poems is not wide like that of Yeats, Eliot and Auden. He is in his own way conscious of this limitation in the following stanza of the Introductory Poem in his posthumous collection, *More Poems*:

They say my verse is sad: no wonder;
Its narrow measure spans
Tears of eternity, and sorrow,
Not mine, but man's.

Despite his narrow range and small output, Housman deals in his poems with motifs closely related to human life: love, death, soldiering, childhood and exile. Since he frequently revised and rearranged his poems, one finds it not always easy to form a plausible estimate of his poetic growth. Two collections

of his verse were published in his lifetime: *A Shropshire Lad* (1896) and *Last Poems* (1922). His *More Poems* was published posthumously in 1936 by his brother, Laurence Housman, who also printed Housman's *Additional Poems* in his biography of the poet, *A.E. Housman*, in 1937. His popularity as a poet undoubtedly rests on *A Shropshire Lad* which was originally entitled *Terence* or *The Poems of Terence Hearsay*. The original title was changed on the advice of his Oxford friend, A.W. Pollard. It was not usual for Housman to allow anthologists to publish his poems. He perhaps thought that their selection of his poems would be governed, to a large extent, by personal predilections. Since he dealt with his favourite themes repeatedly with certain variations of treatment during the process of his poetic growth, he perhaps feared that the publication of his verse in anthologies would cause a hindrance to his readers in forming a proper understanding of his point of view on human life. He occasionally relaxed his strict attitude in this regard because, as his sister, Katharine Symons, notes: "... what he cared for most was as wide a circulation as possible of his poems and that they should help to perpetuate his name."[1] This is why he insisted on his publishers to keep the price of his collections of verse as low as possible so that a maximum number of readers might buy them. His popularity has gradually increased since his death in 1936 if we apply the yardstick of the number of his poems which have been published in various anthologies. As Norman Page points out, only five of his poems were included in

W.B. Yeats's *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936). The number increased to seventeen in the 1973 edition of the *Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry.*[2] This serves as an evidence of the growing appreciation of Housman's verse since his death, especially in the United States where the second of the above-mentioned anthologies is read by a large number of young students of poetry.

Housman does not rank with major Victorian poets with respect to the emotional intensity and thematic variety of their verse. One may justifiably call him a poet of average sensibility who communicates himself with utmost verbal directness. This is perhaps why he has not received the amount of critical attention which, for example, Hopkins did, although belatedly. All the same, Housman's verse has elicited comment from such outstanding critics as Edmund Wilson, Randall Jarrell, William Empson, Christopher Ricks, F.W. Bateson and Cleanth Brooks. It clearly indicates that his verse has its own kind of poetic excellence.

After the publication of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, which coincided with that of Housman's *Last Poems* in 1922, the popularity of Housman's verse suffered a diminution. It was regarded, for obvious reasons, as belonging to a "vanished age". There is, however, no denying the fact that he exercised a seminal influence on the minds of the mature readers of poetry during the second and third decades of the twentieth century. George Orwell attests the fact:

> At the beginning of the period I am speaking of, the years during and immediately after the war, the writer who had the deepest hold upon the thinking young was almost certainly Housman. Among people who were adolescent in the years 1910-25, Housman had an influence which was enormous and is not now at all easy to understand. In 1920, when I was seventeen, I probably knew the whole of the *Shropshire Lad* by heart.[3]

Recording his estimate of Housman's poetry, Stephen Spender writes: "... he might have thrown aside the role of repression altogether and written a poetry which explored his own personality."[4] The judgement is significant inasmuch as critical comment on Housman does not show much awareness of the nature of his personality which was steeped in such classical poets as Manilius and Propertius. Spender makes a curious comparison between the love poems of Donne and Housman. He is also of the view that Housman's verse is devoid of the "honesty and audacity" of Hopkins, though he ignores the fact that no Victorian poet can compare with Hopkins because he gave an altogether new direction to English poetry in terms of language, rhythm and imagery. Hopkins was an innovator much ahead of his times. As regards the treatment of the theme of love in the poems of Housman, they do not have in an adequate measure the qualities of wit, ratiocination and imagery which characterize Donne's love poetry.

As already stated, Housman's lexical and syntactical simplicity is primarily responsible for the

lack of critical exegesis of his verse. *ASL* XXVII (*Is my team ploughing?*) is, on the face of it, too straightforward to need any comment. John Peale Bishop is, however, of the opinion that the clarity of Housman's verse should not be taken at its face value:

> Despite an apparent clarity such that almost any poem seems ready to deliver its meaning at once, there is always something that is not clear, something not brought into the open, something that is left in doubt.[5]

Housman's poems are characterized by a preponderance of the Anglo-Saxon words which have been closest to the hearts of the British. He shows a predilection for using monosyllables which make his verse easy enough to declaim and memorize:

> But men at whiles are sober
> And think by fits and starts,
> And if they think they fasten
> Their hands upon their hearts.

While reading Housman's poetry, one forms the impression that he was very much influenced by Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction, though Wordsworth outdid Housman with respect to the emotive depths of his poems. Bishop is of the view that "the limits within which Housman was able to feel at all were strict, but within them he felt strongly, and both strictness and intensity are in his verse."[6] The emotional intensity of Housman would have been more appreciable if he had tried to broaden out the thematic ambit of his verse. His verse was the result of an "unsteady poetic activity" spanning a period of thirty

years or more. He is often compared with Hardy because of superficial thematic parallels such as exist between his *Is my team ploughing?* and Hardy's *Friends Beyond*, and a pervasive note of pessimism occasioned by the role of destiny in human life with which they deal in their own ways. Commentators cite stanzas from their verse in order to highlight the uniformity of their attitudes to human life, although their technical devices set them apart from each other. One thing which commentators usually ignore is that Housman was not a professional poet like Wordsworth and Tennyson. He was a classical scholar who edited Manilius, academic, reviewer and translator of Greek poems which were published in the *Odes from the Greek Dramatists* edited by A.W. Pollard in 1890. As Norman Page states, Housman "wrote his poems fitfully because he did not go in search of poems... but waited for them to find him out."[7] This statement is applicable to many of his poems like *Bredon Hill, Loveliest of trees* and *The chestnut casts his flambeaux* which have inspired generations of readers.

MP XXVIII, *AP* II and VII seem to have been occasioned either by his separation from his closest friend, Moses Jackson, who left for India in 1887 to take over as Principal of the Sind College, Karachi, or by some other actue experience which Housman wanted to hide from his readers. They are naturally characterized by a strong element of ambiguity. The following epigram is a very clear example of this aspect of his verse:

He would not stay for me; and who can wonder?
He would not stay for me to stand and gaze.
I shook his hand and tore my heart in sunder
And went with half my life about my ways.
(*AP* VII)

Although experience in the above lines has been presented in literal terms "without the intervention of a symbol-making or mythologizing process", the absence of the element of specificity impedes its true appreciation. Yvor Winters points out a similar kind of lacuna in Hopkins' *No worst, there is none.*[8]

Housman's poetry resonates with thematic and verbal echoes of the Greek and Latin poets, Milton, Shakespeare, Kipling and Heine. Besides, he draws heavily on the Scottish border ballads. It has been pointed out that 47 of his 178 published poems are in the quatrain form which is a characteristic feature of the ballads. The following lines from *ASL* LXII and XLVIII point, as Norman Marlowe notes, to a recurrent theme in ballad poetry:

Much good but less good than evil.

Horor and scorn and hate and fear and indignation.

The basic themes of *ASL* VIII and LIII, developed through storytelling, are those usually found in the ballads. The first of these poems deals with murder which seems to have been motivated by jealousy and is reminiscent of *Lord Ingram and Childe Vyet*. As pointed out by Marlowe, the reference to Lammastide in stanza 5 of *ASL* VIII also occurs in

The Battle of Otterburn. Since the boy who has killed his brother, Maurice, is going to commit suicide, he reflects, in the final stanza of the poem, on his absence which will be felt at home after he kills himself. An almost similar situation is found in *Sir Patrick Spens* where the maidens have long been waiting to meet their "dear loves" who, as luck would have it, will not arrive because they have already died.[9] Housman makes a noticeable departure in *ASL* VIII from the traditional ballad form. The whole of this poem is a monologue, while a ballad story is usually unfolded through a dialogue. The poem is, however, dramatic and has a highly condensed action in the manner of ballad poetry. He makes another departure from the ballad norm in *ASL* VIII: there is too much of "self-reference" in this poem. The use of refrain is characteristic of ballads like *Edward, Edward* and *Lord Randall.* One notices an identical feature in *LP* VI (*Lancer*): "Oh who would not sleep with the brave?" The refrain, which occurs five times in the poem, is, however, characterized by a strong element of irony. A very common belief expressed in folk songs, of which ballads are a "narrative species", is that the spirits of the dead wandering the world at night must return to their abodes before the cock crows at daybreak. The readers of ballads are already familiar with this belief which has been expressed in *The Wife of Usher's Well* and *Clerk Saunders.* Housman, as also pointed out elsewhere, draws on this belief in the following lines of *ASL* LIII (*The True Lover*), in which the lover seems to be a ghost, and

LP XXXVI:

So take me in your arms a space
Before the east is grey.

Spectres and fears, the nightmare and her foal,
Drown in the golden deluge of the morn.

Housman's preoccupation with nature is very different from that of the Romantics. He did not propound any pantheistic philosophy, nor did he write a poem like Wordsworth's *The Education of Nature* or Keats's *Ode to Autumn*. The way in which he presents the objects of nature in many of his poems is, to a certain extent, reminiscent of that in which Tennyson presents them as visual and aural equivalents of his emotive states, especially in *In Memoriam*.

ASL II (*Loveliest of trees*) may be called a nature poem in a way characteristic of Housman. The interest he shows in nature in this poem is purely visual in character. He tries to strike a note of contrast between the beauty of spring which returns eternally in accordance with the cycle of seasons and his transient life. While reading it, one is reminded of Robert Herrick's *To Daffodils*. A major difference between the two poems lies in the fact that Housman perhaps does not deal with the idea of the transience of life as effectively as Herrick. It is characteristic of Housman to conjure up images of nature in order to highlight the brevity of human life:

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,

About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

Many of Housman's poems are reminiscent of Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.* Khayyam laments the brevity of human life in many of his *Rubaiyat* and insists on the utmost enjoyment of each moment of our temporal existence in an Epicurean manner. Housman's attitude to human life is Cyrenaic rather than Epicurean. He was strongly influenced by the sensationalist philosophy of Aristippus of Cyrene (435-355 B.C.) who, like Epicurus, believed that pleasure is the highest purpose of human life. Aristippus, unlike Epicurus, was of the view that the most exquisite pleasure consists in intellecutal pursuits for their own sake. Housman takes suffering (which, according to Aristippus, is the "criterion" of evil) for granted:

The troubles of our proud and angry dust
Are from eternity, and shall not fail,
Bear them we can, and if we can we must
Shoulder the sky my lad and drink your ale.

