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CONTENTS

BOOK REVIEWS

Edward H. Strauch

GENRE: KIND, FORM OR MODULATION?

The best known modern defence of the three super-genres —the epic, the lyric and the drama— in German has been made by Emil Staiger, whose *Grundbegriffe der Poetik* is dedicated to the characterization of the three 'basic concepts'. In this work the three are described not so much as literary categories as fundamental possibilities of human existence[1]. Staiger makes clear that each imaginative work participates in various degrees in all genres[2]. In his description of lyrical poetry he refines his flexible notion of genre.

> A lyrical poem is not simply lyrical. In various grades and ways it participates in all genre ideas and only a preponderance of lyrical quality determines us to call the verse lyrical.[3]

Hence considerable change or modification may occur within a genre. In the larger kinds, as in narrative literature, shifts may take place from the lyrical to the epic to the dramatic. A work of literature may be the more perfect, the less it corresponds to the ideal of 'purity of genres'; and the more it achieves an interpenetration of genres.[4]

Wolfgang Kayser in his *Das Sprachliche Kunstwerk* also considers the genre concept to present difficulties. 'What is traditionally called genre is not at all homogeneous'.[5] 'All 'genres' are designations for groups, but one sees at a first glance that the principles of grouping are of a very different nature. Now they are taken from outward form...now they are taken from content[6]. In spite of the ingenious argument for a 'biology' of genres, best exemplified in Ferdinand Brunetiere, 'the concepts of genre empited themselves of meaning'.[7] The main opposition to the hierarchy of the genres came from Benedetto Croce, who refused to accord them any importance.

> Croce condemns 'any attempt at an aethetic classification of the arts as absurd' and thus a *fortiori* rejects all distinction between genres or types.[8]

However, Kayser concludes his historical survey with the observation that Croce's extreme rejection of the concept provoked a reaction, and the situation around 1950 was marked by a strong revival of interest:

> The problem of genres... this perhaps oldest problem of the science of literature, has moved, so to speak, into the center of scholarly interest... To be sure, there manifests itself an almost bewildering wealth of disparate opinions.[9]

If we turn to contemporary scholars, we may take Herbert Seidler as a first representative. He accepts lyrical, dramatic, and epic as 'enduring poetic possibilities'. On the foundation of this loose system, we see the poetic forms analyzed today[10]'. Seidler does not admit that the subject matter helps to determine a genre; such determination would leave a genre 'without limit and artistically insignificant'[11]. Seidler also tells us that pure forms seldom exist, that genres are not something immutable, that they have fluctuated with historical situations. They are no more than vectors, which combine in concrete works in multiple ways. Generic tendencies evolve ever new combinations out of anterior possibilities[12]. Seidler believes that it is the fluid relationships between kinds that make possible the modifications from one genre to another[13].

Thus Seidler has stressed the features which dissolve the rigid structure of kinds and has made us aware of mixed genres, of transitional genres, of evolving genres, all of which approach my own view that the reader experiences literature as a modality.

A similar viewpoint is held by E. Lammert, who considers Staiger's concepts 'epic', 'dramatic', and 'lyric' as indicating timeless qualities of style. Indeed, these concepts do not denote concrete groups of works but rather typical possibilities of expression in a literary work[14]. In Lammert's vision, the novel is a modulation between continuous foreshadowing *(Vorausdeutungen)* and reminiscing *(Ruckwendungen)*[15].

F. K. Stanzel, too, is outspoken against classification by content matter:

> All typological organization according to *Stoff*, themes, characters, areas of reality must be excluded. Novels of war, of adventure, of the sea, *Entwicklungsromane*, novels of generations, detective novels designate groups that are determined essentially by content, materials which are historical, and which do not exhibit the historical constant which types must have in our sense of the term.[15]

And in discussing his own types, the typical narrative situations, Stanzel admits broad areas of transition, of mixed forms or 'inflected' forms among the types.[17]

We find the same awareness of mixed and transitional genres among French investigators. For H. Bonnet 'there exist veritable intermediary genres situated half-way between pure novel and pure poetry. From every novel there emanates a poetic atmosphere, and the novelist habitually seeks the tragic, the dramatic, the pathetic, the cosmic'.[18] The novel is indeed not a genre, but it is a composite of several genres.[19] And 'narrative poetry' contains all genres, as a mixture, not as a synthesis'.[20]

While Bonnet sees mixed elements in the genres, Alberes calls our attention to their evolutionary character. For Alberes the novel in 1950 was the expression of a metaphysic and an ethic, whereas by 1966 it defined a manner of feeling, or an aesthetic, or a phenomenology.[21] Yet Alberes cites Aldous Huxley's *Point Counterpoint* of 1928 as a forerunner of this new, polyphonic novel. There each character's problem resembles that of the others. The motifs of diverse personages intersect, unfold, and complement each other as in a fugue or musical counterpoint.[22] A similar musical analogy is drawn by P. Boisdeffre when he discusses the work of M. Butor: 'From one end to the other, language is treated as musical materials, at the interior of which themes and variations unfold'.[23] These critics see imaginative writing as modulations upon a kind of melodic direction.

To illustrate the divergent current trends in genre theory, let us take one French and one Germah spokesman. Robert

Champigny has devoted three volumes to the definition of three genres. In *Le Genre Romanesque* he looks for a definition which should isolate a 'simple element'.[24] What is thus isolated is 'the pure novel.' The definition is followed by a section on non-novelistic elements, and the Prologue ends with a graphic simile: 'While the 'pure novel' would consist only of the simple 'novelistic' metal, the *novel* may also be an alloy, provided the other ingredients form an aesthetically viable alloy'.[25] In *Le Genre Poetiqe*, Monsieur Champigny aims at a *'poesie pure'*, because poetry is 'the genre which carries farthest the aesthetic conversion of language'[26]. But even here Champigny is tolerant. 'The modalities of the field of presence emphasize that there is an infinite plurality, not only of quality elements, but also of compositions, that is, of possible worlds.'[27] In *Le Genre Dramatique* Monsieur Champigny, who is a purist when isolating the essentials of the three great kinds, is a sceptic when it comes to distinguishing secondary genres; he does not see anything but confusion between (modern) comedy, drama, and tragedy.[28] He barely admits an admixture of poetry and drama,[29] of drama and novel.[30]

If this most independent and original French scholar represents the neatest adherence to distinctions, we may take the German 'Fischer Lexikon,' *Literatur*, 1965, as representative of the 'oecumenical' trend.[31] There G. Priesemann treats the topic of *Gottungen:*

> What constitutsa created genre is the object of contradictory opinions... In every definition of a genre there is need of ever growing differentiation ...The theory of genres must admit borderline cases, transitions, and transgressions.[32]
>
> The survey shows that no single classification principle is satisfactory... A scheme which would comprehend all possibilities remains so far, and perhaps for good, wishful thinking. This clearly confirms the fact that every classification is crude and arbitrary compared to the reality. From the viewpoint of the work all schemes are unsatisfying. The work retains its individual life, its infinite nuances.[33]

Hence, from a juxtaposition of conflicting views of genre, one is led to conclude along with G. N. G. Orsini, ' ...the field is

littered with the ruins of past definitions which have convinced no one save their author...'[34]

Perhaps Northrop Frye's argument against the purist credo may lead us to a more subtle and total interpretation of the literary work.

> 'Pure' examples of either form (romance or novel) are never found; there is hardly any modern romance that could not be made out to be a novel, and vice versa. The forms of prose fiction are mixed, like racial strains in the human being, not separable like the sexes.[35]

Frye's point is akin to the scientific understanding of form in nature, which must surely have a direct bearing on our literary concept of genre. Herbert J. Muller states that the 'systematists among the biologists'... misesd the most revolutionary implications of Darwin's theory, which undermined Aristotle's scheme of fixed objects, fixed categories, and fixed ends. It emphasized process rather than the forms the life process happened to take, and 'natural selection' suggests that these forms were not given in advance'.[36]

Modern biological knowledge of form in nature opposes the abstract notion of genre we have from antiquity (viz., from Aristotle's philosophy), and this opposition requires us to take a historical view of the concept.

Jean Pucelle's *Le Temps* points out that in Western civilization two basic outlooks governed man's view of things. Hellenism gave us a philosophy of essences whereas Judaism gave us a philosophy of progress, contingency, and history. Inspired by Aristotle, scholasticism visualized the world as basically static and thought in terms of qualities and genres. Henri Bergson in *The Creative Evolution* stated that, during the Renaissance; *laws* as the expression of mathematical functions became substituted for genres, thus permitting the descriptive translation of the curve of all phases of a process. In addition, Pucelle tells us that the 18th century sketched in evolutionary theories, which were gradually to supersede the rigid fixity of species.[37]

These historical, mathematical and biological facts justify posing two fundamental questions:

(1) Is genre a physical object or mechanism to be dismantled into its workable parts, or does genre embody organic life processes which ought to be investigated and described as such? (2) Are purist notions of genre due to a culture or concept lag, as Bergson implies? For instance, some neo-classicists (e.g., the French) argued for 'pure' genres, even though the Renaissance had already begun the search for the laws which function in and through living forms. (On the other hand, Dryden and those who defended English drama did so out of a sense of the greater flexibility and freedom attained by 'mixed drama' in which comedy and tragedy functioned together to achieve a greater life-likeness in its variety).

At this point, I wish to propose a system of investigation which can adequately describe what functions in imaginative writing to bring about the human experience we call literature.

It is my belief that all literary 'forms' are governed by moods and states of mind which reflect modes of apperception basic to man. It is these modes that determine how we experience a poem or story rather than the genre form that decides what we experience.

These modes are shown in language. If it is true as Roman Ingarden has said that the meaningful unit of language is the sentence and not the word,[38] we ought to bear in mind that a sentence defines a state of being, an action or the like. This simple fact permits us to make a generalization. It is highly probable that all sentences and therefore *all communication in language is expressed in either the indicative or subjunctive mode of apperception.*[39]

Grammatically the term *subjunctive* means that mode of a verb which represents a state or act as possible, doubtful, desirable, contingent, etc. The mode is used to describe a degree of emotion or feeling. As I would have the word used for the study of the human experience in literature, the subjunctive may be applied to all states, conditions, and actions which express or evoke an affective mood or state of mind. Everything in a story, poem, or drama which stirs the reader's anticipations, joys, sorrows, anguish or ecstasy participates in

and evokes the subjunctive that is potential and operative in 'genre'.

Grammatically the term *indicative* means that mode of a verb which represents a state or act as a so-called 'objective' fact. The mode is used to make disinterested descriptions of places, persons, or events. It represents an extremely low degree of feeling or emotion. The term may, therefore, be applied to all actions and conditions in a linguistic communication which represent the noetic attitude. The indicative mode may be an 'impersonal' style as in Flaubert or Stendhal. Or the indicative may be called forth by all sorts of comparisons among characters, and their situations, by patterns of plot, description, character, and metaphor because such comparisons divulge the overall design of the 'genre'.[40]

Lest the reader think this distinction between the indicative and subjunctive functions of language (and genre) be a spurious one, let me remind him of what he knows well: language embraces a 'denotative' or 'scientific' aspect as well as a 'connotative' or emotive side. These aspects suggest there are at least two kinds of truth: the scientific and emotive. However, a third kind of truth is revealed in everyday reasoning. That third kind is contained in the special logic of the if-clause. 'If this be true, then this is also true.' What this reasoning represents is *conditional truth*. By the fact that we are dealing with a conditional world in any genre, we come to understand the practical use of the terms *indicative* and *subjunctive*.