The expression "drink your ale" contextually implies an attitude of wilful forgetfulness to the anguish of life. Housman, in many of his poems, expresses a keen consciousness of the fact that "the troubles of our proud and angry dust" are the destiny of man who has an inborn capability to bear up against them. Khayyam is as acutely conscious of these troubles as Housman:

And not a drop that from our cup we throw
For earth to drink of, but may steal below

To quench the fire of anguish in some eye
There hidden — far beneath, and long ago.
(*Rubai* XXXIX)

The words "some eye" do not mean the eye of a particular human being; their applicability seems to apply to the whole of mankind. One finds a certain kind of parallelism between Housman's phrase "from eternity" and Khayyam's "long ago" with reference to the inherent troubles of human life.

LP IX describes chestnut and hawthorne flowers being blown away by the wind. Summer, which brings spring, is going to end. Housman emphasizes a correspondence in the poem between the disintegration of the chestnut and hawthorne flowers and the annihilation of man's "hopeful plans":

We for a certainty are not the first
Have sat in taverns while the tempest hurled
Their hopeful plans to emptiness, and cursed
Whatever brute and blackguard made the world.

One important difference between *LP* IX and other poems of a similar nature by Housman lies in blasphemous overtones conveyed by the words "brute" and "blackguard" which he uses in the above-mentioned poem for the Deity who, according to him, created the world of unfulfilled human hopes. Khayyam's vision of the world of human beings in the following stanza of *Rubai* LII is not much different from that of Housman:

A moment guessed— then back behind the Fold
Immerst in Darkness round the Drama roll'd

Which, for the pastime of eternity,
He doth himself contrive, enact, behold.

LP IX expresses a feeling of acute dissatisfaction, similar to that which one often finds in Modern Drama, with the rationale behind the creation of man:

It is in truth iniquity on high
To cheat our sentenced souls of aught they crave,
And mar the merriment as you and I
Fare on our long fool's-errand to the grave.

The attitude of dissatisfaction in the above lines ultimately gives way to that of forced compromise in stanza 5: "Our only portion is the estate of man/ We want the moon, but we shall get no more." Housman comes very close to showing a nihilistic attitude to human life by designating it as a "fool's-errand to the grave." An almost parallel example is found in Khayyam's *Rubai* XXVIII:

With them the seed of wisdom did I sow,
And with my own hand wrought to make it grow;
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd—
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go"

ASL XXXI (*On Wenlock Edge*) is one of Housman's poems by which he is popularly known. It is undoubtedly a product of acute suffering. The first stanza opens with the image of a gale tearing a Shropshire wood. The gale connotes the intensity of the poet's suffering which he does not regard merely as a personal feeling. Housman takes us back more than two thousand years to the fortress town of Uriconium where it blew as fiercely as in the

Shropshire wood. The distance which the poet covers in the poem is not only of time but also of place inasmuch as he takes us far back to Roman Britain. The "gale", which "plies the saplings double" in stanza 1, becomes the "gale of life" in stanza 4. It has been exercising its vehemence against the "tree of man" since ancient times. Although the poem is pessimistic in character, the poet universalizes his suffering by emphasizing his human kinship with the Romans in Britain:

> There, like the wind, through woods in riot,
> Through him the gale of life blew high;
> The tree of man was never quiet:
> Then it was the Roman, now it is I.

Housman's concept of love is very different from that which (to cite a single example) Shakespeare presents in his Sonnet CXVI. Housman regards love as a relationship between men and women which is perhaps governed by a psychological necessity. The relationship ends, as usual in his love poems, in death. The following stanzas represent his characteristic attitude to love:

> The better man she walks with still,
> Though now 'tis not with Fred:
> A lad that lives and has his will
> Is worth a dozen dead.
>
> (*ASL* XXV, st.3)

> And sure enough beneath the tree
> There walks another love with me
> And overhead the aspen heaves

Its 'rainy-sounding silver leaves;
And I spell nothing in their stir,
But now perhaps they speak to her,
And plain for her to understand
They talk about a time at hand
When I shall sleep with clover clad
And she beside another lad.

(*ASL* XXVI, st.2)

ASL XXVII (*Is my team ploughing?*) is a poignant dialogue between two friends— one dead and the other alive. The dead man asks:

'Is my girl happy,
That I thought hard to leave
And has she tired of weeping
As she lies down at eve?'

The living replies:

Ay, she lies down lightly,
She lies not down to weep;
Your girl is well contented.
Be still, my lad, and sleep.

When the dead man enquires the welfare of his living friend, he replies:

Yes, lad, I lie easy,
I lie as lads would choose;
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,
Never ask me whose.

The last two lines of the above stanza state the deplorable fact that just as the sweetheart does not mourn her dead lover ("She lies not down to weep"), the dead man's friend is also not hesitant about cheering her up because he, by doing so, expects to

win her affections.

In *ASL* XXI (*Bredon Hill*), as elsewhere in Housman's verse, love and death are concomitant entities in human life. The poem opens with a wonderful description of the ringing of the church bells in the neighbouring shires. The speaker, who is accompanied by his sweetheart on Bredon Hill, is not able to attend the Sunday service because he is engrossed in wooing her. Naturally enough, he wants the bells to "peel" on the occasion of their wedding. As luck would have it, the sweetheart dies and a single church bell tolls her burial while there is no groom around. The poem basically narrates a tragic love story in the ballad mode, the last stanza of which is highly poignant in effect:

> The bells they sound on Bredon,
> And still the steeples hum.
> 'Come all to chruch, good people', —
> Oh, noisy bells, be dumb;
> I hear you, I will come.

The third line of the above stanza, which also occurs in stanza 3 of the poem, is an invitation to prayer extended to "good people" by ringing church bells. Their sound seems to have lost its association with piety in the poet's mind inasmuch as one of these bells will ultimately toll his death as it did his sweetheart's.

ASL LIII (*True Lover*) adopts the question and answer mode of the revelation of truth-- a device characteristic of some ballads. Love in this poem also ends in death: "But since for you I stopped the clock/

It never goes again." The last stanza, which seems to celebrate the vows of loyalty between the lovers, conveys ironic overtones in the circumstances unfolded in the poem.

Mention should also be made of *ASL* XLVII (*The Carpenter's Son*) in connection with Housman's concept of love. It reads like a monologue in which the speaker dwells on the crime leading to his execution:

> 'Here hang I, and right and left
> Two poor fellows hang for theft
> All the same is the luck we prove,
> Though the midmost hangs for love.'

The poem treats love, strangely enough, as a crime, the punishment for which is hanging. The stanza, quoted above, is perhaps the only one of its kind which extends, in Housman's verse, the applicability of love to the domain of the selfless and the universal, especially because the way in which the so-called culprit is hanged between two thieves reminds one of that in which Christ was crucified.

ASL VI deals with unrequited love which causes different kinds of "ills" to human beings. It is only after one's death that the ills of unrequited love are over but by the time one dies, someone else is victimized by it. According to Housman, this cycle of victimization goes on eternally in human life. The expressions "wan look", "hung head" and "sunken eye" (st. 2) evoke images traditionally associated with all such victims.

Many of Housman's poems are on soldiering. His biographers have written about his fascination for the redcoats in his boyhood. The sacrifices made by soldiers in defending their motherland always won his admiration. In *LP* IV (*Illic Jacet*), Housman commemorates the death of his brother, Herbert Housman, who was killed in the Boer War (1899-1902). His attitude to soldiering is complex in its various manifestations. He regards the soldiers of his country as defenders of the British Empire. The following stanzas from *ASL* I deal with the valour of those who were killed in various wars defending the sovereignty of Queen Victoria:

Look left, look right, the hills are bright,
The dales are light between
Because 'tis fifty years tonight
That God has saved the Queen.

Now, when the flame they watch not towers
About the soil they trod,
Lads, we'll remember friends of ours
Who shared the work with God.

In the first of the stanzas quoted above, the speaker celebrates the Golden Jubilee of the accession of Queen Victoria to the British throne. The fact which, according to him, cannot be ignored is that the British soldiers shared the "work" of saving the Queen with God by laying down their lives on the war fronts. He expresses a sense of pride in the exemplary sacrifice of life made by the Shropshire soldiers:

It dawns in Asia, tombstones show
And Shropshire names are read;
And the Nile spills his overflow
Beside the Severn's dead.

The last stanza of the poem is characterized by an admixture of playfulness and sarcasm:

Oh, God will save her, fear you not:
Be you the men you have been,
Get you the sons your fathers got,
And God will save the Queen.

Housman shows a different kind of attitude when he asks a recruit in *ASL* III either to return home as a hero or not at all. He regards soldiering in this poem as a hazardous vocation: "And make the foes of England/ Be sorry you were born." There is, however, no denying the fact that Housman was strongly disgusted at the loss of life caused by wars. He expresses an acute sense of anguish at the intermittent fury unleashed by "truceless armies" in *ASL* XXVIII (*The Welsh Marches*). Because of his human kinship with British soldiers, he feels as if he was himself guilty of bloodshed. The poet's sense of disgust is so strong that he craves for death in stanza 9: "How long, how long, till spade and hearse/ Put to sleep my mother's curse?"

LP V and VI (*Grenadier* and *Lancer*) also deal with soldiering. In the first poem, the poet presents his point of view through the persona of a grenadier who has been recruited very cheap for thirteen pence a day because of his poverty. His recruitment in the

army finally brings death which rids him of the troubles of his life:

> And I shall have to bate my price,
> For in the grave, they say,
> Is neither knowledge, nor device
> Nor thirteen pence a day.

In *LP* VI, the speaker is fully conscious of the fact that his recruitment as a lancer will prematurely end his life. Recruits have traditionally been fascinated by the thought that they will be acclaimed as brave by their countrymen. The refrain, "Oh who would not sleep with the brave?", occurs five times in the poem which invests it with strong ironic overtones.

LP XVII (*Astronomy*) is a poignant poem which was perhaps occasioned by the death of the poet's brother, Herbert Housman, in the Boer War. Housman expresses his feelings of bereavement drawing on his knowledge of astronomy. The astronomical images of "Wain", "polestar" and "nadir" do not play an integral role in furthering the theme of personal grief in the poem. Mention should also be made of *LP* XXXVII (*An Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries*) in which Housman makes use of hyperbole in a sarcastic manner with regard to the exploits of mercenary soldiers:

> Their shoulders held the sky suspended;
> They stood, and earth's foundations stay;
> What God abandoned, these defended,
> And saved the sum of things for pay.

Since Housman's *Last Poems* was published in 1922, some of the poems in this collection might have

been inspired by the Great War, though it is difficult to identify them.

Childhood and its innocent pleasures are recurrent themes in the poetry of Housman. In *ASL* XLI, he looks back wistfully to his boyhood when he derived pleasure from the objects of nature during his stay in Worcestershire. In lines 12-18 of the poem, which are reminiscent of Wordsworth, Housman recollects "in tranquillity" the joy which was afforded to him by nature during his boyhood. His subsequent stay in the urban surroundings of London was totally a different kind of experience to him:

> But here in London streets I ken
> No such helpmates, only men;
> And these are not in plight to bear,
> If they would, another's care.
> They have enough as 'tis: I see
> In many an eye that measures me
> The mortal sickness of a mind
> Too unhappy to be kind.