In so far as conditional truth shows causal relations (if-then), it is indicative. In so far as that conditional world embodies and expresses feelings, doubts, and desires, it is subjunctive. In so far as this emotive truth is secured coherently in the conditional, it is indicative. Furthermore, in being ultimately grounded in universal human experience, the conditional is indicative. Hence the conditional world of the genre is indicative in its self-consistency as in its corresponding to actual human perception and to man's common sense.

Just how intimately the subjunctive and indicative modes are interrelated in any genre may perhaps best be illustrated by an analogy. In physics *cohesion* is the force by which

molecules of the same kind are held together. Hence the syntax of a sentence, made up primariy of words expressing empirical or denotative meanings, is properly the *cohesive* link of language. *Adhesion* is the binding force exerted by molecules of unlike substances in contact with each other. Hence we may speak of the adhesion between sentences, i e., of the mood or mode which binds together the elements, sensations or sentiments into a unified atmosphere or style. This properly is the adhesive link of language. Therefore, in imaginative literature we may speak of the *cohesion of syntax* and the *adhesion of mood*.

These understandings permit us to draw two important conclusions. First, the cohesion of sentence, paragraph and genre is expressed and evoked through the indicative mode whereas the adhesion of imaginative writing is communicated through the subjunctive mode. Second, we should always consider these modes as an interdependent subjunctive- indicative modulation. From word to word, from image to image, from sense to significance, this modulation moves through infinite variation toward a finalized entelechy of feeling and form. And this movement which realizes itself through the modulation of meaning acquires the nature of an ineluctable modality.

Thus far I have reviewed the mixed kinds, intermediary stages, transitional types, and evolving forms of genre. After defining the key concepts *subjunctive* and *indicative*, I have spoken of the way cohesion of syntax and the adhesion of mood imply that a subjunctive—indicative modulation exists in a literary work. It is now time to examine *how* genre may be regarded a modulation which evokes distinct modes of human feeling and understanding.

Literature manifests and evokes modulations in at least four distinct ways. The first involves reader identification with the existential experience portrayed. Aristotle maintained that literature must not only show men acting as they might in given situations but also show them acting consistently in predictable, true-to-character ways. Verity in fiction means, then, that the fictional situation and characters must correspond to: 1) what ordinary men have experienced, 2)

what we can experience, 3) what we could experience as a hero in a given moral situation, and 4) what we could experience as this hero in this given moral situation. The four correspondences pass from the most general degree of identification to the most intense degree of identification possible in ones' empathy with a single, pathetic, or tragic individual.

Although this person's admirable qualities may urge us to sympathize with him fully his flaws disrupt our attraction to him and warn us to keep our distance. Flaws which may destroy him could also ruin us. In tragedy not only does dramatic irony serve to keep the spectator at a suspenseful distance from the inexorable onrush of events but also the hero's flaw prevents the spectator from completely identifying with him. In a like manner, the representation of flaw in comedy evokes that distance from the characters which permits us to laugh at them and at their ridiculous situations.

It follows that an imaginative work calls forth degrees of identification and separation. In so far as the literary work excites sympathy for the hero it is successfully subjunctive. In so far as the work hinders complete identification through irony or through the hero's manifestation of a flaw, so far is it indicative because the fiction stimulates us to reason rather than feel.

In broader terms, when we identify with the transcendental powers working in and through the hero, the indicative is evoked when we decipher the form or direction of his life. Yet at the same time, recognition of the transcendental or divine in the individual life calls forth subjunctive awe. By contrast, we are separated from the pattern of a hero's existence when we witness his *hamartia*, *hybris*, or tragic flaw bringing about his destruction. Because the pattern reveals how this individual destiny is separate from the divine, reasonable scheme of things, it forces us to think. Nevertheless, in witnessing the isolation of the tragic figure, we fear to undergo a similar fate. Thus the first modulation that fiction evokes is that of identification with and separation from the destiny described.

Literature calls forth a second pervasive modulation in the

use of metaphor, and irony, whether operating separately or working together.

Metaphor is the most anciently recognized form of comparison. Aristotle pointed out that metaphor showed the resemblance of things seemingly disparate. It is the identification of elements or essence not usually detected in two separate things. It is 'the recognition of congurity', in contrast with the joke which is 'the recognition of incongurity'. What must be borne in mind is that metaphor can be a single comparison as in 'Love is a singing bird' or the underlying poetic unity of an entire work as in an allegory, romance or novel. Hence literature needs to be studied for metaphors which translate: 1) the hero's states of mind, 2) the atmosphere of place, 3) the mood of the narrator's style, or 4) the plot (the hero's adventure, way of life, or experience). Plot may incarnate an archetypal metaphor showing the destiny of a Socrates, Saint Francis of Assisi, Buddha, or Faust. Hence metaphors should be studied individually and as a possible poetic or prophetic substructure.

When metaphor evokes empathy for the hero and his experiences, it tends to be subjunctive. When metaphor assists us to visualize the truth or universal plan of things, it tends to be indicative. Individual metaphors tend to be subjunctive because they translate states of mind. On the other hand, extended metaphors tend to be indicative because, like a melody, they show us the pervasive design of the work.[21] Thus we see that a metaphor alone may be considered a modulation effecting the 'form' the imaginative work takes.

Irony has the contrary function to that of metaphor. Whereas metaphor underlines or calls attention to an identity between two things apparently disparate, irony (viz, the ironic remark) stresses the disparity between two seemingly similar things. Verbal irony literally states one thing to mean figuratively its opposite.

The ironic perception regards life as a mass of incongruities. Irony, therefore, not only applies to a single remark or a single instance but also applies to the succession of ironies which make up the substructure of an entire literary work. For

example, Sophocles' *Oedipus* contains single ironies related to single instances as: Oedipus expecting a different kind of truth from Tiresias, Jocasta's vain attempt to dissuade her husband from continuing the search for the truth, or the messenger's hopeful word about Oedipus's parents. There is the more pervasive irony of Oedipus, the riddle solver, using the same skill to bring about his own doom. Hence there is the irony of words, of moments, and of a fate. Obviously the continual discovery of ironies provokes a continuous modulation of spectator expectations. The tension and disquiet created by partially understosd ironies evoke subjunctive alertness, but this ultimately changes as the pattern of the dominant irony divulges the indicative reality behind the deceptive world of appearances.

We may conclude, then, that both metaphor and irony operate separately to modulate our feelings and understandings, and when both are used together, they effect an even more complex modulation which attracts us to sympathize with the personages and repulses us for fear of becoming the victims they have become.

Another comprehensive modulation in literature is effected by the comparsion and contrast of space. When spatial comparisons are made, when *here and there* are compared, the effect is generally indicative. When Wordsworth extolled the virtues of the 'noble dalesmen', thought to be remote from civilized nations, the poet discovered that the man from the country could have as noble traits as the civilized man in the city. In other words, whatever allows us to see the universal affinities among men, despite differences in place, is basically a spatial comparison.

Spatial contrast occurs when the geography, customs, or physical differences of another country or far away land are described. The mere use of such words ae *l'etranger, der Auslander, der Fremde, foreigner,* or *alien* evoke specific responses which alert the hearer to the spatially or anthropologically different.

Exotic places fill us with awe. The adventures of Odysseus, Dante's journey through hell, Faust's Walpurgis night— all

awaken fear and fascination. All journeys into the foreign and into the unknown arouse our vigilance. In contrast to the familiar, such realms make clear *our* psychic or ethnic differences. Thus when space is compared and contrasted in fiction, we experience a modulation which arouses identification and familiarity or awe, uneasiness and separation.

A further pervasive modulation is effected by the comparison and contrast of time.

A well-known literary device is to compare the present with the past. In Victor Hugo's *Legende des Siecles*, for instance, the past is united to the present by Hugo's belief in the progress of the human race. His comparison of past and present overcomes his doubts about man. The poet enables us to see the grand design of man's evolution toward God.

Another example is Proust's 'symphonic' novel *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. The to-be author Marcel searched for the meaning of those memories which welled up involuntarily in him. At such moments he sensed no separation between past and present, his present and past self, even though those selves reflected widely segregated phases of his life. When Marcel realized they revealed the unity of his life, he found his artistic method and purpose. In this fusion of past and present, he discoverd his true identity and destiny. Just as metaphors see through the disparities of things, so do such temporal comparisons see *through* the disparities of time. By showing Marcel the underlying pattern of life itself, they tend to evoke the indicative.

Literature often makes use of temporal contrasts. As an example of contrast between present and past, Victor Hugo's *Contemplations* offer a poetic dialogue between his today and his yesterday. Such contrasts frequently arouse pathos because what was precious in the past is now lost. In Hugo's case he contemplates life and its griefs (e.g., the drowning of his daughter) to come to an acceptance, to a trust in God's wisdom. Hence a characteristic modulation takes place. After the expression and evocation of grief (the subjunctive mode), the poet comes to acknowlege the omnipotence of the Divinity, and surrendering to that (indicative) Omnipresence, he is freed

from private anguish to discover a higher, if sadder, faith.

Another example is Chateaubriand's *Memoires d'Outre Tombe*, in which the poet confronts his youth and old age. His sense of being lost gradually changes as the poet rediscovers his deepest identity— the eternal Rene. This discovery of (indicative) identity, despite the disparities of time, reassures him. Nevertheless, the search for the lost identity has modulated from abysmal moments of agony to the final, high moments of revelation and destiny.

We come at last to the modulations centred on character, situation and plot. Let us first look at parallel situations which provided the kind of modulation that tends to show events indicatively, that is, as a clear pattern of action and consequently of meaningful experience.

In a story, a character's situation is thrown into relief by the situation of other characters. A play as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* shows such parallels where the situation of Laertes and Fortinbras resembles that of the Prince. Each son is out to avenge his father. Similarly Ophelia and the Queen reveal in what ways 'Frailty, thy name is woman'. The play- within-a play repeats the murder of Hamlet's father and 'catches the conscience of the king'. Thus parallel situations tend both to define concisely the central situatin of the hero and to clarify the overall design of the play.

The comparison of characters also aids in the clarification of patterns of understanding. Characters who are not direct or open antagonists may be considered parallel characters. Obvious parallels in *Hamlet* are Horatio and the Prince. To compare the sons Hamlet, Fortinbras, and Laertes is to discover the nobility and high destiny which the Prince's life will realize. Or again, to compare Polonius, the uncle king, and Hamlet's sire as father figures is to discover the evil that the usurper represents. Such comparisons provide the student with an Indicative insight into an author's method of characterization.

The comparison of plots within a story is similarly revealing. Take the trouble to examine the abortive plot-lines of Fortinbras and Laertes and discover their lack of complexity and lack

of depth of character, which want casts Hamlet's own meaningful story into high relief. To study these various plots is to become conscious of the multiple meanings in Hamlet's story. Similarly, the plot of the usurper king (the story from the uncle's point of view) and of Hamlet's ghostly father might reveal unsuspected religious implications in the play. Thus by comparing plots parallel to the main plot, one discovers that parallels strongly outline the direction and significance of the entire story.

At the level of comparing situation, characters, and plots, it should be evident that these together modulate the reader's experience in very specific ways, which are well worth the scanning.

Patterns of contrast effect a clarity of design otherwise impossible to find through parallels alone. Just as no Aristotelian definition is without *differentiae*, so is no art work structurally or semantically without tensions: near and far, loud and soft, immediate and mediate, vertical and horizontal, straight and curved, smooth and rough, bright and dark,— in short opposites and oppositions which enable us to understand the work. Let us examine, then, how patterns of contrast work in a literary work.

In constrast to the parallel situation in *Hamlet*, there are countersituations. A countersituation is one in which a character is obliged or motivated to act against the central character or against those allied to him. To begin with, two characters may find themselves in parallel situations— Laertes and Hamlet. When Laertes impetuously and blindly acts to avenge his father's death and aims his complaint at the uncle king, he is in a parallel situation to that of Hamlet: that of an avenging son. However, when the king persuades Laertes that Hamlet is Polonius's slayer and when Laertes becomes the instrument of the king's counterplotting, then Laertes finds himself in a countersituation, i.e., in a situation which requires that he counter, defeat, or destroy the hero. When Laertes's situation becomes truly counter to Hamlet's, we experience a sudden upsurge of anxiety for the Prince. When Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern unwittingly do the king's bidding, they represent

another counrersituation. Of course, Polonious personates a countersituation when he mirrors the efforts of the king. Countersituations make the experience more complex, tense, and serious, hence stimulating the subjunctive mode of experience.

Countersituations lead us naturally to consider countercharacters who tend at first to rouse suspense and then to awaken us to the meaning of the story or the embracing design of a literary work. Countercharacters may be distinguished both from parallel characters and from the traditional concept of protagonist– antagonist.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* illustrates the meaning of countercharacters. Those figures who surreptitiously or openly counter the hopes, expectations, or moral purpose of the Prince are countercharacters. In *Hamlet* both men and existence are actively evil against the Prince. Men are malicious, cunning and vicious. Existence is rotten, malignant, and 'out of joint'. Hence the metaphysical anxiefy of the play. Thus as *drama is conscience,* it modulates through subjunctive and indicative modes of mind.

The typical modulation in ancient tragedy is in the sustained evocation of the subjunctive (brought about by our knowledge of the character's internal weakness and by witnessing his futile struggle with fatal forces) until the sublime moment when the archetypal, indicative pattern of the tragic life is perceived. In Aristotelian terms, the change from good fortune to bad would constitute the indicative design of the play whereas the unexpected recognitions and reversals maintain the subjunctive suspense.

Another form of modulation arises essentially from the countermovements *within* characters. Although for the ancients, internal weakness meant a fatal end, that end is brought about not so much by others or by the fates as by the victim's own guilty passions. In a modern play as Goethe's *Faust,* internal weakness can be transcended, and despite human failings, man can still attain psychological or metaphysical salvation. However, this happens only through a great reckoning with conscience.

Thus we see that patterns of contrast help to define the intention of an imaginative experience. The tensions and apprehensions they awaken are mitigated in the finality of the form they find. If such patterns at first evoke the subjunctive, eventually they reveal the indicative design of experience made beautiful.

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38. Roman Ingarden, *Das Literarische Kunstwerk, Dritte durchgesehene Auflage,* (Tubingen: Max Niemayer Verlag, (1965), p. 43
39. The reader may object that I have omitted the imperative mode. While this is true, I do not believe the imperative plays such a dominant role in apperception as do the subjunctive and indicative in imaginative literature.
40. In this connection, the reader may wish to examine my book, *A Philosophy of Literary Criticism, Volume I, Patterns of Comparison,* Exposition Press, N.Y., 1974
41. The nets of Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* becoming the 'nets of doom' is an example.

A A Ansari

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE: AN EXISTENTIAL COMEDY

Framed in an ironic mould and despite the eventual resolution of the dissonancies *The Merchant of Venice* is charged with moments of deep anxiety. The two protagonists—Antonio and Shylock—locked up in a war-like embrace from the start—provide us, in their respective attitudes and responses, with two apparently analogous, though sharply differentiated, patterns of behaviour. The antagonism between them is savage and explicit and seems to be rooted in elemental passions: to Antonio, Shylock is 'like a goodly apple rotten at the heart'[1] and to Shylock, Antonio is 'like a fawning publican'. Antonio is open-handed and self-effacing and his generosity has, perhaps, encouraged to some degree Bassanio's spendthrift habits; their mutual love and friendship seems to be in accord with the Platonic ideal of friendship which was upheld and applauded in the Renaissance age; 'to you Antonio/I owe the most in money and in love', (1,1,130-31)— Bassanio, and 'Then do but say to me what I should do/That in your knowledge may by me be done./And I am prest unto it': (1,1, 158-60) —Antonio. This is borne out by Solanio, who can at least be trusted with accurate reporting, thus: 'Turning his face, he put his hand behind him,/And with affection wondrous sensible/ He wrung Bassanio's hand, and so they parted' (II,viii, 47-49). It is stretching the point too far, merely indulging in wild surmise, I think, to discover in this, as has been suggested, any overtones of homosexuality. Antonio is one who not only feels wearied with life but whose entire mode of existence is shadowed with loneliness and a sense of being self-exiled. He is introduced to us as one who is imbued with the passion for self-sacrifice– offers ungrudgingly to help the Prodigal

Bassanio— reckless, pleasure-loving and debonair as he is— when such help is earnestly solicited and Bassanio's own resources, on account of his extravagance, are sadly depleted to meet a contingency. Though his argosies are at present all gone out to distant seas, yet the trade capitalist Antonio can very well count on the fortune they are likely to bring him and he also commands credibility in the commercial circles of Venice. Normally he looks insulated and withdrawn from the humdrum of life— one who is fed on his own delicious melancholy:

> In sooth I know not why I am so sad,
> It wearies me...
> But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
> What stuff, tis made of, whereof it is born,
> I am to learn : (1, i, 1-5)

This malaise of his clearly registers the impression of boredom and *ennui* and also betrays an ignorance of self which is very characteristic of Antonio. He disavows categorically later, while refuting Salerio, that his anxiety has anything to do with his business enterprises, for it is rooted, in fact, deeply in his psychic make-up. The fact of sadness or 'estrangement' from the Sartrean *ensoi* holds the key for unlocking the secret of Antonio's quaint charm: he insists on it alittle later thus:

> I hold the world but as the world Gratiano,
> A stage, where everyman must play a part,
> And mine a sad one. (1,i, 77-79)

Here his mind seems to be obsessed by the transitory nature of the world, the notion of make-believe involved in play-acting and by the 'boundary' situation with which man in a hostile universe is confronted. Salerio, while talking with Solanio— both of them are irksome and unsavoury characters, though— also confirms the pervasive complexion of Antonio's mind thus:

> I pray thee let us go and find him out
> And quicken his embraced heaviness
> With some delight or other. (II,viii, 51-53)

In a later context, while answering Bassanio's query in respect of Antonio's well-being, he, rather unwittingly, underlines this

fact in this pithy and suggestive way: 'Not sick my lord, unless it be in mind' (III, ii, 233). And, surprisingly enough, this impression persists till the very end, for instance, in Portia's 'Sir, grieve not you,— you are most welcome notwithstanding' (V, i, 239).

In spite of his genuine, though undemonstrating, friendship with Bassanio and his frequent contacts with Gratiano, Antonio is essentially a lonely man, there is no Portia to sweeten the agonized moments of his life and share his burdens which seem to shake his equipoise: 'These griefs and losses have so bated me/That I shall hardly spare a pound of flesh/Tomorrow, to my bloody creditor' (III, iii, 32-34). His inward being, starved of the nourishing springs of intensely emotive life, finds its compensation in friendship— a fact which, as acutely pointed out by Miss Mahood, is paralleled with the relationship of the poet with his friend in Shakespeare's Sonnets.[2] More or less like a protective shield for Bassanio he remains all along a care-worn person and suffers from a sense of alienation. The only thing which sustains him and provides him propelling energy is his benevolence and altruism; his willingness and capability of doing a good turn to Bassanio to whom he is bound with 'hoops of gold' and lending money *gratis* and thus have the consolation of alleviating the distress of others. The latter fact becomes an irritant for Shylock, for it brings his *modus operandum* or style of functioning into disrepute: 'I hate him.../...for that in low simplicity/He lends out money *gratis*, and brings down/The rate of usance here with us in Venice' (I, iii, 37-40).

The action of the play is triggered off by Bassanio's decision to go forth to Belmont for taking the risk of wooing Portia, and Antonio, committed to finance this romantic adventure, is at once pushed to the foreground. The melancholy streak in him, which is well-pronounced, determines the sombre reality of the play as a whole and in a way provides its spiritual setting. He does not evince any spontaneity of response even when the tension generated by the likelihood of the forfeiture of the bond is relaxed. His emotional temperature rises only occasionally as in his jeering and flouting of his professed adversary,

Shylock; he looks down upon him with unconcealed abhorrence and seeks to undermine his human dignity and staying power with unremitting shafts of ridicule. Even when he is driven into a tight corner he does not lose his equanimity of temper though the undertone of irony in his utterance is a fair index of the blistering contempt he feels for Shylock. In spite of his solicitude and over-flowing generosity towards Bassanio there is hardly anything in the play to corroborate that he is on terms of intimacy with any one– not even with the bunch of friends common to Bassanio and himself. He lacks the moral stamina which enables one to face the vicissitudes of life with an unflinching eye, and his death-wish, arising from soul-sickness, of and born of an acute sense of frustration, is brought out thus:

> I am a tainted wether of the flock.
> Meetest for death,— the weakest kind of fruit
> Drops earliest to the ground, and so let me;
> You cannot better be employ'd Bassanio,
> Than to live still and write mine epitaph. (IV i, 114-18)

The awareness of inner corruption and the anguish accompanying it seems to thrust him towards the threshold of death. A later utterance in which boredom reaches the point of saturation and is steeped in despair, approximates to it thus:

> it is still her (Fortune's) use
> To let the wretched man outlive his wealth,
> To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow
> An age of poverty; from which ling 'ring penance
> Of such misery doth she cut me off. (IV,i, 264-68)

It is this pervasive gloom and abiding discontent pertaining to survival in an inimical world which provides the dominant undertone of the play. He is fed up with life because of the increasing load of miseries on him and the uneasiness and annoyance caused by the 'lodg'd hate' and 'loathing' Shylock bears to him. No convivialities are available to distract him, and though not exactly self-centred his universe is nevertheless bounded with narrow horizons: he has no option but to seek sustenance from the realization of limited objectives and concerns. His value-system suffers from a sort of 'lack' or

inadequacy, and this kind of self-engagement has almost always the effect of atrophying one's perceptions.

Shylock– the polar opposite of Antonio— offers a sharp dramatic contrast to him in so far as he is lacking in that humaneness which is the bed-rock of Antonio's personality. For one thing his relationship with Tubal is very much unlike the sense of mutuality and reciprocity shared by Antonio and Bassanio, and this is evidenced by the following bit of dialogue which takes place between the two of them at a crucial point in the play:

Tub. One of them showed me a ring that he had of your daughter for a monkey.