"The mortal sickness of the mind", of which Housman speaks in the above-mentioned lines, was apparently caused by the process of industrialization and scientific rationalism in Victorian England. Like Huxley, Romanes and other agnostics of the late nineteenth century, Housman suffered from the anguish of a soul which had been nurtured in a Christian background before he became a deist. As he mentions in his *London Introductory Lecture*, he found himself "in the position of one who has been reared from his cradle as the child of a noble race and the heir to great possessions,

and who finds at his coming of age that he has been deceived alike as to his origin and his expectations; that he neither springs of the high lineage he fancied, nor will inherit the vast estate he looked for, but must put off his towering pride and contract his boundless hopes, and begin the world anew from a lower level."[10]

In *LP* XXXIX and XL, Housman also reminisces about his boyhood. In the second of these poems, he speaks of the "aftermaths of soft September" and the "blanching mays". These images accentuate the element of wistfulness in the poem at a stage when the speaker is experiencing the stress of his adult life.

Interrelated with the childhood motif, Housman wrote a certain number of poems on exile. The best of them is *ASL* XL (*Into my heart an air that kills*) in which he nostalgically looks back to the "blue remembered hills", the "spires" and the "farms" of Worcestershire. The memories of "the land of lost content" in this poem are characterized by elements of vividness and poignancy.

Housman shows a genuine poetic sensitivity in many of his poems. In *AP* XVII, the two greatest troubles of his life are "the brains in my head" and "the heart in my breast". These troubles "reave" him of the pleasures of his life. He expresses a desire in the above-mentioned poem for the "ease" which characterizes the life of those "That relish their victuals and rest on their bed/ With flint in the bosom and guts in the head." The tone of these lines is ironic because Housman, being a sensitive poet, could not

have craved for the "ease" of the life of the insensitive multitude.

In *MP* I (*Easter Hymn*), Housman expresses a starkly pessimistic outlook on human life:

> If in that Syrian garden, ages slain,
> You sleep, and know not you are dead in vain,
> Nor even in dreams behold how dark and bright
> Ascends in smoke and fire by day and night
> The hate you died to quench and could but fan,
> Sleep well and see no morning, son of man.

Notwithstanding the fact that Housman renounced Christianity at the age of 13, we find him entreating Christ in the last line of the poem to "Bow hither out of heaven and see and save."

In his Leslie Stephen Lecture, *The Name and Nature of Poetry*, Housman expresses his view of poetry as an art which produces "physical excitement". He believes that great poetry "sets up in the reader's sense a vibration corresponding to what was felt by the writer."[11] How far Housman applied this canon to his own verse is highly debatable. The word "vibration", as Housman applies it to a reader's response to poetry, basically involves the channelling of experience through a sensory mode. A reading of Housman's poetry clarifies the fact that he does not always succeed in transmiting a feeling of "vibration" to his readers. He must have felt it himself through the Latin and Greek poets, Shakespeare and Heine, but there is not much of it in *A Shropshire Lad* and his later poetry. Very little Keats is perceptible in his

verse. Robert Bridges had published Hopkins in 1918– eighteen years before Housman's death in 1936. His readers legitimately expect to find a certain number of passages sensuously inspired by Hopkins in *More Poems* (1936) and *Additional Poems* (1937) even if they may not be able to arrange all the poems in these collections with chronological certitude.

Housman's poetry is, to a certain extent, repetitive both thematically and verbally. This trait of his verse has irked many of his critics. While reading Housman, one finds a number of poems dealing with death and the anguish of human life with occasional variations. He uses some words and phrases quite frequently in his poems: "azure", "nadir", "hues", "list", "friend", "plain", "heaves", "steep", "for aye" and "earth's foundations". Quite a few of these expressions recur in his verse because they serve as masculine rhymes. Professor G.B.A. Fletcher has already listed the instances of verbal repetitions in Housman's poems.[12]

As already stated, Housman frequently exploits the sights and sounds of nature in his verse, but they serve merely as visual and aural supports for his sombre thoughts on life and death. A salient quality of most of Housman's poems, however, lies in the fact that they afford solace in distress and bereavement. His verse has always elicited a positive response from his readers because he deals with certain fundamental truths of human life. Although the philosophy of life that he propounds is pessimistic in character, it is not always possible to disagree with it.

REFERENCES

1. Quoted by Norman Page in *A.E. Housman: A Critical Biography*, 1983, p.179.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
4. Review of *Collected Poems* by Stephen Spender in *Horizon*, I, 1940, p. 300.
5. J.P. Bishop, 'The Poetry of A.E. Housman', *Poetry*, LVI, 1940, p. 141.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
7. Norman Page, *op. cit.*, p. 183.
8. Yvor Winters, 'Gerard Manley Hopkins' in *Hopkins: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Geoffrey H. Hartman, 1980 (Indian Reprint), p. 41.
9. Reference to 'Sir Patrick Spens' in connection with *ASL* VIII has also been made by Norman Marlowe in *A.E. Housman: Scholar and Poet*, 1958, p. 73.
10. A.E. Housman, *London Introductory Lecture*, 1892, p. 37.
11. _____, *The Name and Nature of Poetry*, 1933, p. 12.
12. Grant Richards, *Housman*, 1897-1936, 1941, pp. 413-17.

NOTE : Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*, quoted in this essay, are from the fifth and last edition of the Fitzgerald translation.

Department of English
Aligarh Muslim University
Aligarh.

The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, Vol.21, No.1. pp.84-96

Ajita Bhattacharya

THE CHURCH VERSUS IDENTITY DILEMMA IN *GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN*

Discovering in his own experience as a boy and youth in the Harlem ghetto of New York the universality of black man a experience in America – a never-ending pursuit of freedom and identity - the artist in James Baldwin records this excrutiating reality but not without a fair deal of symbolism, metaphors and ironies in his autobiographical first novel "Go Tell It On The Mountain" (1953). The novel Houston A. Baker Jr. (*Black Literature in America*, p.16) describes as "... far more than the Harlem environment. The novel is a Bildngsroman (a novel recording the development of a young man) of universal appeal and it speaks eloquently of the terrors and hopes of youth as a whole, while at the same time it portrays the very special terror of being young and black in America one finds loaded with religious symbolism and even the title is derived from a Negro spiritual. The Negro hymn interprets the command "Go Tell It .." as the good news (gospel) that "Jesus Christ is born" or as the message given to Pharaoh seeking deliverance from bondage for the people: "Let my people go". Shirley S. Allen (*Critical Essays on James Baldwin*, p.169. asserts that:

> the cry "Go Tell It On The Mountain" is much more than the announcement of good news: it is a shout of faith in ultimate victory while the struggle and suffering are still going on. Jesus is born, but he has still to face the cross. The Israelites still have to survive the wilderness and conquer the promised land, the freed captives have to cross the desert and rebuild Jerusalem, and the seventh seal has yet to be opened before God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Baldwin's use of the surname 'Grimes' for the different characters of the family whose 'grim' life stories are told is symbolic of the Negro American's ceaseless battle in America with his own 'blackness'. He portrays through the older characters the life and aspirations of the Negro men and women in the South and as to how a change in their outlook occurs at a later stage after coming North.

Part One of the novel called "The Seventh Day" presents to the readers a black family of Harlem with Gabriel Grimes as the father, Elizabeth the mother, their four children - John, the protagonist of the novel, Roy the rebel the two daughters Sarah and Ruth, and also the "little voyager soon to be among them." With the church that has been a part of the Grimes family and cannot be separated from the earliest memories of John, an adolescent Negro hospital play in the lives of the elders of the Grimes family is sketched by the novelist by putting both the institutions at an almost equal distance from the Grimes' house and the establishments being not far from each other: "The church was not very far away,

four blocks up Lenox Avenue, on a corner not far from the hospital (*Go Tell It*, ...p.12). That the family is not living in affluence and is in fact struggling for its very existence can be understood from Elizabeth's words about her husband to Roy:

> That man shovelled snow in zero weather when he mightive been in bed, just to put food in your belly. (p. 26)

John who does not know that he is not the natural son of Gabriel, the head deacon of the Temple of the Fire Baptized, but the bastard son of Elizabeth sees and feels the hopelessness and wretchedness of the situation not only within the poverty-stricken family, with its ever increasing members and the loveless behavior of his father towards his children, but even outside his family in the Negro life in general in Harlem. On Sunday mornings while walking to church with his whole family he does not fail to note the typical qualities of desperation and anger in the gestures and actions of the Negro men and women on the streets of Harlem :

> They talked, and laughed; and fought together, and the women fought like the men. John and Roy, passing these men and women looked at one another briefly, John embarrassed and Roy amused. Roy would be like them when he grew up, if the Lord did not change his heart. These men and women they passed on Sunday mornings had spent the night in bars, or in cat houses or on the streets, or on the rooftops, or under the stairs. They had been drinking. They had gone from cursing to laughter to anger to lust (p. 12).

Gabriel does not want his children to follow the example of these men and women and therefore imposes strict restraints on their conduct which the children are forced to obey only with a heart filled with hatred and opposition, particularly from Roy. Gabriel wishes to bring them up in the faith of the Lord and wants his son Roy to take to religion. Contrary to the expectations put in him by his father, Roy joins the group of the so-called 'bad boys' of Harlem who try 'to cut the throats' of the white boys and do not fear getting theirs cut in the attempt. Gabriel has no love for his bastard son, whom he teaches to keep away from all the outwardly appearing - to be - good white people, but it is John of whom the people of Harlem expect to 'become a Great Leader of his people'. Not knowing the reason for his father's unjust discrimination between him and Roy, John fails to get love and tenderness from his father despite attempts to please him. But along with this reality has come to him the truth and knowledge of his power of intellect. It is through this power he hopes to get love deprived to him otherwise. He sees his father, a minister of the church, preaching the sermons of love but in private life holds an attitude closely resembling that of hatred towards him, and it is this duplicity that hardens his heart against the Lord. He has no wish to join the church for he knows what the restricted and narrow path of religion had given to his God fearing Negro father and mother, and what to the fearless white who preached Christianity but never practised it and

even then were the owners of wealth and power:

> he did not long for the narrow way... In the narrow way, the way of the cross, there awaited him only humiliation for ever; there awaited him, one day, a house like his father's house and a church like his father's, and a job like his father's where he would grow old and black with hunger and toil. The way of the cross had given him a belly filled with wind and had bent his mother's back (p.37).

The dream of being a Poet or a college President or a Leader of his people in the future, later on, becomes to him a key that would unlock the door to popularity and wealth enabling him to live a luxurious life as lived by the white folks in the same world - eat good food, wear fine clothes and go to the movies as often as he wished. The problem of John Grimes, thus, on the Saturday of March 1935, on which he becomes a Negro boy of fourteen years, is that of the search for an Identity. It is also on this same day that he becomes conscious of the sin within him; that of his growing sensual 'reality' and is filled with fear and guilt. Reaching the crest of his favourite hill in Central Park on his birthday

> John, felt like a giant who might crumble this city with his anger; he felt like a tyrant who might crush this city beneath his heel; he felt like a long-awaited conqueror at whose feet flowers would be strewn, and before whom multitudes cried. Hosanna! He would be, of all, the Mighst, the most beloved, the lord's anointed;

> and he would live in this shining city which his ancestors had seen with longing from far away (p.38).