Shy. Out upon her ! thou torturest me Tubal, — it was my turquoise, I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor: I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys. (III, i, 108-113)

Even his own flesh and blood, Jessica, 'asham'd to be my father's child', and alleging 'Our house is hell' (II, iii, 2) rebels against his authority and abandons him with unmitigated callousness: the bitterness of this sense of loss stings him to the quick and pushes him little by little to the verge of desperation. The 'house' invoked so often in Shylock's utterances is the symbol of insularity and imprisonment to which he has been condemned consequent upon the rupture of all personal ties and social commitments. Apparently Shylock looks inflexible and uncompromising, his mind rivetted on the injuries done to him he sees no prospect of achieving an equipoise. In view of the lasting damage caused to his psyche and the raw wounds inflicted on him continuing to fester any possibility of reaching an understanding with the coterie of his adversaries is completely ruled out. He bears an ancient grudge against all Christians in general (something rooted in his racial sensitivity) and against Antonio specifically because his commercial interests have been jeopardised by the latter's innocuous lending practice. To support his hypocritical contention that 'thrift is blessing' he cites the Biblical analogue of the agreement between Jacob and Laban regarding the rearing of the ewes: the speckled ones produced by the use of an ingenious device fell to Jacob's share. Shylock justifies, by inference, the breeding of the metal

and thus turns it into flesh and rationalizes his own nefarious practice by equating the divine and the human mechanism. Also perhaps he is insinuating that there is hardly any difference between the profits accruing from his money- lending practice and the 'venture' of Antonio's sending out his argosies to distant lands and thus earning 'excess' which is after all 'good'. His malice and hatred towards Antonio seems to spring from primitive, animal drives and he sees no harm in making a public demonstration of it. He is, therefore, bent upon exacting the penalty for Antonio's possible failure to pay back the three thousand ducats by the stipulated period of time.

Act I scene iii opens thus:

Shy : Three thousand ducats, well,
Bass : Ay, Sir, for three months.
Shy : For three months, well.
Bass : For the which as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.
Shy : Antonio shall become bound, well. (I, iii, 1-5)

Here the reiteration of the monosyllable 'well' betrays a cool, calculated, grim resolve to catch Antonio 'upon the hip' if he were to stumble, and this sounds almost premonitory. His secret calculus, the details of which he is too cunning to disclose, is boosted up by an uncanny apprehension which is hinted at thus: 'but ships are but boards, sailors but men, there be land-rats, and water-rats, water-thieves and land-thieves,(I mean pirates),and then there is the peril of waters, winds, and rocks: (I, iii, 19-23). As his hatred intensifies and the plan of wreaking vengeance ripens and gets clarified in his mind he becomes impervious to all persuasion, logic or even threat: his mind cannot be dispossessed of what holds it in its strong grip. He refuses to be moved by any sentimental appeal to compassion or charitableness: 'And for my love I pray you wrong me not' (I, iii, 166), addressed to Antonio contains an element of wryness and callous indifference to all softer passions:

I'll have my bond, I will not hear thee speak,
I'll have my bond, and therefore speak no more.
I'll not be made a soft and dull-ey'd fool,

To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield
To Christian intercessors: follow not.—
I'll have no speaking, I will have my bond. (III. iii, 12-17)

He has not only become impercipient but has been reduced to a state of petrifaction: only the haunting cadence of the word 'bond' is dinned into one's ears with nauseating frequency and a nameless horror. He speaks in a tone of finality, the whole utterance being measured and categorical and contains an element of iron in it.

It can hardly be denied that Shylock is a self-tortured soul and he has been forced to develop a permanently nihilistic stance: a pose based upon nothing but a gesture of rejection and annulment. At the back of it lies the aggressively unyielding, malicious and haughtily offensive behaviour of the whole pack of hounds by which he is surrounded on all sides— an attitude which stresses man's inhumanity to man. He is hissed at, ridiculed and insulted for the 'moneys and usances' which he regards as his legitimate due, for to him the breeding of the barren metal is as innocuous as the breeding of the ewes. He has been subjected to such constantly rehearsed vituperations that he has developed a guilty conscience which he tries to cloak behind his flintiness. The fact of his being consistently discriminated against, of his being forcibly removed to the periphery of civilized living, becomes a deposit of his Unconscious and makes his normal responses warped and contorted. The racial prejudice which seems to operate on both sides— the Christians as well as the Jews vie with one another in apathy and intolerance— makes Shylock develop a sort of primeval hatred and revulsion like that of a Heathcliff and makes him repudiate all pieties, graces and decencies of a corporate and sophisticated mode of existence. His obduracy derives, ultimarely, as a chain reaction, from the mockery and ridicule poured upon him by the magnificoes of Venice, especially by Antonio, Bassanio and the whole set of his opponents who pride themselves upon their much-publicized gentleness, urbanity and decorum. His coarsened sensibility and his emotionally twisted nature constitute a blockage in the way

of communication in the absence of which he has been rendered incapable of responsiveness to the good and the beautiful. With the trial scene in the offing, Shylock, in a crucial passage makes, *apropos* of Antonio, a spirited defence of his self-validating view-point thus:

> 'he hath disgrac'd me, and hinder'd me half a million, laugh'd at my losses, mock'd at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies,— and what's his reason?I ama Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is?— If you prick us do we not bleed? if you tickle us do'we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us shall we not revenge? – if we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? revenge? If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example ?—why revenge! (III,i, 48-64)

Though the word 'revenge' has been flaunted repeatedly here—the implicit assumption being that the Jewish retaliation is as good as the Christian assault by which it is motivated-- yet looked at in a wider perspective it is a plea for equality and a sense of human brotherhood, and Shylock's logic seems in its own way irrefragable. He hammers out his points with vigour and pungency, speaks with devastating clear-sightedness and his attacks upon his opponents are lethal and demoralizing. He speaks nevertheless like a man under the sway of controlled passion, with an intentness and dignity of utterance, and yet as one who is brutal and unforgiving. What is also worth noticing is that he makes his points with only the nutritive and sensitive composition of human nature in view and does not bother about the rational soul of man or his angelic substance. With the human relationships become wilted and their sanctity gone he feels alienated not only with the whole Christian community but also with Jessica, Tubal and Launcelot and his identity seems to dissolve in the overwhelming tide of disgust and loathsomeness. His mind thus tends to become empty and opaque and incapable of human interaction. He is the eternal outsider, accursed to live beyond the pale of the charmed

circle. He always has the desolating, agonized feeling of living outside society and suffering from his own sense of negation.

Antonio and Shylock offer two parallel versions of loneliness and the difference between them amounts to this: whereas the former's loneliness is, perhaps, temperamental, that of the latter is the end-product of a continuous process not only of discriminatory treatment of him but also of ostracism to which he is subjected as well as of his desire to cling to his own separate racial identity. For Shylock hatred, revenge and loneliness form a network of complexes out of which he just cannot extricate himself. It is incorrect to hold that Lorenzo's elopement of Jessica is the proximate cause of the pursuit of his plan of revenge, for as confirmed by Jessica herself, Shylock had been harping upon it all along and had vowed himself to it in case he succeeded in ensnaring Antonio. It is intriguing to notice that both Antonio and Shylock claim to be epitomes of patience, respectively, thus: 'I do oppose/My patience to his fury, and am arm'd/To suffer with a quietness of spirit,/The very tyranny and rage of his' (IV,i, 10-13)— Antonio, and 'Still have I brone it with a patient shrug,/For suff'rance is the badge of all our tribe' (I,iii, 104-105)—Shylock. All this seems to be merely a futile exercise in sophistry on the part of both of them; the truth, however, lies in these counter-assertions which are marked with disillusioning forthrightness:

Shy. I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following: but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. (I,iii, 30-33)

—

Ant. I am as like to call thee so again,
To spet on thee again, to spurn thee too,
If thou will lend this money, lend it not
As to thy friends, for when did friendship take
A breed of barren metal of his friend?
But lend it rather to thine enemy,
Who if he break, thou may'st with better face
Eaxact the penalty. (I, iii, 125–132)

The 'bond' becomes for Shylock a sort of fetish round which are gathered together all the destructive impulses which

are embodied in himself. It was observed earlier that Jessica's desertion of Shylock was one of the disturbing factors which precipitated his emotional crisis and threw him into perturbation, and he was perplexed with a sense of dereliction and loneliness. It is also worth pondering that Shylock's frenzied outburst on learning of Jessica's flight with Lornnzo from 'my sober house' as reported by Solanio:

> My daughter ! O my ducats ! O my daughter!
> Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
> Justice, the law, my ducats, and my daughter! (il, viii, 15-17)

is not intended either to evoke pathos for his sense of deprivation or expose him to the agony of the stab of derision: both of these will be tantamount to creating a facile theatrical effect which is far from Shakespeare's dramatic purpose. The coupling of 'O my ducats' and 'O my daughter' does not merely underscore Shylock's ingrained avarice but is also symptomatic of the fact that the wrench from Jessica has given him a jolt at the deepest psychic level. One may add that his apparent hatred of Jessica may as well be regarded as an inverted form of love in a man who is hedged in and baited by a swarm of bitter enemies. This, along with his bruised egotism, contributes in no small measure to his sense of humiliation.

In the beglnning of Act IV, before the trial scene gets going, the suave and sober Duke, discarding all pretence of refinement and finesse characterizes Shylock thus:

> A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch,
> Uncapable of pity, void and empty
> From any dram of mercy (IV, i, 4-6)

This is followed by another vignette of Shylock— done by Antonio, believed to be uniformly benign and superior, and who yet is capable of strong and sudden eruptions of feelings:

> You may as well go stand upon the beach
> And bid the main flood bate his usual height,
> You may as well use question with the wolf,
> Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb:
> You may as well forbid the mountain pines
> To wag their high tops, and to make no noise
> When they are fretten with the gusts of heaven:

You may as well do anything most hard
As seek to soften that—than which what's harder?—
His Jewish heart
(IV,i. 71-80)

Goddard significantly comments on this to the following effect: 'The metaphors reveal his intuition that what he is dealing with is not ordinary human feeling within Shylock but elemental forces from without that have swept in and taken possession of him'.[3] In spite of being preoccupied with straining after effects— every single image reflecting a certain subtlety of contrivance— Antonio's elaborate rhetoric suffers from both flaccidity and mawkishness and in it the descent from the anti-sublime to mere bathos and helplessness is brought out thus: 'You may as well do anything hard.' The pejorative intention is manifest from beginning to end and can hardly be mistaken. The accent of the high-falutin speech cannot altogether cover up the explosion of resentment and exasperation against Shylock, and, surprisingly enough, contradicts the impression of the anguished and level-headed gentleman Antonio is generally reputed to be. Alongside this may also be placed Gratiano's caricature of Shylock, based as it is upon his parodying the Pythagorean view of reincarnation:

Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith,
To hold opinion with Pythagoras,
That souls of animals infuse themselves
Into the trunks of men: thy currish spirit
Govern'd a wolf; who hang'd for human slaughter—
Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,
And whilst thou lay'st in thy unhallow'd dam,
Infus'd itself in thee: for thy desires
Are wolvish, bloody, starv'd, and ravenous. (IV,i, 130-38)

This is downright name-calling in the manner of Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* and bears upon it the stamp of Gratiano's mean-spiritedness. The obsequious Gratiano is not bothered to communicate his sense of consternation through any literary artifice— perhaps because he is just incapable of managing it— but sfraightaway puts his nasty finger upon Shylock's 'currish spirit' and sarcastically designates his desires as 'wolvish', 'bloody', 'starved' and 'ravenous'— a gruesome collocation of adjectives suggesting a sort of fiendishness.

Small wonder, then, that Shylock becomes all the more hardened in his reactions and would not be appeased with anything less than obtaining the coveted pound of flesh. The three well-marked stages in his following the lead of his dark end malevolent impulses or three phases of the crescendo of obduracy may be distinguished thus: 'It is my humour', 'My deeds upon my head', and 'An Oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven!' And when Portia wishes to intercede by saying 'bid me tear the bond', pat comes the reply: 'When it is paid, according to the tenour' (IV, i, 231).