The adolescent boy soon to be a young man of intellectual talents, capable of shouldering the responsibilities and burden of his nation as much as any other white young man, views from the height of the hill the gap that existed between two sections of the one and same New York city: Harlem - with all its poverty, evils and restrictions of the black Americans; and, the City - with its freedom and glamour of the white Americans. The City becomes to him the very epitome of white detachment, its residents- "whose eyes held no love for him" and "when they passed they did not see him, or if they saw him they smirked .... and .. was a stranger "(p.38) to the city and its white people - becoming objects of this young Negro boy's latent hatred. His emotions are only a projection of Baldwin's very own boyhood days spent in Harlem. John receives his first lessons of hatred in his own family from a father who has accepted the white image of black man's inferiority that found frequent expressions in his anger and in his clinging to religion as his only redemption from the sorry state of things and does not reciprocate John's love for him, and the latter ascribes this to his own ugliness and blackness while making attempts to get rid of the stigma that gives him rejection, John on careful observation finds filth, dirt and darkness - a symbol of evil and degradation - pervading his home and the Harlem Ghetto. The

more he tries to 'keep clean' the more he finds himself surrounded with 'dust and dirt', which only help in enhancing his consciousness concerning his own blackness. Inside the Grimes' house, in which he lives, he sees that

> The room was narrow and dirty; nothing could alter its dimensions, no labour could ever make it clean - John thought with shame and horror, yet in angry hardness of heart: He who is filthy, let him be filthy still (p.24).

R.A. Bone writes "To a young boy growing up in the Harlem ghetto, damnation was a clear and present danger: 'For the wages of sin were visible everywhere, in every wine-stained and wine-splashed hallway, in every clanging ambulance bell, in every scar on the faces of the pimps and their whores, in every helpless, newborn baby being brought into this danger, in every knife and pistol fight on the Avenue'. To such a boy, the store-front church offered a refuge and a sanctuary from the terrors of the street. God and safety become synonymous, and the church, a part of his survival strategy". (*The Negro Novel in America*, p.219). The first part ends showing John in the church, as darkness envelops the world outside, in the midst of saints singing with them, despite his unwillingness in doing so knowing well that : "If he did not sing they would be upon him, but his hearts told him that he had no right to sing or to rejoice" (*Go Tell It* ... p.70).

In part II, "The Prayers of the Saints", the

novel acquaints the readers with the grim stories of John's Aunt Florence, Gabriel's sister. Gabriel and Elizabeth, All the three characters who begin their lives in the South and come North to ensure a bright future of freedom and respectability tell their respective true tales in flashbacks never disclosed to the rest. John remains utterly ignorant to their many bitter realities and hypocrisy. But their narrations play a significant part in understanding their mental process and as Bone says "It is through the lives of the adults that we achieve perspective on the boys's conversion" (p.221) that takes place in part III. In telling the story of each character Baldwin presents the white man as he justly appears to the black psyche : certainly not the well wishes of the Negro American but as 'distant executioners' whose blind brutality drives Richard to suicide, whose domineering sexuality leaves Deborah ravaged by the side of the road, whose dazzling power renders the misery of the ghetto all the more dismal.

In the final part of the novel, "The Threshing Floor", John attains maturity and strikes a truce with his identity. A boy who initially in refusing to be the 'Leader' of his people and also to be a 'Preacher' had rejected his racial and religious heritage, is 'saved' on the night of his fourteenth birthday amidst the singing and praying of the saints. John had watched the others deep in their prayers and had thought about what he had always been told by the Saints of the Church: that the Lord's power delivered

His followers and faithfuls from their sorrows. But these words do not clear him of his doubts:

> But ... out of all their troubles ? Why did his mother weep ? Why did his father frown ? If God's power was so great, why were their lives so troubled. (p.167)

Despite his skepticism John realizes that it is only through becoming God's anointed that he can be equal with his father. It was only through the attainment of God's power that he can become powerful. But he does not want it to gain his father's love:

> He did not want his father's kiss ....not any more, he who had received so many blows. He could not imagine, on any day to come and no matter how greatly he might be changed, wanting to take his father's hand. (p.168).

This passage again is heavy with implications. John's no longer wanting his father's love may be interpreted as the Black man's putting to an end their craving for assimilation with the white who had ignored him cruelly, inflicted many pains and agonies to his person, and hurt his ego that have become the ever-raw wounds of their consciousness. The blacks no longer want to equip themselves with accessories that will help them to gain the attention and love of the white Americans, rather are concentrating more to gain power for themselves that will enable them to live with self respect and dignity. John in disobeying his father's orders by going to see a movie had in

fact tried to make clear Baldwin's argument that "....seems to suggest that the black man should reject the definition imposed on him by the white man just as Johny refuses that imposed on him by Gabriel." (K. Kinnamon, p 132)

while lying on the floor deed on his fourteenth birthday before the altar, waiting to be taken through, John, who in the eyes of Baldwin is Ishmael, the bastard son of Hagar of Egypt and Abraham in the old Testament, and hence would ultimately become the heir of his father, passes through many fantasies, evasions, soft options till he makes peace by striking a "bargain". This "bargain" is the safety from the evil storming within him and without, in the boundaries of the church. Bone's remark in this regard is very significant: "In exchange for sanctuary he surrendered his sexuality, and abandoned any aspirations that might bring him into conflict with white power. He was safe, but walled off from the world; saved, but isolated from experience" (p.220). This, to Baldwin, is the historical betrayal of the Negro church. In exchange for the power of the word the Negro trades away the personal power of his sex and the social power of his people. In the darkness of his fantasy the ironic voice nags him to rise and leave the religious world for the more real outside world if he did not wish to become like the rest of the 'Niggers'. In this darkness of pain and torture he hears ' the Sound' which he had been hearing all round him and from all the people he had known all his life in the

'anger' of his father, in 'the calm insistences' of his mother, 'in the vehement mockery' of his aunt, in the uncompromising voice of his half brother Roy - but had never ever known and understood its significance nor the source of its origin. But on that day lying at the foot of the altar pleading with God to take him out of the darkness and wilderness he found himself wandering into, he learns:

> .... he heard it in himself - it rose from his bleeding, his cracked-open heart. It was a sound of rage and weeping which filled the grave, rage and weeping from time set free, but bound now in eternity; rage that had no language, weeping with no voice - which yet spoke now, to John's startled soul, of boundless melancholy, of the bitterest patience, and the longest night; of the deepest water, the strongest chains, the most cruel lash; of humility most wretched , the dungeon most absolute, of love's bed defiled, and birth dishonored, and most bloody, unspeakable, sudden death. Yes, the darkness hummed with murder: the body in the water, the body in the fire, the body on the tree. John looked down the line of these armies of darkness, army upon army, and his soul whispered : who are these ? who are they ? And wondered : where shall I go ? (*Go Tell It...* p.232).

John faces the truth during his 'coming through which most importantly he had tried his best to evade always; that despite his unwillingness to identify with the Negro people which would compel him to share the humiliations, the scars received on their bodies, the punishments, the anguish and death through which

they had passed at the hands of white people, directly or indirectly, he actually belonged to the "armies of darkness" and this was his identity. With this realisation and the realisation that God had taken him up as his 'Saved' son " he felt himself, out of the darkness, and the fire, and the terrors of death, rising upward to meet the saints .. . For his drifting should was anchored in the love of God; in the rock that endured for ever. "(Ibid, p.236), Gabriel, Elizabeth and Florence too had begun their independent lives but had ultimately found solace and the hope of deliverance mingled with the hope of revenge "by proxy" from the white man in the love of God. John "struggling to come up for air, from the dark ghettos of the human heart to the open spaces of perceived truth and direct responses" (Maini, p.43) comes to the shore of hope for a better future than the despairing present, early in life, and, therefore, 'at dawn be emerges from the Temple, smiling and confident about the future.' John in accepting Christianity that promised the Judgement Day, the last shall be first and that God will recognize his own, accepts a faith that had sustained the black preachers since slavery. In this autobiographical novel, Baldwin, the great black novelist, in telling the story of John Grimes ultimately giving up the pursuit of identity for a life of religious ecstasy, thereby identifying himself with the age-long Negro attitude of accepting the present as it is with no individual aspirations and struggle put to their fulfilment and the fact of leaving the hope for a

better, happy and humane future in the hands of Fate or God, has actually presented the mental set up of the black youths in search for a panacea and also his very own dilemma that eventually led him to seek refuge in the Church renouncing his great desire for a separate identity - entirely different from those of the common 'Negroes',-like John Grimes and many other young black boys in America, to protect himself from all kinds of evils, torments and humiliations for a short duration during his fourteenth year in the United States of America.

REFERENCES

1. Baldwin, James, 1954. *Go Tell It On the Mountain*, London : Michael Joseph.

2. Baker, Jr., Houston A. 1971. *Bkack Literature in America*, McGraw Hill & Co.

3. Allen, Shirley S. "Religious Symbolism and Psychic Reality in *Go Tell It On the Mountain*". *Critical Essays on James Baldwin*, Ed. Fred L. Hall & Co.

4. Bone, R..A. 1958. *The Negro Novel in America.* New Haven and London : Yale University Press.

5. Kinnamon, Keneth, 1932. *James Baldwin: A Collection of Critical Essays.* Englewood Cliffs, N. J. : Prentice.

6. Maini, Darshan Singh, Sept. 1990, Reconsidering James Baldwin," *Span.*

L. L. N. Degree College
Lecturer in English
Sirsa, Allahabad

The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, Vol.21, No.1. pp.97-110

M. Asaduddin

CONRAD'S *NOSTROMO* AND THE QUESTION OF ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

Nostromo has a special place in the entire corpus of Conrad's fictional works. It is much more ambitious than his Malayan novels, viz., *Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands, Lord Jim* or his hugely polemical novel on Africa, i.e., *Heart of Darkness*. In regard to both form and content *Nostromo* touches a new high, what some may call the zenith of Conrad's artistic achievement and demonstrates his capability to deftly handle a deeply complex theme and his sophistication as a practioner of novelistic technique. Conrad's insight into the actual workings of popular uprisings and 'nationalistic' movements, of which he had first-hand knowledge as a member of a patriotic and long-suffering family of Poland, make the novel seem a chronicle of contemporary times. The novel's relevance to us at the dawn of the twenty–first century is as striking as when it was written in 1904, or when Walter Allen observed in 1954 "*Nostromo* is a political novel in the profoundest meaning of the word and this is the index of Conrad's achievement— it may stand as a picture of the modern world in microcosm."[1]

The central theme of the novel, apart from the cluster of thematic concerns that makes it such a multi-layered text, is the evil effects of the relentless pursuit of material interests. Indeed, Conrad was deeply concerned in this novel with the alarming implications of economic imperialism without naming it because the term had not gained currency till then. Conrad's term for it was 'material interests' symbolised by the San Tome silver mine. The existential human condition which is the subject of investigation in all Conrad's major novels is given a particular dimension here where the narrative shows how individual destiny is linked up with that of the community and how the destiny of the community is influenced by larger socio-economic and historical forces. This is borne out by Conrad's own statement made in his letter to Ernest Bendz: "I will take the liberty to point out that Nostrome has never been intended for the hero of the tale of Sea-board. Silver is the pivot of the moral and material events effecting the lives of everybody in the tale."[2]

The first part of the novel "The Silver of the Mine" while giving us the socio-historical background of Costaguana, which is, "meant for a S. American state in general"[3] describes how Charles Gould wanted to bring prosperity to the country by tapping the resources of the silver mine. Gould is obsessed with the idea of industrial development thinking that progress is a concomitant of material advancement. However, his wife Emilia Gould realises right in the beginning that industrial development is not an

unmixed blessing and that 'progress' is a double-edged weapon. There are many passages in the first part of the novel suggesting that the advancement of American capitalism has robbed the country of its pristine environment, ecological balance and peace. Emilia Gould is saddened by the fact that the winds of change will inevitably wipe out the small, beautiful things, never to be retrieved:

> ...I will confess that the other day, during my afternoon drive when I suddenly saw an Indian boy ride out of a wood with the red flag of a surveying party in his hand, I felt something of a shock. The future means change — an utter change. And yet even here, there are simple and picturesque things that one would like to preserve.[4]

An important insight is contained in the fact that Conrad writing during the heyday of imperialism was not seduced by its rhetoric of progress and development. He was first among the writers who interrogated, not overtly but implicitly, the western notions of progress and development, particularly in the context of the colonial administration. The narrator uses an elaborate repertoire of images and metaphors to bring home the problematic nature of development which is rarely an unmixed blessing. The so-called instruments of progress bring in their wake evils of another kind, by wiping out local ethos and folklore. It is precisely these anxieties that, among other things, make the novel a modernistic text that lends itself to fruitful postcolonial exegesis. For example, the row of telegraph poles signalling the

outward manifestation of material progress is said to be "waiting outside for a moment of peace to enter and twine itself about the weary heart of the land."[5]

Nostromo recreates the past of Costaguana and that of the Gould family through some evocative scenes. Through these scenes we come to know that the past history of Costaguana comprises a series of uprisings and coups brought about by people of different ideological persuasions. The regimes oscillated between the tyranny of popular dictatorships and the rule of a partly enlightened but largely self-serving aristocracy. This made Costaguana chronically unstable. Charles Gould's father was a wealthy merchant who had to bribe successive governments to keep himself in business. It is during the regime of such a government that the heavily taxed silver mine was sold off to him arbitrarily, despite his strongest protest. The senior Gould, without any experience of mining, tried his best to make it a viable enterprise, but in vain. His life was so vitiated by the mine that his advice to his son, then studying in Europe was "never to touch it, never to approach it, to forget that America existed."[6]

Costaguana, as already pointed out, had a very unstable polity. Paradoxically, the San Tome mine, contributed to its instability. Within a span of six years it could have as many as four governments. The tyranny of Guzman Bento was followed by a 'fatuous turmoil of greedy factions' and it is during this turmoil that Charls Gould reopens the mine. He

disregards the advice of his father and, imbued with the idealism of youth, plunges whole-heartedly in the endeavour of developing the mine which, according to him, would result in political stability and the development of Costaguana. Gould's belief in material progress represents the magisterial Victorian view that the consolidation of Empire and the progress of science and technology is a desirable end in itself and nothing but good emanated from it. The fact that the narrative intelligence in the novel subjects this view to searching scrutiny makes it a particularly interesting and useful site for the examination of Conrad's sometimes ambivalent views about imperialism and colonialism.

Conrad's treatment of Gould's ruthless pursuit of material interests indicates his deep understanding of the way political systems and business interests work. The financial investor, in the scheme of the novel, is no less than a political dictator. Gould, though a domestic enterpreneur, has foreign (English) affiliations and he needs the support of a foreign investor (American), Holroyd, to extend him capital needed for the mining activity. The economic enterprise, the mine, needs a political agent at Sta Marta; it tactfully and extensively bribes those with political influence to be left in peace. These insights into the 'realpolitik' of the developing and the under-developed world are authentic. They will be found to have direct parallels to the European and American commercial and political intervention in Spanish American affairs. Towards the end of *Nostromo*, the occidental province

of Sulaco gets separated from Costaguana as a result of the counter-revolution. This succession is in the interest of American capital in that it secures, for the time being and with Holroyd's approval, the wealth of the mine, Holroyd's investment. As actually happened in Panama, in Costaguana also, the secessionists got an edge over their enemies by the arrival of the U.S. navy: "An international naval demonstration... put an end to the Costaguana-Sulaco war... The United States cruiser, *Powhattan*, was the first to salute the Occidental flag."[7]

All political activities in Costaguana — the revolutions, the civil war with their attendant intrigues — are directly or indirectly related to the material interests of political parties and revolutionaries. Everybody — from Sotillo to Montero, from Sir John to Holroyd— are drawn to Sulaco, the 'Treasure-house of the world'. The silver mine transforms Charles Gould. His initial idealism gradually turns into an irrational obsession. The mine gets such a strong hold over him that he becomes indifferent to everything else. The silver of the mine does help him to contain the political chaos in Costaguana to some extent, but his real interest lies in the Concession – 'Imperium in Imperio'. He is successful in making the mine a controlling force in Costaguana. It certainly brings power, but only to Charles. By owning the most powerful thing in the continent he becomes the most powerful man who can 'send half of Sulaco in the air.' However, Gould's unreflective commitment to the silver mine leads to its fetishisation by him. The means become the end.

Instead of using the power emanating from the mine to control the darkness, Charles himself is gradually controlled by the mine and eventually enveloped by the darkness. As Royal Roussel points out cogently:

> The founding of the Occidental Republic which is the eventual result of Gould's decision to give his direct and open support to Ribiera, representing consequently not the triumph of light but only another manifestation of the persistent tyranny which has always characterized Costaguana.[8]

The gradual transformation of Charles Gould from an idealist-philanthropist to a willing accomplice is a pointer to the forces of material interests which, once unleashed, cannot be reversed. His more clear-sighted wife Emilia watches with mounting disappointment that the silver mine has not only vitiated the politics of the land, but it has vitiated their relationship as well. She is jolted by the discovery that there is something inherent in the necessities of 'successful action' that carried with it the "moral degradation of the idea."[9] The shared idealism which was the basis of their relationship is lost in the quicksand of political intrigue to which her husband surrenders gradually without putting up a strong resistance. Slowly, there happens a subtle parting of ways between the husband and the wife. For Emilia Gould the mine symbolises the wall dividing her from her husband. She wants to salvage part of her idealism by acts of philanthropy like opening schools, establishing hospitals for nursing the sick and being generally useful to all.

The corrupting potential of material interests can be seen at its worst in case of Nostromo who was considered 'incorruptible' by everybody. The 'incorruptible' Capataz de Cargadores' cares for nothing except for his reputation. He neither longs to possess silver as Sotillo does, nor does he have a taste for luxurious living. The Costaguanan society has given him a good name and appreciates his valour. His heroic actions measure up to his wide reputation and he always satisfies the expectations of his capitalist employers. Nostromo is initially indifferent to the silver as he relates it to a magic emblem rather than a material object. His personal effects – his buttons, his whistle, his buckles – are all of silver, but his public gift of all his buttons to the Monerita indicates his indifference to their material value as much as it demonstrates his perpetual longing for the lustre of a good name. Even his employer, Captain Mitchell, is forced to acknowledge that his usefulness far outweighs his wages. His character begins to undergo slow transformation when he is entrusted with the task of saving the silver. He and Decoud are left entirely to their own devices, abandoned by their political masters. The accomplishment of the task also makes him feel 'betrayed'. When he first leaves Decoud and is faced with the problem of resuming his life he feels desperate because he has lost the reputation for which he lived. He realises for the first time that his capitalist employers have always exploited his reputation to serve their own end, that he was their whipping boy. Having lost trust in those

people who have exploited him he decides to keep the secret of the silver to himself. Thus he becomes 'corruptible'.

However, from the very beginning Nostromo's estrangement from his native society and culture is highlighted. His authority is devoid of any ethical sanction inasmuch as it does not represent the aspirations of his community. He does not realise that in serving the cause of the European imperialists, he is acting directly against the interests of his own people. His unreflective commitment to his capitalist masters indicates the way in which modern economic imperialists lure the best talents from underdeveloped communities and alienate them from their culture and people. S. Raval explores this aspect of Nostromo's character and points out:

> Prior to his disintegration Nostromo's ethic is simply a moralistic appearance buoyed up by the network of political economic interests he serves. The power of this network is in its ability to create a man of the people, for the people and to make him serve values and interests neither the people, nor he, their idealised representative, would support.[10]

A cogent critique of Conrad's anti-imperialist and anti-colonial stance in modern times comes from Edward Said, the most widely known cultural-literary critic of our times. Said suggests that Conrad, dealing with the type of cultural and economic imperialism as in *Nostromo* was much ahead of his times. While most of his illustrious contemporaries in the field of English

fiction seemed to endorse the belief, sometimes overtly and sometimes tacitly, that the European imperialism was the chosen destiny of the native people in far-flung colonies Conrad shows his disagreement with them on this issue. A considerable segment of Said's book, *Culture and Imperialism* is taken up with the discussion on Conrad's novels, particularly, *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostromo*. Said, though appreciative of Conrad's largely anti-imperialist stance also accuses him of erasure as far as the cultures and histories of erstwhile colonies were concerned. While paying him a left-handed compliment for his critique of British and American speculators in Costaguana, he finds that this critique was less than adequate–

> ... it is true that Conrad ironically sees the imperialism of the San Tome mine's British and American owners as doomed by its own pretentious and impossible ambitions, it is also true that he writes as a man whose *Western* view of the non-western world is so ingrained as to blind him to other histories, other cultures, other aspirations.[11]

The problem with Said seems to be that he forgets that Conrad was an imaginative novelist, not an ideologist or a polemicist. He was interested in the existential reality of things and not in a political agenda. If he had pointed out the blind spots of paternalistic capitalism represented by Gould and Holroyd, he also depicted the rapacity of short-sighted politicians who masquerade as patriots in Costaguana. The accusation that Conrad was blind to "other

histories, other cultures, other aspirations" is certainly unfair. At several points in the densely textured narrative the past and present history of Costaguana and its culture have been given adequate space where Conrad discusses with great prescience the vitality and resilience of native culture even though he did not forgive the freebooters and criminal adventurists in that culture who used common people as mere pawns in their pursuit of political ambition, loot and plunder. The great number of native people — as individuals and as a community – have a strong presence and the novelist articulates their legitimate aspirations and grievances as well as their shortcomings. He delves deep into the minds and lives of his characters and minutely records the impact of the struggle on individual destinies. Conrad does not denigrate their conventional wisdom thouh he deplores their lack of political cohesion. If they can not organise themselves against their colonialist masters, illiterate and politically immature as they were, it is a tragic reality that obtained in the many erstwhile colonies which were under one or another colonial power. It is not Conrad's case, as Said asserts, that anti-imperialist independence movements were all corrupt and in the pay of puppet masters in London and Washington. In a well–written article William Riviere, while evaluating Said's critique of Conrad, with particular reference to *Nostromo*, writes

> Conrad described his Atlantic and Pacific seaboards as, after all, they really were: controlled by people most of whom had

> European origins – Catholic and Protestant competing; crooks turned into generals and saviours of the nation, competing against other crooks turned into demagogues and saviours now patriots of the new country — a ruling class who had liberated themselves from metropolitan government while retaining the financial and cultural links they found pleasing, and had also liberated themselves from any rivalry with the anciently indigenous peoples while retaining them as a labor force and sometimes as cannon fodder.[12]