Portia's speech at the trial scene, invoking human compassion on the divine analogy, is a superb and set piece of oration — eloquent, forceful and highly stylized— but is at the same time marked by impotence because it miserably fails in unfreezing Shylock and thus breaking the deadlock. Shylock has grown impervious to all such sentimental appeals. Portia nevertheless plays her game with consummate skill and optimum of shrewdness, first in letting Shylock, irrevocably bent upon literalism, have his own way, with the facade of the law being in his favour, and then, by a clever stratagem, forcing upon him, in the reversed situation, the acceptance of the implementation of nothing less than the letter of the law— literalism, in a new guise. Shylock's obstinafe insistence on literalism, meant to be an agent of destruction, becomes, paradoxically enough, the miraculous means of deliverance for Antonio. Her legal acumen enables Portia to place Antonio's sworn enemy in a quandary and Gratiano, with his lacerating tongue and never-failing opprobrium at his disposal, jumps to the occasion and throws Shylock's earlier exuberant commendation of Portia: 'A Daniel come to judgment' mercilessly back into his own teeth. Whereas Portia undoubtedly emerges from the ordeal of this ritualism as an accomplished performer and a brilliant strategist, Gratiano gloats in the prospect of seeing Shylock lick his own wounds. In that consists Antonio's and his own unanticipated glow of triumph and that also constitutes the source of Shylock's chagrin as well as his tragic dilemma. All Shylock's furtive calculations are thus upset when the literalism he had all along so passionately insisted on is enfor-

ced against him, thus inevitably resulting in his total discomfiture. But despite his dogged pursuit of his quarry, his setting his heart on 'a weight of carrion flesh and his being reviled as an 'inexcerable dog' by the foul-mouthed Gratiano, Shylock does possess a sort of dignity and self-containedness. And had he had the courage and grittiness to face the consequences flowing from the operation of the letter of the law in its fulness — and it would have squared with his own initiai impulse as well– he could attain the near-tragic dimensions of personality. But harrowed, hunted and stigmatised as he is, he tends to lose his nerve and proves himself guilty of a sort of apostasy and is, therefore, 'hoist with his own petard'. It is no less true that a sort of palpabie lack of charity stares one in the face when one contemplates the way in which he is despised and belittled by his opponents– the Antonio-Bassanio-Gratiano axis against which he is pitted– including the Duke, after his annihilation in the court room. And though forgiven for his trespasses, he is made to undergo conversion to Christianity almost under duress which fact brings little credit to his detractors and opponents. They seem to derive a sort of masochistic pleasure from his being trapped and reduced to dust and ashes. No feat of verbal felicity or splendid understatement can match the force and meaningfulness of the laconic 'I am not well' for conveying the impact of the sense of persecution on the shattered and disillusioned Shylock. Will it be too much to claim that like Malvolio, Shylock is deliberately excluded from harmony or grace when almost all the *dramatis personae* aro moving towards it to become co-sharers in an unanticipated upsurge of beneficence? It is only fair to admit that this represents the climactic point of the continuous process of his being excluded from the open sesame by the excluders who were motivated by nothing else except sheer perversity.

Racial discrimination against the Jews, sense of superiority assumed and wantonly paraded by the Christians and the fact of Shylock's unfeeling extortion of money— the use of 'excess' obstructed by Antonio's liberal 'economics of Christian grace': this chain of causalities cannot be called in question.

What is, however, of prime importance is that two diammetrically opposed personality types are produced by this chain, despite their sharing together the common trait of loneliness. It hardly needs stressing that whereas Shylock's behaviour and being are of a piece, in a way unified, a sort of disjunction between the two seems to exist in the case of Antonio— It was pointed aut earlier that Shylock is barred from the experience of grace and harmony by the Christian conclave which is deadly set against him and this fact is brought out in Lorenzo's generalized observation thus:

> Such harmony is in immortal souls,
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it. (V,i, 63.55)

This 'muddy vesture of decay' in which Shylock's 'currish spirit, in Gratiano's servile, animal image, is enclosed cannot hope to penetrate to concord and grace. But Shylock, despite all his infirmities, is possessed of greater breadth and intensity of imaginative life (he has been given more effective lines in the play) than Antonio and even his hatred, as pointed out by Burkhandt, is the 'generosity of hatred',[3] which Antonio is by no means capable of reckoning with: he is also potent in his vindictiveness. At the same time it is true that Shylock is averse to participating in any activity which has a festive or communal complexion: most of the time he is pacing up and down in a barricaded universe of his own creation, and imperceptibly shades off into Duke Orsino or Malvolio of *Twelfth Night*. Very much unlike Orsino, however, we find Shylock, early in the play, warning Jessica against the infernal temptation of 'the drum/and the vile squeaking of the wry-neck'd fife' and this makes us pause awhile. But then 'the drum' and 'the fife' — organs of the sacrilegious music— are those of the Christian masquers, and he is in all probability suspicious of these precisely and preponderately on that account. And when one of these Christians— his own unacknowledged son-in-law, Lorenzo, who surreptitiously flew away with Jessica—idling in Belmont— the Arcadia of the play— speculates with such audacity and cocksureness;

> The man that hath no music in himself
> Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
> Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils,
> The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
> And his affections dark as Erebus: (V,i, 83-88)

is it going beyond permissible limits to hazard the guess that he is rather unwittingly passing a pretty harsh judgment on Shylock, not only by branding his 'affections' dark as Erebus' but by denouncing him as unfit to live anywhere, by implication, except in Erebus? Whatever criteria of judgment we may evolve, and even conceding that he sometimes appears like an unappeased ghost, there is no denying the fact that Shylock is possessed of a sort of consistency and human solidity as opposed to Antonio whose sobriety and sophistication are double-edged.

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Maqbool H. Khan

THE FARE IN *HAMLET*

The usual gesture of wishing away the plethora of commentary and the desire to see *Hamlet* without its film of familiarity, both by now conventional— almost ritualistic— in their reiteration, are nevertheless expressions of real difficulty. One, however, cannot escape the implications of the long history, and the extreme diversity, of critical responses to the play. It is a fascinating study in itself, registering as it does, over a span of centuries, all major shifts in sensibility and taste, highlighting through the partial validity of diverse approaches the Shakespearian apotheosis of improvisation, and thus, perhaps, forcing the critic to recognize the need for an ever-shifting, ever-vigilant focus of response. It is indeed possible to see *Hamlet* in the light of each of its organically-related antinomies of, on the one hand, broad, generalised, poetic effects, and on the other, what might be called the dramatically significant particularities of character and plot. This technical virtuosity on Shakespeare's part— reconciliation of opposites— is less surprising only if compared with the greater paradox at the core of *Hamlet*— the reclamation from the morass of futility and nihilism (as profound as in *Troilus*, or perhaps more so) of the possibilities of tragic experience, the founding of hope on ultimate despair.

Going back for a moment to the question of a valid response, it may be suggested that the note of interrogation in the title of C S Lewis's celebrated lecture, *'Hamlet'— the Prince or the Poem?*, confronts us with a non-existent choice. 'The Prince' is a character rooted in a particular dramatic context specifically related to certain other characters, and in turn that dramatic context itself related to a certain historical situation— validating thus, within limits, Bradleian psychologising and motive—

hunting, as also scholarly explorations of Elizabethan dramatic conventions, ethical codes of revenge and hononr, and popular eschatology. It is noteworthy, however, that the other half of Lewis's pair of contraries does in no way negate the 'dramatic' (in the Bradleian sense) quality of the play. Shakespeare's credibilising art, refining material drawn from Belleferest and the probable ur-*Hamlet*, engaging the audience's attention at the level of intense contemporary significance, cajoling his creative exhuberance into a delighted acceptance of the limitations of theatrical success, was nevertheless at the service of a truly transcendent imagination. Medieval moralities may no doubt be found embedded in the structure of Shakespearian tragedies, but at the same time, Shakespeare was most certainly concerned to engage our sympathies in the *human* destiny of his protagonists. If Hamlet is an infinitely greater Everyman (and there is little doubt that he is Everyman, though a shade less medieval than his prototype) it is because of a certain transluscence in the play's dramatic structure and a peculiar resonance in its language.

The nature of the supernatural and the order of experience to which it relates has always seemed to me to be the most intractable element in the play. To the contemporary audiences this was no doubt its most exciting aspect— if the *Shakespeare Allusion Book* is a safe guide. Most other manifestations of the supernatural in Shakespeare could be explained in either simple poetic (make-believe) or psychological terms. We do not have to go beyond nineteenth century rationalism (with its *penchant* for pre-Freudian psychologising) or nineteenth century poetics (epitomised in Bradley) in order to avoid a sense of discomfort in the presence of the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Ghost in *Julius Caesar* or the Witches in *Macbeth*. The Ghost in *Hamlet*, though never without its theatrical excitement, requires a different line of approach. That his origins lie in a popular dramatic convention or in popular beliefs is entirely irrelevant to our purpose. What really matters is, first of all, what Coleridge thought to be Shakespeare's technique in making him credible, and next, more importantly, the reverberating context of his appearance.

It is remarkable how a play that bears even on its surface unmistakable marks of Renaissance scepticism, and which at a profounder level brings the larger uncertainties of life into sharp focus should seek to establish in its opening scene a link with the world beyond. It is not necessary to lay stress on the elements of mystery, puzzlement and of soul-sickness as they have already received ample critical attention. What might perhaps be found interesting is the way a sense of evil is juxtaposed, or rather mediated, through an ambiguous and puzzling supernatural context. The emblematic significance of the battlements, enveloping the seemingly secure grandeur and sophistication of the court at Elsinore, is suggested to us not only by awed references to 'this thing' and 'this dreaded sight' but also by its proximity to the non-human universe:

> Last night of all,
> When yon same star that's westward from the pole
> Had made his course t'illume that part of heaven
> Where now it burns...

They look forward to the end, to the high stage on which the dead body of Hamlet would be ordered to be placed by Fortinbras. The end is in the beginning, but, to anticipate ourselves a little, it is not exactly like the beginning: mortality has been accepted and, though still mysterious, has yet clarified the act of living.

To go back to the ambiguity of the beyond. It is not Hamlet alone who, on his first encounter with the Ghost, is puzzled by its 'questionable shape[1]:

> So horridly to shake our disposition
> With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls

Earlier, in the opening scene, we have already had some rather odd juxtaposition of a sense of 'strange erruption' with poetic evocations of the 'season... wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated', followed immediately by 'the morn in russet mantle clad/Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill.' The image of the morning in terms of an early-rising farmer may have been dictated by the need for the relaxation of dramatic tension but the earlier mention of 'this bird of dawning' is certainly

intended to deepen, by contrast, that consciousness of evil with which the Ghost's appearance is associated, and which had come to the surface with Francisco's

> For this relief much thanks, 'tis bitter cold,
> And I am sick at heart.

In order to avoid confusion it is better to suggest what is not being sought to be established in this analysis. The suggestion that the supernatural is poetically *associated* with evil, or that it provides a medium through which a sense of evil initially and powerfully suffuses the dramatic fabric, is not the same as to say that the Ghost is an *agency* of evil, infecting Hamlet's mind with a corrosive sense of mortality and ultimatetly leading, as Wilson Kinght would have it, to the death of a very 'normal' Claudius. Nor is the suggestion about the ambiguity with regard to the eschatological status of the Ghost tantamount to saying that it is the source of Hamlet's procrastination since he needs confirmation of the truth revealed by the Ghost. Such a view would be fallacious since it would seem to lay a very literal and rather unpoetic stress on Hamlet's 'Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damned.' This is not to deny that the issue did have a contemporary significance lost to us, but the significance was only peripheral in that it illustrates how great art always uses popular ideas and theories as mere scaffoldings for poetic structures.