Thus, *Nostromo* can be said to rigorously interrogate some of the fundamental assumptions underlying European imperialism and American capitalism. The main character, apart from the many events and encounters that illustrate it, through whom this interrogation has taken place is certainly Emilia Gould. The issue of how the past of Costaguana with its picturesque flora and fauna and traditional ways of life can be reconciled with its future development often agitates her mind. Mrs. Gould does not know how the conflict between tradition and technology could be resolved. She is saddened by the vision of a future in Costaguana stripped of its native traditions. She sardonically refers to the "religion of silver and iron" in the very beginning of the actions in the novel and anticipates the ways in which economic interests are going to erode the quality of life in Costaguana. She witnesses how the cultural life of the people has been thoroughly disturbed. The miners at the Campo have gained a secure way of life, but looking at their "flat, joyless faces," dressed and

housed indentically, Mrs. Gould asks herself if they are really more happy now than when they were illiterate and impoverished peasants but, nevertheless, part of an intensely vital and throbbing human tradition. In asking such questions Mrs Gould not only puts the imperial 'White man's burden' project to substantial doubt but also invites us to look at the narrative from the perspectives of the native people of Costaguana. These perspectives will make it clear that the history of 'oppression and brutality' rooted in the colonial past of Costaguana and is part of the native Costaguanans, but also a story of colonial domination and its resistance. They also underscore the problematic nature of the relationship between a great writer's politics and his art and the reader's and critic's engagement with them.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. V.S. Pritchett, *The Working Novelist* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), p.195.
2. G. Jean Aubrey, *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters,* Vol II (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1927), p.296.
3. *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters,* Vol I, p.315.
4. Joseph Conrad, *Nostromo* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1917), p.120.
5. Ibid., p.166.
6. Ibid., p.17.
7. Ibid., p.487.

8. Royal Roussel, "Nostromo: The Ironic Vision", *The Metaphysics of Darkness: A Study in the Unity and Development of Conrad's Fiction* (London: The John Hopkins University, 1971), p.119.

9. *Nostromo*, p.521.

10. S. Raval, *The Art of Failure: Conrad's Fiction* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986), p.85.

11. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.xix.

12. William Riviere, "Learning from a Master", *PNR: one hundred and eighteen*, vol. 24, Number 2, Nov-Dec, 1997, p.68.

Department of English
Jamia Millia Islamia
New Delhi

The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, Vol.21, No.1, pp.111-119

Robert F. Fleissner

ENTER THE THIRD WORLD: YEATS'S "SECOND COMING" EVEN OF A BLAKEAN TIGER—LIKE IMAGE

Owing to the commonplace that W. B. Yeats was strongly influenced by the British Romantics, notably Blake (though also somewhat Shelley),[1] specific references to Blake being cited, for example, in both Yeats's "Under Ben Bulben" (1 .64) and his "William Blake and His Illustrations to the *Divine Comedy*,"[2] he may also have been even more substantially indebted to aspects of that early romantic and especially in "The Second Coming."[3] Because he called this literary forbear of his "one of the great mythmakers and mask-makers,"[4] it need not be particularly astonishing that the famous so-called riddling image of the "rough beast" in probably his most well-known short poem owes certain memorable features to Blake's equally familiar lyric "The Tyger." Such a verdict, even if it amounts only to indirect reverberation, could help much in our reinterpreting the Yeatsean verse, especially if, as I happen to have suggested elsewhere fairly recently,[5] the bestial allusion there is clearly (and especially at the present time) suggestive of the emergence of the Third World as a vital enough force coming into its own with the onset of the New Millennium. Because there have been

various other noteworthy critiques on record of this wild animal image of Yeats's though, let us see how specifically bringing in the well-known Blakean tiger effect can now be of assistance in consolidating a vital new exegesis. For the main point to bear in mind is that Blakean influence has been otherwise determined here. As Stallworthy shows, "Miss M. Rudd reveals the phrase 'stony sleep' [in the 'rough beast' poem] to have been borrowed (no doubt unconsciously) from Blake's lines in 'The First Book of Urizen':

> Ages and ages roll'd over him
> In stony sleep ages roll'd over him" (24).[6]

First of all, admittedly a certain peril exists in that such a specifically Africa-oriented reading might lend itself even to the criticism of being a bit subversive. Thus, in my recent contribution to the Yeats *Annual*, I happen to make passing reference to Africa as being the "Dark Continent" (99), which could be presumed by some modern–day readers as a purely negative image. In Yeats's own time, however, the term simply alluded to a certain mysteriousness or obscurity, relatively speaking. If the "beast" image is taken as an Anti-Christ symbol, as is sometimes done, any specific African association here would scarcely be complimentary, but the "Bethlehem" context surely negates such a reading. After that essay was completed, I came upon David Erdman's reading of Blake, *Prophet Against Empire: A Poet's Interpretation of the History of his own Times*,[7] which

relates "The Tyger" to Yeats's "The Secret Rose" (180). In any case, Erdman's recondite titular image offers another dimension in terms of the intimations of apocalypse phrased as a rhetorical query at the end of "The Second Coming." The main danger of an Africa-oriented reading is that the primitive notion of that continent as being as a whole somewhat wild and uncivilized might again thereby regrettably emerge. Indeed, the poem has been, at times, viewed as dealing with certain totalitarian forces, lines 4-8 often said to be alluding, at least in manuscript form, to the Russian Communist Revolution of 1917,[8] the bestial imagery then even as forecasting the encroachment of later fascism in addition, a viewpoint that Yeats himself presumably allowed for finally as at least a "valid" one in his later years.[9]

Still, the presiding image of the "rough beast" at the tail end of "The Second Coming," though obviously related somehow to Saharan Africa (specifically, in part, to the Egyptian sphinx image there in 1. 14), need hardly be taken in any negative manner, especially then with the immediate querying reference to the birthplace of Jesus Christ following (1.22). Granted, I happen to have earlier posited, but only in passing, that this allusion could refer, partially or at any rate connotatively, to the familiar British hospital for the deranged, even known at that time in "cockney" English as "Bedlam." Hence the modern colloquial meaning of that term. (Such a spelling need not be present with Yeats, though, for the average British reader with his own accent would discern

that.) Nonetheless, the majority viewpoint is that, especially because of the lyric's very title, the Christian landmark is what was at least denotatively intended here — even though, admittedly, Yeats was hardly an orthodox Christian. In any case, the phrase "to be born" in this context does suggest here a kind of rebirth.

The poet later referred to his animal symbol as having been "associated with laughing, ecstatic destruction" (suggesting perhaps even a bit of the hyena image),[10] and he brought in here his own mystical view, as later described in his *Vision* of 1937, which was not then specifically related to what he dubbed the "Christian cycle" in his imagery patterning. Yet a comparison with the Blakean animal poem provides a somewhat more conventionalized and perhaps pedagogically more accessible linkage. So let us examine that in further detail.

First of all, it is easily enough recognized that in both "The Second Coming" and "The Tyger" bestial imagery duly connects with a vital final question. Thus Yeats's subject "And what rough beast ...?" is in effect verbally anticipated by Blake in his own (repetitive) query, "What immortal hand or eye / Could (or, then, Dare)frame thy fearful symmetry?" (11. 3-4, 23-24). True, in Blake's case such a question is usually taken as a rhetorical one; however, the questioning framework does not have to be considered as such, especially if the Yeatsean query

is then seen, in part, as a kind of echo, or reiteration, of the Blakean image.

Now, in both instances, the implicit answer can truly be thought of simply as "God." For why not? Whether either poet would specifically or consciously have asked for that is quite another matter; at any rate, such an explanation can easily be considered as being at least half-conscious. Then let us notice again, in particular, that in both lyrics the main query effect appears at the tail-end and as a kind of conundrum, making us duly ponder the outcome.

Because Blake cites a tiger, but Yeats rather a lion, both wild enough images, the overall affinity may appear at first more analogous than substantial, admittedly, yet the major concern in this matter involves the avoidance of bias. Thus Geoffrey Thurley writes, in a general way, "It is wholly characteristic of Yeats to transform Blake's (animal) into a slouching, mindless omen of disaster." [11] What is more, Blake's tiger is partly so famous because of the striking intensity of the poem's overall imagery. Likewise one thing that clearly stands out in the Yeats poem is the very reference to "passionate intensity" itself (1.7).

Then, on the abstract level, Blake's double allusion to "fearful symmetry" (11.4,24) would likewise tie in with a Yeatsean abstract conception, "*Spiritus Mundi*" (1.112). What is more, a symmetrical enough image appears also in Blake's opening ("the widening gyre"). Allusions to the heavens also stand out: "A

gaze black and pitiless as the sun" in Yeats (1.15). As for the gyres involved, A. Norman Jeffares, in his "Gyres in Yeats's Poetry," after referring as well to the discussion of Blake's application of these symmetrical effects in Yeats's *Vision* (xi),[12] notes that that lyric is "Romantic in more than form," for "it is shot through with Blakean and Shelleyan echoes in theme and diction" (202).[13] Why then has not the most obvious correlation, that of the two animals of the wilderness, the tiger and lion, stood out before for scholars?

Finally, do both poems prognosticate chaos, or rather a reasonable solution to the problems of the world? True, in "The Tyger" questions abound without any immediate answer, whereas in the Yeats poem broad general allusions to "Mere anarchy" (1.4) and to the beast as lacking "all conviction" (1.7) stand out as well. Yet the beauty in the overall image of the beast in both cases does appear to dominate, leading at least to a fine enough aesthetic solution relating to the import of the Third World. But specifically to Africa? That of course raises the minor problem of how a tiger image could have been vitally influential here when it was native to India, not Africa; but then this beast did migrate some, from not that far away, and was at times transported (for example, I have been recently informed of someone having witnessed tigers in Kenya).[14] In all events, the principal stress here is on the Third World connection as a whole, not on the particular continent that happens to be involved.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See, for example, Hazard Adams, *Blake and Yeats: The Contrary Visions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955), pp. 236-40. In itself, this book's title might appear to stress more differentiation, though. For the impact of Shelley, see D. Weeks, "Image and Idea in Yeats's 'The Second Coming,'" PMLA, 58 (1943), 281-92. Weeks finds a source of the poem in Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound" (i. 625-8). This is then cited by Jon Stallworthy in his notable work *Between the Lines: W. B. Yeats's Poetry in the Making* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 23.

2. See his *Essays and Introductions* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 111-45.

3. Of course it was also inspired by what he declares in a note to his own *Wheels and Butterflies* (1934), namely miscellaneous source material including "a brazen winged beast that I associated with laughing, ecstatic destruction, afterwards described in my poem 'The Second Coming'" (for which see Stallworthy 23).

4. The citation is from a standard classroom text. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 6th ed., 2 Vols. (New York: Norton, 1993), II, 1996.

5. See my most recent paper on this, "What Rough Beast'?: The Yeats-Eliot Kinship Rekindled, "in *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies*, ed, Richard J. Finneran (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996 XII (1994), 94-101 (which appeared in print belatedly in 1998).

6. See Margaret Rudd, *Divided Image: A Study of William Blake and W.B. Yeats* (London: Routledge, 1953), p. 119. Her discussion of "The Tyger" (pp. 89-90) does not, however, cite "The Second Coming."

7. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954.