What the evocation of the supernatural (the stress is, it may be noted, not merely on the Ghost as one of the *dramatis personae*, but on the whole atmosphere evoked in the opening scene and reinforced in Act 1, Scenes 4 and 5) achieves is to lend a sense of urgency and authenticity to the play's central concern— exploration of the possibilities of action, and thus of hope, in a morass of despair. The Ghost, a focal point for all that lies beyond (and beneath? – 'well said, old mole: canst work i'th 'earth so fast') human life, is indeed a mote 'to trouble the mind's eye.' Shakespeare perhaps encourages us to have an open-ended, non-conclusive view of his nature so far as it relates to the 'secrets' of 'the undiscovered country, from whose bourne/No traveller returns':

> But that I am forbid
> To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
> I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
> Would harrow up thy soul...
> But this eternal blazon must not be
> To ears of flesh and blood.

The 'eternal blazon' (which does not refer merely to purgatorial fires) must not be since Shakespeare wants his protagonist to grope his way through ethical mazes unaided by ready-made hopes. We should not expect to get from the Ghost what it is in no position to give. What he can and does give is nothing but an authentic vision of libidinal horror. We will return to it in a moment, but first let us stress a peculiar set of reverberations in the Council scene.

The resonant silence of Hamlet in his inky cloak is a disturbing element in the routine proceedings of the court, highlighted by the socially 'correct' and 'definable' role-playing by Laertes. The stress, non-verbally formulated by the mere presence of Hamlet, has so far been on what is 'usual'. 'Common' and 'particular' indeed seem to be a stronger pair of contraries than 'seeming' and 'being', or rather would, assimilating the latter into a deeper unity, indicate a more significant area of the play's embodied experience. We cannot, incidentally, do justice to the peculiar force of the Queen's

> Thou know'st 'tis common, all that lives must die,
> Passing through nature to eternity.

in terms of character analysis alone. The idea is commonplace enough but its formulation in terms of Polonius's 'sentences' would have been more in character. The strange haunting quality, in spite of Hamlet's sardonic underlining, 'Ay, madam, it is common,' raises it above its immediate context, and strengthened by Cladius'

> a will most incorrect to heaven,
> A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
> An understanding simple and unschooled.

it reverberates through Hamlet's major soliloquies, and finally merges with the Grave-diggers' whispers of mortality. Gertru-

de's question 'If it be,/ Why seems it so particular with thee;— ignoring for the moment the irony of 'seems', and using a kind of critical short-hand— links up with 'thinking too preciesly on the event', with Hamlet's half-conscious formulation of his dilemma in terms of the duality of 'king of infinite space' and 'bounded in a nutshell', and finally with his authenticating, affirming choice in 'Readiness is all.'

The nobility of Hamlet's mind can be brought into question only at the risk of imperilling the validity of critical judgment. Nobility is, however, not the same as 'percipience', though in the ultimate anlaysis, both can be seen to spring from a clarity of moral vision. Nobility of mind is a certain disinterestedness in relation to the outside world— both physical and human— the ability to transcend the limitations of the self not necessarily in terms of self-effacement but as self-enlargement. Hamlet has this nobility in abundance. There is, however, a peculiar Renaissance edge to this basic generosity of mind which it is difficult to believe it could have acquired in any other age except its own. A few centuries earlier, confident of its metaphysical moorings, it would have been more intellectually conscious of, but emotionally less sensitive to, evil. About a hundred years later it would have similarly lost its taut tragic poise, and, instead, found ifself wallowing among Swiftian Yahoos, overwhelmed, though not quite, by the sense of its own irrationality. The mind of Hamlet, quite obviously, is that of a Renaissance humanist. It is not for nothing that there is so much talk of 'going back to school in Wittenberg' and 'Enter Hamlet reading on a book', and 'What do you read, my lord?'. Hamlet's learning, moreover, seems to be up-to-date and though perhaps inadequate for purposes of exegetical work on the classics, is sensitively upto the mark in popular Elizabethan psychology ('blessed are those/Whose blood and judgment are so comedled/That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger/To sound what stop she please'), Renaissance dramaturgy (that 'mirror upto nature' comes close to Sidney's *Apologie* is suggested by Hamlet's words in the Closet scene: 'it will but skin and film the *ulcerous* place') and what might be called 'philosophical anthropology' ('What a piece of work is a

man...)'. Hamlet's understanding of music is next only to his regard for the Renaissance code of honour and friendship. His appreciation of the plastic arts has the same sense of human grandeur sensuously apprehended as inspired the great Italian painters of high Renaissance:

> See what a grace was seated on this brow...
> Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
> An eye like Mars to threaten and command,
> A station like the herald Mercury,
> New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill...

The force of all this evidence inclines one to think that the *donnee* in *Hamlet*, that is what Shakespeare himself assumed with his audience, was a passionate commitment to, and not merely 'faith' in the Hyperion image of man.

The stress on the nobility of Hamlet's mind and his optimistic faith is not intended to reduce the play's complexities to a simple juxtaposition implied in 'Hyperion to a satyr'. The overwhelming sense of corruption and evil strangely erupting from beneath the surface of common appearances, rudely upsetting a youthful idealist's scheme of values, causing 'accidental judgments' and finally leading to many 'carnal, bloody and unnatural acts'— substance indeed for many trage dies—is however subsumed under a greater synthesis. Hamlet's consciousness mirrors the universe around him. There is little doubt that upto an extent we are asked to let ourselves be overwhelmed by that which overwhelms Hamlet— to see things as he sees them, or as the Ghost has presented them to him. We are asked to sympathise with, if not to share, Hamlet's world weariness in his first soliloquy, the ferocious exposure of his mother's sensuality in the Closet scene, and to see the point at least of his savage treatment of Ophelia in the 'Nunnery' and 'Play' scenes. All this, however, does not preclude a subtler attempt to focus attention on the mirror itself along with the image being reflected in it. The ethical and intellectual contents of Hamlet's consciousness—all his metaphysical and moral perplexities— elicit sympathy, stand in significant relation to Shakespeare's contemporary ethos, have a universal

dimension, but at a deeper dramatic level, it is not the contents of his consciousness but the attitudes underlying them and expressed through action or inaction that have also been brought to light. Brutus's was a similar case—what makes him so interesting is not the tragedy of a larger than life idealism but rather the uncertain ground of that idealism.

The Ghost's insistent injunction, 'Remember me', and Hamlet's ominous, self-destructive and violent acceptance of the duty laid on him:

> Yea, from the table of my memory
> I'll wipe away all trivial fond records ..
> And thy commandment all alone shall iive
> Within the book and volume of my brain,
> Unmixed with baser matter...

have a width of scope (in poetic terms) which, mingling easily with the general tenor of Hamlet's soliloquies, preclude all possibilities of meaningful action. Hamlet has a predilection for being—but not predicatively. The only predicate for being acceptable to him is being everything— an infinity of roles, a succession of emotional states. He craves for freedom while the essence of freedom is in choice, in self-definition, which he is reluctant to make. The alternative is non-being, and that is the starting-point of his greatest soliloquy. 'The change' in him, the gradual though implicit recognition of his own impercipience, has been accomplished, so to say, 'off-stage:' it is not perhaps necessary to locate the exact moment. Hamlet's behaviour on the night before the encounter with the pirates, leading to the recognition of the value of an instinctive, rash response to a specific situation—an element already present in Hamlet's disposition— is perhaps the moment of truth in Hamlet's career:

> Sir in my heart there was a kind of fighting
> That would not let me sleep — methought I lay
> Worse than the mutines in the bilbees. Rashly,
> And praised be rashness for it... let us know
> Our indiscretion sometime serves ue well
> When our deep plots do pall, and that should learn us
> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will.

There is a deeper pessimism and irony and, paradoxically, profounder grounds for hope involved in 'the divinity that shapes our ends' and in 'there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow' than perhaps in some of the bleaker statements of *Lear*. 'Praised be rashness', indeed, since it commits us only to our choice and not to its possible consequences which may include the death of a Polonius as much as that of a Claudius. 'Readiness is all'— and as the God Krishna said to the warrior Arjuna 'as when he admonished (him)/On the field of battle./Not fare well, But fare forward, voyagers.' *(The Dry Salvages)*.

Tha two Hamlets – the Hamlet surrounded by negation and despair and the Hamlet whose surrender to despair is viewed ironically— are fused within each other in concentric circles, intensifying doubt. leading 'to the dreadful summit of the cliff/ That beetle e'er his base into the sea', and finally emerging into tragic affirmation of dignity merely through a passionate rejection of 'bestial oblivion' as human destiny.

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NOTE

1. Of all the plays of Shakespeare it is in *Hamlet* thát one strongly suspects the presence of a dramatic sub-text. Polonius, no doubt, is ridiculous, pompous and 'sententious'— a Johnsonian—Prufrockian mix-up— if we go by the words alone. Such a view, however, pushes us unwittingly towards one of the three 'unsympathetic' Hamlets: a palimpsest view of the text (J.M. Robertson), an ambitious, egotistical and frustrated Prince (Count Madariaga), a revenger contaminated by what he contemplates (Prosser). All such views ignore one of the basic tensions in the play, evoked poetically, between idealistic commitment and *reàlpolitik*. The realisation that humanistic idealism is a rare Apollonian dream and that *realpolitik* is as pervasive as life itself is a moment of truth for Hamlet. A sub-textual, more sinister

Polonius wilfully adding his mite to the claustrophobic effect of Denmark, though superficially playing his role of a relatively harmless, rather cynical but willing instrument of King would perhaps be closer to Shakespeare's intention in this most political of his plays. It is not for nothing that it is Polonius who brings the news about the players to Hamlet. Did he not recognize in them poor imitators of his own art?

Z A Usmani

KING LEAR : *NOTHING AND THE THING ITSELF*

King Lear is a dramatic exploration of the tragedy of the infinitude of man's desires and the most painfully reductive possibilities of his finite existence in a finite world which would deny these desires — by answering them with nothing, but not without serving to affirm the potentialities, the irreducible humanity, of the human self, which exposes itself to the world as *the thing itself*. Thus, though there is no straight line of progression, the intensities of the play are delivered through the interdependent movementa of reduction and revaluation. Let us say, through a two-fold movement of reduction-revaluation. For the movement from *all* to *nothing* is inseparably involved with the movement towards *the thing itself*. The most significant and archetypal symbol of this human self is King Lear himself, who becomes from the King he was to 'every inch a King' in a purely human sense — and this is one important reason why the play is entitled, not merely 'Lear', but *King Lear*. It is not that the meaning of the play is synonymous with the experience of Lear (we always know more than he, or for that matter any character, does). It is that it is synonymous with our (reading cum theatrical) experience of the mutually defining experiences of Lear and of other characters, as they *see*, and respond to, their world.

In our experience of the play we discover the mimetic image of a universe that seems ultimately to 'wear out to nought' (IV. vi. 137) in terms of human meaning. In this universe life can realize itself only by preying upon itself. In terms of this realization, or again in terms of human meaning nothing seems to be the ultimate possibility of everything. It is because the universe, which includes, and is included by, the human self,

is finite in all its configuratioas, so as to offer only conflicting possibilities to the human self whenever it seeks to act upon it (physically or mentally) to satisfy some desire for meaning, or for what each protagonist sees, according to his own lights, as 'justice.' If the universe is augmented by man, who seeks to impose his meaning upon it, in one dimension, then in another dimension it reduces itself and him too; allows itself, as it were, to be nibbled and ultimately swallowed up by some Black Hole. This is its 'promised end', in terms of human meaning. In such a universe, as S L Goldberg points out, man's deepest vulnerability lies, not in the meagre frailty of his body, but in his capacity to feel, to will, to want meaning and justice. He manages to endure this vulnerability by masking it from himself, or trying to neutralize it in action upon the external world, or both.[1]

In such a universe the outline of one thing is the boundary of its counterpart. In other words, the identity of every thing is limited by the conflicting identities of other things, and the independent identities of all things are *defined* by the welter of their interdependence. Hence man can satisfy some need only by creating another; he can realize some form of life, in the immediate world, only by destroying another form of life. He can have something only at the cost of not having something else, whichever of his alternatives he chooses. He can only make an impossible choice.[2] If he seeks to have all, the answer of the universe is always: *nothing*.

So is the case with King Lear. The question is; Why should King Lear seek to abrogate power and divide his kingdom? Criticism has not faced this question squarely enough. Consequently the tragic dynamics of *King Lear* has not been properly understood, not to speak of its distortion by redemptionistic interpretations. It must be recognized that the initial situation of the play is not just a given' improbability (as Bradley theorizes), but one that demands of the protagonist an impossible choice as a matter of an existential necessity, which usually arises out of sociopsychological needs. The play indicates that Lear is autocratically presiding over a 'sophisticated', rigidly institutionalized, fairly 'accommodated', power-conscious, and

self-complacent culture, one which has the propensity of getting reduced to mere Law[3] for fear of 'the disasters of the world' and the raw kinesis of feeling. In trying to shut off the 'heath' within and without, it has been trying to shut off the 'pudder' of conflicting elemental energies through which human identity is defined. It is a culture of law-hardened institutional masks and role-playing. The individual's vulnerability is hidden under the mask, but at the same time his sense of his own identity, his sense of his own way of responding to life, is thwarted. The masks can hold only shabbily against this sense of identity and the vital energies that inform it, and cracks are visible in them, as we shall see. Lear who has essentially a loving and kindly heart is himself wearing a composite institutional mask of King-lawgiver-magistrate-judge-patron-father-patriarch. This mask derives its meaning from Lear's sovereign political power, and can command 'respect' and 'love', in the institutional sense. But beneath this mask the human, let us say humane, meaning is being reduced to nothing, and so is Lear's humane sense of his non-authoritative identity. The humane meaning he needs, but cannot acknowledge his vulnerability in point of this need to himself and to others, is respect and love. Only this humane meaning of his social position can answer to his humane sense of his own authoritative identity. We can have a glimpse of this humane meaning, not only in Lear's all-inclusive ideal of Cordelia's 'kind nursery', but also in Kent's appellatives, which have, ironically enough, their institutional meaning as well :

> Royal Lear,
> Whom I have ever honour'd as my King
> Lov'd as my father, as my master follow'd,
> As my great patron thought on in my prayers'—
>
> (I. i. 139-42)

But after long years of authority-mongering ('A dog's obeyed in office'), Lear should be obsessed by the fear that he is not worth the respect and love he desires. He can demand this humane *all* of love and respect only as a moral repayment for giving away his, political, 'all.' Thus he is driven to make his impossible choice which imposes impossible choices on others.

Lear's is an impossible choice because, in the context of finite existence, it involves only reductive alternatives, each costing not less than everything. At the crucial age of eighty he can choose to having his humane identity finally reduced to nothing by continuing to have the 'all' of sovereign political power. Or he can choose to having his sovereign political power reduced to nothing by seeking the *all* of humane identity, which should elicit love and respect out of considerations other than political ones. Lear chooses the latter alternative. Though he cannot acknowledge to himself and to others the need behind his choice, he makes the choice of bargaining his 'all' for a greater, more magnanimous, more human and humane *all*— of a respectable and loveable 'authority'. To secure it by means of symbolic props he wants to retain, 'With reservation of an hundred Knights' to be sustained by his daughters, 'The name and all the addition to a King'.

Lear can speak to his courtiers only of negative and publicly acceptable reasons to express his 'darker purpose'— of his 'fast intent/To shake all cares and business from our age,/Conferring them on younger strengths' etc.— and these are the reasons he can acknowledge to himself, too. In the division of his kingdom, about which his courtiers already know (I. i. 4), he wants to do the 'justice' of giving the deservedly largest and most 'opulent' share to his most loving and loved daughter, Cordelia, and at the same time to stage-manage a public demonstration, and confirmation, of this 'justice'. Hence he tries to stage-manage a folk-loric, ritualistic love-test. He presumes, as kings and babies tend to presume, that he can manipulate the world as he wants; for he is the 'lord and master' here. Indeed he is blind to his own vulnerability and needs as also to the vulnerability and needs of others. But in his autocratic self-complacency he cannot 'see better'. Nor can he do better in his situation of impossible choice. But his action imposes a series of impossible choices on others and back on himself, so as to initiate the flow of tragic action itself in all its horrifying inevitability (in this play it seems to be rushing headlong to the 'promised end'). In fact the tragic action of *King Lear* comprises a series of reductive actions issuing from

a series of impossible choices. Thus in seeking to reduce himself in terms of sovereign political power through the love-test Lear would be reducing the self-conscious and self-asserting identities of others to mere stooges of his will, and thus imposing upon them the reductive alternatives of impossible choices. Goneril and Regan have to choose between the reduction of their share in the kingdom and power, which is so important for their own sense of their insecure and power-hungry identities, and their own reduction to apparent stooges of his will for making obsequiously flattering but hypocritical declarations of their love. After they have spoken, Cordelia, though she 'cannot heave her heart into her mouth', is called upon to choose between reducing her own self-righteous sense of the dignity of her truly loving identity to enter into a disgusting competition with her hypocritical and self-seeking sisters, and reducing her expected ceremonial declaration to, what she cannot see as cruelly wounding and insulting, *nothing*, and with it Lear's whole show, too. In acting out her impossible choice she too cannot see her own and others' vulnerability and needs. She simply ignores the unutterable plea for reassurance that prompts his questions. We wish she had *seen*, not just the arbitrary demand of her father, but the need behind his demand. She in turn sees Lear himself, just as Lear sees her, reductively. They cannot admit the whole of each other's being. Each becomes locked in a self-conscious ego. As Lear struggles to save the situation— 'Nothing?... Nothing will come of nothing: speak again'—he only hurts Cordelia's sense of her dignity, which is in fatal opposition to his own. She feels he is reducing her to a beggar and imputing to her the same motives of gross self-interest that she resents in her sisters. She defends her sense of her dignity by speaking of loving according to her 'bond', which word she ironically pushes against the mercenary images— 'rich', 'metal' etc.—of her sisters' rhetoric, and also makes it mean the bond of human relationship. In its humane sense this 'bond' is the only guarantee of respect and love, and nothing that happens in human experience can annul its value. The mercenary sense of the word points in the direction of the nihilistic vision, and

the humane sense in that of the affirmative vision— and the two visions are interdependent; they mutually qualify and deifne one another.

But there is also the external or institutional sense of the word 'bond', which covers the other two senses and throws them out on its reduction. It is this institutional, quite constraining, rationally determined, debt-and-payment, sense of the word that Cordelia is pushing at the institutionalized Lear who persists in reducing her to a beggarly self-seeker, even in showing his deeply affectionate anxiety for her fortunes':

> I love your Majesty
> According to my bond; no more nor less...
> Good my Lord,
> You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I
> Return those duties back as are right fit,
> Obey you, love you and most honour you. (1,i,94-101)

She speaks as though she had no will of her own to do all that. Her *nothing* is producing a gap in the institutional structure for the tragic onslaught of the ambiguous, to-and-fro conflicting elemental energies through which such 'bonds' are reduced and revalued. They break out in the form of Lear's wounded rage. In bewildered incredulity, mortification and disappointment he struggles and struggles to save the situation, and against the mounting pressure of his wounded rage, too. It breaks out as an impossible choice is forced on him by Cordelia. His Majesty has been publicly shamed and humiliated by his best-loved daughter. She has repudiated his proffered gift and along with it his love, and has thrown back at him his own institutional, retributive calculus as, with a cold ironical rationality, she has halved love and denied him its mysterious fulness. He makes his last desperate struggle by suggesting, what he himself knows full well, that there might be a discrepancy between intention and speech: 'But goes thy heart with this?' 'Ay, my good Lord', is the answer she gives. 'So young, and so untender?' 'So young, my Lord, and true'. Her 'truth' obstinately excludes her 'heart', and is therefore too much less than the truth. With her self-conscious rectitude, she reacts

against the falsehood of her sisters only to turn her own 'truth' into little more than falsehood.

Lear's impossible choice is between two reductive alternatives: acquising in the publicly shameful and humiliating loss of his majestic dignity by 'bearing it tamely'; and violently tearing away his 'heart' from the sense of his own self by disinheriting Cordelia and giving away her share to her sisters. If the terms of his demahd impose heartlessness on her, so do the terms of her reply impose it on him. His wounded rage which has been gathering up beneath the surface of the dialogue, breaks out now. As Ruth Nevo rightly points out, it is now that Lear commits his fatal error, which is the redistribution of the Kingdom through the disinheritance of Cordelia and the giving of entire power into the hands of the 'wicked' daughters.[4]

Cordelia forces individual reality on all the characters. She does not see that she reduces to nothing the whole flamboyant masquerade of the Lear culture. All its protective institutional masks are fractured and the wearers exposed to the raw kinesis of feeling. Lear's own composite institutional mask, whose essential, political, aspect he was himself trying to reduce, is badly fractured, and its shivered fragments, as Ruth Nevo observes, are reflected separately in each of the figures that surround him, as the division scene is reflected in phantasmagoric parodies. These figures, though they have their own particular identities for desiring their respective senses of 'justice', reflect the various ways in which Lear was masking his deepest vulnerabiliiy in desiring 'justice' to define his own identity to himseif. Cordelia reflects his self-righteousness behind this desire; Goneril and Regan, especially Goneril, the ferocious, even predatory, propensity for its execution so as to pluck out what 'will but offend us' and make it 'a stranger to my heart and me' (I. i. 115); and Kent the persistent ethical devotion to the humane significance of this desire, from which significance emerges a new concept of 'Authority'. Gloucester, whom Lear dismisses immediately on his entry in the Opening Scene, reflects what Lear has been so terrifyingly forced into, the awareness of one's vulnerability to the will

of others so as to be subjected by them to unbearable suffering and pain. Such an awareness lies beneath Gloucester's jocular self-complacency. But this leads us to consider the 'cracks' that are already visible in the law-hardened, institutional masks of the Lear culture. These cracks give us a peep into human vulnerability and into the 'heath' within that defines it. They prepare us for the fracturing and peeling of the masks, and thus for the movements of reduction and revaluation in the play. In fact they prepare us for the reduction to *nothing* of all the accommodating masks and clothing, or 'art'–shall we say symbolic forms— of human values by which man conceals from, and makes endurabie and visible to, himself the naked reality of his own 'unaccommodated' humanity, of the vulnerable value-desiring and suffering, *thing itself*, in terms of which the revaluation of everything is called for. Through these cracks Shakespeare takes us on a backward journey through the civilizational process, as its accommodating structures fall off one by one till we reach the vision of unaccommodated man' and further back to the man–animal of Lear's vision in IV. vi. In this journey Lear's own masks are badly stripped off; those of king, lawgiver, magistrate, judge, patron, father and patriarch. He is reduced to 'my Lady's father,' to an old man, to a fool, to nothing, to 'unaccommodated man', and therefore to the 'poor', bare, forked animal' that man is in his naked humanity: and this is the irreducible reality, the *thing itself*, that the play affirms, even through the reduction of Lear's life to nothing in response to the incomprehensible and unbearably painful *nothing* of Cordelia's death.