8. For this conception I am particularly indebted to Meyer H. Abrams of Cornell University. It is cited in an earlier edition of the *Norton Anthology* (cf, n4), the so-called revised edition of 1968 (II, 1582), for which he was general editor. There he also asserts that "scholarship has traced most of Yeats's mystical and quasi-mystical ideas to sources that were common to William Blake" (II, 1859), Cf. also n13 below. Other scholars, ones in the Cornell Yeats Series, notably Jon Stallworthy and the editors of Yeats's *"Michael Robertes and the Dancer": Manuscript Materials* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), see pp. 147-65, namely Thomas Parkinson and Anne Brannen, need also to be cited here.

9. See Abrams again. For an elaboration of this point of view, cf. the eminent editor of the *Yeats Eliot Review*, Russell Elliot Murphy, "The 'Rough Beast' and Historical Necessity: A New Consideration of Yeats's 'The Second Coming,'" *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 14 (1981), 101-10. Reference is thereby made to Yeats's *A Vision*. Allusions to Germany and Russia in early MS. Materials are readily discernible in the Parkinson/Brannen volume.

10. See the third ed. of *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, also edited by M.H. Abrams (New York: Norton, 1981), p. 823.

11. *The Turbulent Dream: Passion and Politics in the Poetry of W.B. Yeats* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983), p. 122. (The bracketed interpolation provided here by me is for greater contextual clarity.)

12. *The Circus Animals: Essays on W.B. Yeats's Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), pp. 103-14, especially p. 108.

13. See his "Yeats, and the Greater Romantic Lyric," in *Critical Essays on W.B. Yeats*, ed. R.J. Finneran (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1986), pp. 190-207.

14. Also worth at least mentioning is Malcolm Bull's brief article claiming that the Yeatsean beast is perhaps not the African sphinx after all but rather the manticore, another legendary animal, which happened to be associated both with desert and Holy Land. This could detract from an explicitly African setting here perhaps. Yet originally Yeats did have an animated sphinx in mind, and the one in Egypt is applicable most easily because it rests on its belly, thus plausibly enough accounting for the "rough beast" in the poem as being in a state of slouching. Still, I find it hard to believe that the poet, in asking "what rough beast . . . ?," was seriously querying whether he really had a sphinx or manticore in mind. *Notes and Queries*, 240 (1995), 209-10.

Department of Humanities
Central State University
Wilberforce, Ohio 45384
USA

The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, Vol.21, No.1. pp.120-134

Chiramel P. Jose

WILLIAM BLAKE'S DEPICTION OF TIGER: MYSTERY OR MASTERY!

"The Tyger" is considered to be the masterpiece of William Blake's poems, just as his *Illustrations of the Book of Job* is definitely his masterpiece in paintings. Back in 1810 Henry Crabb Robinson wrote about this poem: "We cannot better set forth the many sided gifts of our poet than by following up his singularly delicate and simple poem with this truly inspired and original description of 'The Tyger'." [1] Standing at the heart of the *Songs of Experience*, it symbolizes the dreadful forces in the world just as "The Lamb" symbolized gentleness, vulnerability and innocence in the circle of Innocence. Blake himself had meticulously corrected and rearranged and rewritten this great poem. John Sampson in 1905 gave the elaborate analysis of 'The Tyger', following each stage of its development, in his admirable edition of William Blake's Works.[2] There he observes that even back in 1806 this poem was appreciated by Dr. Julius and translated by him into German. He reprints this German translation, "*Der Tiger*" with the commendatory words "This spirited and admirably literal rendering [by Dr. Julius, in German language] appeared... at a time when Blake's *Songs* were almost unknown to his own countrymen." [3] From the time of Sampson there has been a steady outpour of critical

studies on this great poem.[4] In the present study, however, I am not proposing a hair-splitting scrutiny of all the lines of the poem; rather, an analysis of the poem with a special focus on the biblical themes involved in it, comes under the purview of this study.

Blake is considered to be the most unique of all English poets, because he is the real author of his works in the full sense of the word, due to his insistence on not only composing the poems but also on illustrating them with his own paintings and ornamental texts as well as printing them himself by the process called illuminated printing. To get to the core of his works in the composite art of poetry and painting, one is expected to concentrate on the text and design of each and every poem. Therefore, the availability of the facsimile reprint of Blake's illuminated edition, *Songs of Innocence and Experience: Showing the Two Contrary States of Human Soul*, 1789-1794[5] is expedient for the present study. Viewing the plate of the poem 'The Tyger' no critic is satisfied with the painting of tiger done by Blake below the text of this poem. Rather than subscribing to the view that such an accomplished artist like Blake could not draw or paint the picture of a ferocious tiger, the present study purports at showing that Blake's depiction of tiger through his words and lines is an intentional blend of mystery and mastery. Relying on the critical heritage the following observations are relevant for the present study.

Kathleen Raine suggests that Blake must have

seen George Stubb's famous painting of Tiger which was exhibited at the Society of Artists of Great Britain, in Somerset Street, in 1769. Blake at this time was 12 years old, and in his second year as a student at Pars's drawing school, which was held in the same house where the Society was lodged. Stubbs used to exhibit there regularly. Reproducing this famous painting in her book, Kathleen Raine posed a question, "Is 'The tyger' a tribute to a boy's enthusiasm for Stubb's glorious beast, seen at this impressionable age?"[6] Stubb's Tiger from Raine's book is not reproduced in our present study. But a comparison with it will definitely bring out the contrast with Blake's own painted tiger below the text of this mysterious poem. The tiger of Blake is painted or drawn differently in different copies. Erdman suggests that the expression of the tiger varies in different copies, from smiling to worried, or to supercilious or to patient. Considering all these Geoffrey Keynes had said that it ranged from "a ferocious carnivore painted in lurid colours" to a "tame cat." But Erdman does not agree with Keynes's recognition of a ferocious carnivore in some of the copies.[7] It can be seen that the painted tiger is no where near Stubb's tiger, nor his own depiction of the tiger in and through the words of the poem. The most ardent admirer may be able to find, at best, a paper tiger. Erdman points out that "this picture, like the poem it illuminates, remains one of Blake's contrived enigmas- a contrivance forced upon him by the truth, one feels."[8] But Erdman does not explore

this enigma. J. Bronowski in an attempt to salvage the apparent weakness of the artist, said: "You must not look closely on the tiger because Blake and his contemporaries had never seen real tigers; they had only seen stuffed animals. And this one had been very badly stuffed."[9]

Anne K. Mellor's position is by far the most acceptable. Mellor observes:

> The Creator of the tyger possesses, as all men do potentially, the daring imagination and the sublime wrath necessary to dominate the forces of reason. Man's expanding Energy can be channelled into an awe-inspiring, bounded artistic image, the fearful symmetry of this tyger. But the energy of this tyger is a development of the Innocence of the Lamb, as the controversial illustration indicates. The tyger is pictured as a gentle, striped, and peaceful beast (in Copies B [M.M.] and Z [T.P], a creature that fuses the loving gentleness of the Lamb with the quiet power of Energy at rest. When the murdering dissections of reason are annihilated, the tyger and the Lamb will lie down together.[10]

All the same, Mellor also observes that "Even the intentionally innocent tyger in some copies looks too much like a stuffed toy to be a wholly persuasive Lamb. In several of these designs Blake's line is so weak and his colouring so haphazard that details of the designs are obscured;" [11]

A.K. Mellor is right in pointing out that it is "not the most open of visual designs." [12] Only when

we have finished reading the text of the poem, we can fully resolve the enigma of the tiger-picture by Blake, which we reserve to the last part of our discussion of this poem. To be sure this tiger is located by Blake in the desert of Experience, and this is represented by a barren tree on the right side of the text and a colourless clump of vegetation at the left. Kathleen Raine gives a detailed analysis of the poem against the background of Boehme, Paracelcus and Gnostic and Cabbalistic traditions.[13] Considering the line "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" crucial to the resolving of the mystery of this poem she analyses the pros and cons for a possible answer. But at the end she leaves the question unanswered. She observes:

> Instead of seeking to find a yes or a no, we will be nearest to the truth if we see the poem rather as an utterance of Blake's delight not in the solution but in the presentation of the problem of evil as he found it in the Hermetic and Gnostic tradition.[14]

After browsing through many a criticism of this poem one is inclined to consider Morton D. Paley's essay "Tyger of Wrath" [15] as the best solution to the mystery of this poem. In this exhaustive study Paley invites us to recognize 'The Tyger' as an apostrophe to the wrath of God as a sublime phenomenon; to the wrath which Boehme calls the First principle, which the Prophets (of the Old Testament) saw released in history, and which Blake perceived in the tremendous energies of the French Revolution."[16]

In both the Old and the New Testament this Wrath of God is eschatological and brings about the destruction of the wicked and the building of New Jerusalem. Throughout the Bible this eschatological Wrath of God is manifested in the images of fire and beasts of prey (e.g. Genesis 19:24; Exodus 14:24; Isaiah 66:15; Malachi 3:2; Isaiah 13:21-22; Ezekkiel 15:6-7; Jeremias 21:14). Sometimes both the fire and wild beasts are associated with the day of Wrath (Amos 3:4; 3:8; Amos 5:6). If read against this Biblical background, 'The Tyger' becomes more poignant. Commenting on the first two lines:

> Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright
> In the forests of the night (K 214)

Paley observes that "the allusion is to the wrath of the Lord burning through the forests of a corrupt social order." [17] The same idea had been hinted at by Foster Damon, when he spoke of these lines:

> Blake intends to suggest that the great power of Wrath is to consume Error, to annihilate those stubborn beliefs which cannot be removed by the tame horses of instruction.[18]

Blake seems to be astonished at this sublime mystery, Tyger.[19] The second line should also be compared to a passage in *The Four Zoas*, where Urizen's "tygers roam in the redounding smoke/In forests of affliction" in the Caves of Orc (Night the Seventh, 11. 9-10).[20]

An interesting connection with the Book of Job will not be out of place here. For the eighteenth

century people, The Book of Job was the most sublime book of the Bible which voiced the manifestation to the sublime through descriptions of divine wrath and power. The Book of Job was considered to be the masterpiece of World Literature of all times. In Blake's old age he produced his masterpiece as an artist in the *Illustrations of the Book of Job*. And it is not a mere coincidence that Blake's poem "The Tyger" is an astonishment at the sublime manifestation of God, just as *Job* was one. In the Book of Job after answering Job from the whirlwind God manifests his power through a number of questions to Job about the symbolic beasts Behemoth and Leviathan (Job 40 and 41). Blake depicts these beasts in his *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, plate 15. Paley implicity suggests that Blake was probably inspired to write "The Tyger" under the influence of the biblical descriptions of "Behemoth and Leviathan, symbolic beasts of which the Tyger is related as an embodiment of sublime power." [21] And more emphatically he says: "The Tyger is the Leviathan of Job in that both are fiery images of divine energy." [22]

Coming to the most difficult fifth stanza of the poem this position will be further clarified. The whole argument of the poem stems from the mystery of creation. The poet's wonder at this sublime mystery of creation is expressed by the questions: "Did he smile his work to see? /Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" (K 214). Before analysing these questions, it is necessary to pay attention to the

evolution of the pattern of questions in the poem. At first they are almost normal questions upto line 8. Then all on a sudden it explodes in a way, and the questions are in a broken pattern. As Anne Mellor observes, the implication is that "Energy should always exist in tension with its form, in a 'fearful symmetry' that threatens to explode into an infinitely expanding force at any moment, just as the pressure of Blake's vision against the syntax breaks the full line questions of lines 7 and 8 into the half line questions of line 13 and 15."[23] Then as if the tension is released the syntax of questions is retrieved in the fifth stanza. Just as Job was coming to terms with God after God's answering from the Whirlwind , Blake seems to have resolved this mystery of sublime power, towards the fifth stanza.

Blake probably realized that, "when the stars threw down their spears/And water'd heaven with their tears," the Creator must have been delighted to see the work of his hand and smiled. That is why he again changes the syntax and formulates two full rhetorical questions both of which must be answered in the affirmative. But before going to those rhetorical questions the above quoted lines 17 and 18 are to be scrutinized. As Paley explains, it has several related meanings. The literal image is that of starlight and dew. On the historical level, the stars represent the armies of the monarchy. From the time of his *Poetical Sketches* (1769-1798) to the time of *Jerusalem* (1804-1820) Blake associated stars with tyranny, war and oppression. Paley points out that the

failure of the counter-revoluntionary armies at York-town and Valmy is implied in these lines, and as well in the similar line in *The Four Zoas*, V:222. There the unfallen and whole man, Albion's Zoas represented by Urizen, Luvah, Urthona and Tharmas on the unfallen state, and by Satan, Orc, Los as the fallen states of the first three Zoas, are falling down before the supreme power of Albion and with Urizen "The stars threw down their spears and fled naked away." The unfallen Man's freedom seems to be winning over all the strifes of the four zoas in their fallen state.

Similarly in "The Tyger" Blake is giving high praise to the apocalyptic role of the French Revolution. The defeat of the stars throwing down their spears signified the casting off of both the cosmic and internal constraints, freeing man to realize his potentially divine nature. The stars of tyranny are falling down or losing the battle and they are shedding the tears of hypocrisy and self-pity and frustration. For Blake Jesus was the God-Man or the Perfect Man. And the creation of Tiger is an answer to the corrupt world. Blake realizes that meekness, pity, mercy and love alone are not enough. There must be tigers of wrath as well. Innocence alone is not sufficient. Experience also must be joined with Innocence into a harmonious whole. The hypocritical tears of the tyranny and jealousy which is described in "The Human Abstract" - "cruelty waters the ground with tears" in order to make the Tree of Mystery grow – can no more mislead and harass the redeemed man. The creation of tiger is not to be

seen as creation of evil but as the creation of a weapon to fight out evil. In the matter of fighting the evil of any sort, the Lamb-like meekness will not always suffice. The picture of Jesus Christ letting loose the tigers of wrath in him against the temple-centred injustices in the "Cleaning of Temple Scene" in the Gospels,[24] confirms our interpretation of The Tyger. Just as Jesus is the Word of God, so also at the temple scene He becomes manifest as the Wrath of God. Just as the Lamb is symbol of Christ, so also is the Tyger. Just as the Christ it was who made the Lamb, so also He was the One who made the tyger too. As Christine Gallant has affirmed "indeed, the Creator made the Lamb and equally made the Tyger - both at the same time and in the same place."[25] Christ did smile to see his work, 'The Tyger.'

Blake has elsewhere in *The Four Zoas* mentioned about the adaptability of rage to mercy. In Night the Third, answering Enion's pleading for pardon and pity, Tharmas answered:

> Image of grief, thy fading lineaments make my
> eye-lids fail.
> What have I done? Both rage and mercy are
> alike to me;
> Looking upon thee, Image of faint waters, I
> recoil
> From fierce rage into thy semblance
> (Ll. 195-98; K 297).

Here rage and mercy are identified. Understanding the lamb and tiger as aspects of the same creator, one is

exonerated of the temptation to exclaim in view of the seemingly inadept picture of the tiger,

> Did he who write the poem make thee?
> Did he smile his work to see?

Blake definitely smiled to see his work. Blake meant his tiger to be capable of lying down with the lamb. With all its terrible fearful symmetry, the tiger when understood as having a definitive purpose, acquires a certain amount of tameness and amiable nature.

Commenting on those two questions, Martin K. Nurmi says: "If 'The Tyger' is considered in the context of Blake's work alone, it seems to me that he could be regarded as a providential creation for - not of or by - the fallen world of Experience. If we take the stars in this crucial stanza as having a meaning near to that which they had in words closely contemporary with the poem, as symbolizing oppression, and also take their throwing down their spears in this context as indicating some kind of defeat, then the answers to both the questions are probably yes."[26]

According to Isaiah 61:1-2 and its re-enactment in Luke 4:18-19 the mission of Jesus Christ was "to set at liberty all those who are being oppressed," the most important among other tasks. In the vision of William Blake, Christ must have been happy and smiled to see the tiger, because for himself always, "the tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction."[27] This is perfectly in tune with Blake's

attitude toward human experience which resulted in "the conviction that only by the clash of contraries which an outrageous statement generates can truth be adequately expressed."[28]

If we are reading the poem in the above sense, the last stanza poses a problem to be answered. If Blake had resolved the mystery, then why should he reiterate the first stanza? In this repeated stanza the fourth line's 'could' is changed to 'Dare' in the present tense. Thus the last line "Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?" seems to be a hard nut to crack. In the whole poem Blake is using the word 'dare' in the present tense (L1. 7,8,16 and 24) whereas all other finite verbs are in the past tense. Normally these lines should have been evoking the sense of "might dare" or "will dare" by the word "dare". If that be the case, in order to accommodate this stanza in the framework of the aforementioned analysis and interpretation, I am inclined to think that the creation of the 'tygers of wrath' is not to be seen as a 'once-for-all-finished' act. It must be an ongoing process, and men of Imagination are invited to create "tygers of Wrath" in order to liberate and lead the oppressed to the higher Innocence, the third stage. Blake is probably asking the men of Imagination, "who will dare to frame the tiger's symmetry constantly and keep it burning in the forests of night, i.e., in this corrupt world?".

Nelson Hilton has highlighted that just as the lamb and the tiger have one common creator, so also.

Blake is the maker of "The Lamb" and the poet of "The Tyger." The lines present - as does the poem - a scene of writing; of framing; of creation which is the passage from imagination to text, from Blake's Eternity' into time, and so practically done that through its thirteen 'words' we assume that creation."[29]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This modern translation from original German text of Robinson, is reproduced in G.E. Bentley, Jr. ed., *William Blake: The Critical Heritage* (London; Routledge & Kegan Paul 1975), p. 163.

2. John Sampson, *The Poetical Works of William Blake* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), pp. 108-115.

3. Ibid, p. 115.

4. Morton D. Paley in a very lengthy footnote gives a detailed enumeration of the stand taken by critics down through the years towards this poem in *Energy and the Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 39-40.

5. Facsimile reprint Oxford, 1967, in the original size, with an introduction and commentary by G. Keynes, Oxford University Press, 1985.

6. *Blake and Tradition*, II, (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 4.

7. *The Illuminated Blake* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.84.

8. Idem

9. *The Visionary Eye; Essays in the Arts, Literature, and Science* (Cambridge, Massachussetts, and London: The MIT Press, 1978),p. 106.

10. *Blake's Human Form Divine*, (California: California University Press, 1974), p. 65.

11. Ibid., p.110.

12. Ibid., p.66n25.

13. *Blake and Tradition*, II,3-31.

14. *Blake and Tradition*, II,31.

15. This essay first appeared in *P.M.L.A.*, 83 (1966). Later it was reprinted in Morton D.Paley, *Energy and the Imagination*, pp.30-61.

16. *Energy and the Imagination*, p.41. Stewart Crehan has tried to explain that Tyger is a symbol used by Blake for the 'Tygerish Multitude' of French Revolution, or for the 'Democratic Revolution' itself. But when it comes to the crucial question of lines 19 and 20 he seems to evade it. See "Blake's Tyger and the Tygerish Multitude", in *Blake in Context* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan & U.S.A. & Canada: Humanities Press, 1984), pp.123-137; see especially p.135.

17. *Energy and the Imagination*, p.42.

18. S. Forster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), p.278.

19. It must be noted here that Blake's text does not have the punctuation. Exclamatory marks are provided by Keynes.

20. Blake wrote two versions of Night the Seventh. The above passage is from the probable first version. See G.

Keynes, Blake: *Complete Writings with Variant Readings*, (1957; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.320.

21. *Energy and the Imagination*, p.47.

22. Ibid., p.48.

23. *Blake's Human Form Divine*, p.66.

24. All the four Gospels recorded this incident unlike many other events in the life of Jesus Christ. See Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-16. The most vivid description is given in John 2:13-16 where Jesus uses a whip of cords.

25. C. Gallant, *Blake and the Assimilation of Chaos* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), p.45n.

26. Martin K. Nurmi, *William Blake* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1975), p.66.

27. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, (Facsimile rpt., London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), plate 9:5.

28. Margaret L. Wiley, *Creative Sceptic* (1966; Indian rpt. Calcutta: Scientific Book Agency, 1969), p.116.

29. Spears, Spheres, and Spiritual Tears: Blake's Poetry as 'The Tyger', II, 17-20", *Philological Quarterly*, 59, 4 (1980), 529.

Post Graduate Department of English
St. Thomas' College, Trichur - 680001
Kerala, India

THE ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES
(BI-ANNUAL)

Statement under Section 19-D Sub-section (b) of the Press and Registration of Books Acts read with Rule 8 of the Registration of Newspapers (Central Rules) 1965.

1.	Place of Publication	:	Aligarh
2.	Period of Publication	:	Bi-annual
3.	Printer	:	Aligarh Muslim University Press
4.	Publisher	:	S. Wiqar Husain
5.	Editor	:	S. Wiqar Husain
	Nationality	:	Indian
	Address		Department of English Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh
6.	Owner	:	Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh

7. I, S. Wiqar Husain, declare that the above-mentioned particulars are correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

S. Wiqar Husain
Publisher

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS BY
MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY

S.M. Rizwan Husain
- Contrastive Syntax

Iqbal Hasan
- Robert Bridges: A Critical Study

Iqbal A. Ansari
- Uses of English

Santosh Nath
- Treatment of Greek Mythology in the Poems of Tennyson

Farhat Ullah Khan
- ESP, Vocabulary and Medical Discourse

Sohail Ahsan
- Divine Dispensation in King Lear

A.R. Kidwai
- Targets of Satire in Lord Byron's *Don Juan*
- Orientalism in Lord Byron's "Turkish Tales"
- The Crescent and the Cross

Najma Mahmood Shaharyar
- Virginia Woolf's Concept of Perfect Man-An Exploration in Comparative Literature
- From the Circle to the Centre-- A Critical Miscellany

Asif Shuja
- Urdu-English Phonetics and Phonology
- A Course of Spoken English
- Noun Phrase Structure of English Urdu

Seemin Hasan
- Voice of Feeling–Myth and Mythology in Keats's Major Poems

Kausar Husain
- Translation and Mother Tongue in Language Teaching

Attia Abid
- The Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald

Basit Husain
- James Thomson: Concept of Nature in "The Seasons'

Renate Sarma
- Die Romane R.K. Narayans: die Thematik und ihre Darstellung