Before Cordelia triggers off the reduction of all language to the language of feeling there are two contrasting and mutually defining languages in the State Room of King Lear's Palace: the language of court-gossip and the language of ceremony. The cracks in the accommodating masks are made visible through both these languages and in their own ways. At first the language of courtly gossip comes up with the suspicion that beneath his mask of impartiality in the division of the kingdom the king may be hiding his vulnerability to 'affect' and 'value' one Duke (the Duke of Albany, as it should be) more

than the other Duke (the Duke of Cornwall). In fact the play opens by showing us, in its very first speech, a 'crack' through which we take a peep into human vulnerability, even that of king Lear:

> Kent. I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

The gossipy conversation suddenly switches over to matters of personal life:

> Kent. Is not this your son, my Lord?
> Clou. His breeding, Sir, hath been at my charge: I have so often blush'd to acknowledge him, that now I am braz'd to't.

This shows us the crack in Gloucester's institutional mask of fatherhood. Beneath it lies the reality of 'breeding'; the reality of his vulnerability to illicit sex, which has resulted in his vulnerability to the, deriding, will of others.

The sex theme which is introduced here in the very prelude to the reductive-revaluative movements is always 'mounted' on it in such a way as to reinforce its intensity. A few words about it will not be out of place here. It intensifies the reduction of Goneril and Regan, in their business with Edmund, to lustful beasts preying even upon one another. It gradually intensifies the reduction— through derangement — of Lear's consciousness into the formulation of his nihilistic vision. The reduction, even the derangement, of consciousness is actually its most painful intensification, which enables Lear to *see* what he would have been prevented from seeing by the accommodating rational structures of consciousness. Still, what he *sees* is not the whole truth.

Through the jokes of the Fool the sex theme intensifies Lear's reduction to a fool and then to nothing. Another image of nothing, almost an object lesson for Lear, is Edgar/Poor Tom who is harping on his sexual sins and the foul fiend, not without raising laughter. As somebody has pointed out, Shakespeare has put these two 'lightning conductors' on either side of Lear to 'earth' the laughter to keep the dignity of Lear intact and prevent us from laughing directly at him. It is the fiend's world that Lear sees in Act III after his Gods have become silent—he

has already questioned their justice and 'sweet sway' through his 'ifs' in II. iv. 191-94. Lear goes mad because he cannot accommodate himself rationally and morally to the fiend's world, and thus he becomes the helplessly vulnerable reality his conscious will refuses to recognize. But before this he has already had the shattering and mortifying experience of the 'marble-hearted fiend' of ingratitude because of the unkind treatment of his undaughterly daughters: 'Are you our daughter?' This has in fact precipitated the sex theme in his consciousness. It explodes in his curses on Goneril's 'organs of increase', whom he sees as a possible mother. Linked up with the question is the possibility that their mother's tomb may be 'Sepulchring an adult'ress (II. iv. 131-33). In the storm scenes, where the fiend takes over, the sex theme expands into an impersonal and universal magnitude—'Crack nature's moulds and all germens spill at once/That make ingrateful man.' The question 'Is man no more than this?'— than 'a poor, bare, forked animal'?— brings Lear to focusing his gaze, 'down from the waist', to the lower nature of man, which he splits apart from his higher nature because he cannot reconcile the two. This leads him to his nihilistic vision in IV. vi. It is the vision of a world in which the possibility of adultery seen in II.iv. 131-33 is realized as a universal principle of nature, common to animals and man who is an animal among other animals. It is a world of bestial, nihilistic riot of appetite and hypocrisy. It is the fiend's world— with 'Centaurs' and all— and it is only in this way that Lear can see it to bear it and yet reject it in nauseating horror, 'to sweeten my imagination'. The rejection, which brings back the idea of doing justice— 'Kill, Kill, Kill, Kill, Kill, Kill!'— makes way for the assertion of the affirmative vision in what follows— the beautiful image of the fulness of being in sorrowing Cordelia, which though it cannot be fully actual only because of the external and internal violent impulses it excludes, radiates its positive significance back and forth; the miracle of the reconciliation scene; and the reality, though it is short-lived because of being incomplete, of Lear and Cordelia 'alone' singing 'like birds i'th'cage'. The sex theme, therefore, is directed to a positive end. In *Hamlet* the

sex theme ultimately evokes the smells of necrophily to awaken love only at Ophelia's grave. In *King Lear* it evokes the 'smells of mortality' to awaken love, an *I–Thou* relation in the reconciliation with the living Cordelia. Each vision, affirmative as well as nihilistic, is limited and *defined* by the conflicting possibilities of the other. The two visions are as the two natures of man. But the point of contact between them is man's vulnerability to feeling and desiring meanings and values. This is the sheer helplessness, and also the sheer grandeur, of his irreducible humanity.

But to return to Gloucester and the cracks in the masks. Gloucester has 'braz'd' himself to the deriding will of others and to his own feeling of shame in acknowledging the 'whore-son' by putting on a mask of jocular self-complacency in this matter for the sake of self-protection, which is the philosophy of the Gloucester family, as the play unfolds it. But his uncalled-for information about having another son, by order of law', and then his uncalled- for, indecent and, at least indelicate jokes, which he makes even in the presence of Edmund, about Edmund's mother and the 'good sport at his making 'betray his panicky fear of the full exposure to life, and of his own human vulnerability. It is there that the tragic fault lies— 'Do you smell a fault?' he asks. Deep down in his heart he seems to have basic human warmth and human decency. Edmund should be smarting under these jokes in silence (which is an important sub-text). A stigmatic mask of bastardy has been thrust upon him since birth not because of his own fault but because of Gloucester's 'good sport' with his mother. It has reduced him to a despicable social outcast, which his ego can no longer bear. Later on he makes his impossible choice by reducing himself to cold, ruthless will which he drives towards socially acknowledged position and power with hypocritical unscruplousness, in order to cover his stigmatic mask. For making his will 'realistically' independent he fortifies himself with rationalizations— 'Thou, Nature, art my goddess'. etc. In this way he seeks in Nature the sanction and the counterpart of what he has reduced himself to.

As King Lear bursts upon the scene in all the effulgent

grandiosity of his composite institutional mask, dismisses Gloucester (with whom Edmund also goes away), and makes his ceremonial speech the cracks become visible in his mask. They become visible through his majestic self-complacency; his assumption of his own and others' invulnerability; his vanity which nurses itself upon flattering lies and self-delusions; his rhetorical pomposity; his stage-consciousness and theatricality; his attempt at a public demonstration of 'justice' according to 'merit' in the division of the Kingdom in order to execute his secret intention, which he blurts out later on, of giving the largest share to Cordelia; the inaccuracy and even the inadequacy that lies behind his high-falutin language— 'while we-unburthen'd crawl toward death'; Albany is more loving than Cornwall; France and Burgundy have 'Long in our court... made their amorous sojourn'; his bid to bargain his kingdom and political power for a reassurance of love (which indicates his unacknowledged fear of his own unworthiness); his dangling the offer of 'a third more opulent than your sisters' before Cordeila has spoken and in fact to make her speak— this is linked up with his disclosure: 'I lov'd her most, and thought to set my rest/On her kind nursery': his desperate attempts to save the situation, and along with it his affectionate anxiety for Cordelia's fortunes— 'speak again'; mend your speech a little...; 'But goes thy heart with this?'— his visualizing the possibility of neighbouring even 'the barbarous Scythian... to my bosom' (which betrays his unacknowledgable desire for the comforting tenderness of love); his puffing and thundering; his swearing by the power of nature, which he regards as external to himself and as a framework of order guaranteeing the order of his institutional framework; and his comparison of his own will to something non-human and absolutely irresistible— 'Come not between the Dragon and his wrath'; 'the bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft'. King Lear entered with 'one bearing a coronet'. It was 'intended for Cordelia, as Kenneth Muir observes in the Arden Edition notes. After the disinheritance of Cordelia this coronet is parted, through their husbands, between Goneril and Regan I another phantasmagoric parody of the division of the Kingdom. But this

triggers off the reductive-revaluative movement of the play.

Lear has effected the reduction of his institutional power. But Kent ironically anticipates his further reduction into a mad man, a helpless old man and a fool: 'be Kent unmannerly,/When Lear is mad. What would'st thou do, old man?... To plainness honour's bound/When majesty falls to folly.' He also speaks of his 'hideous rashness' and of his inability to 'see better.' Ironically, he is providing clues to the ruthless agents of his ultimate reduction, Goneril and Regan, who will mercilessly strip off every last shred of external 'authority' with which he might identify himself. Goneril especially will 'pluck' most of these epithets from their context of well-wishing to fit them into her narrow moral categories and to push them at Lear with self-commanding corrective zeal.

But if Kent unwittingly points to the extremity of the reductive-nihilistic movement, he also unwittingly points to the extremity of the revaluative-affirmative movement which is involved with it. He does the latter, as we have already noted, by ironically evoking the humane meanings of his appelatives—'Royal Lear' etc. This is really looking forward to the affirmation of the irreducible humanity of the vulnerable human self which can be revalued only in relation to devastatingly reductive action and suffering.

Kent's impossible choice is between reducing himself to the 'plainness' of his own sense of loyal and humanely ethical identity so as to incur the King's wrath and reducing himself to a silent and servile observer of wrong-doing. He chooses the first alternative, and is exiled by Lear. But Lear does not know that he is exiling himself from the accommodating institutional fold of his civilization, and is going on a backward journey through the civilizational process to expose his self to the 'disasters of the world' within and without.

Cordelia's 'nothing'—no thing too—reverberates throughout the play. It forces impossible choices and reductions and individual reality on everybody. It smashes all their institutional masks in which cracks were already visible. Goneril and Regan, in whose masks the cracks were showing through the hypocritical and flattering exaggerations of their language, reduce

themselves to predatory self-seekers. We have a glimpse of their reduction when they are alone in the Opening Scene. Regan fears 'unconstant' starts from the 'infirmity' of Lear's age, her self-convenience being her sole consideration. Goneril has a moral zest for wielding power in security. Her rampant ego is threatened by Lear's propensity for 'rashness' and not alone by 'the imperfections' of his 'long-grafted condition' but by 'the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them'. She says : 'We must do something, and i'th' heat'.

Edmund starts his business of manipulating the world to master it with social status and power. The more he drives his will to it the more he is driven to concealment of his identity from himself and from others. He is himself infected with the weakness he so contemptuously despises in others; the self-deluding weakness which runs in the Gloucester family, of justifying or explaining away unpleasant realities about the self or the world by fancying some principle in external nature— in Gods, or eclipses and stars; or, as with Edmund himself, in Nature; or even in the Wheel (of Fortune) that he sees coming 'full circle' in his downfall and impending death.

In the first two Acts we see Lear desperately trying to piece together the fragments of his self-identifying mask of 'authority', without realizing that it was held in tact by his political power. He is obviously pleased when Kent— who has come to attend on him in disguise— tells him he has authority' in his countenance. In Lear there is little spiritual progression towards any self-knowledge through any purgatorial affliction. It should be noted that his first pang of remorse occurs even before he has become conscious of affliction in his new situation. It occurs when the Knight speaks of the Fool having 'much pined away' since Cordelia's departure: 'No more of that. I have noted it well', (I. iv. 79). Oswald tells him that he is 'my Lady's father'. The Fool, who mirrors, and makes desperate attempts to correct Lear's infantile folly (and this is why Shakespeare makes him a boy of tender age) through the folk-wisdom of his painfully reproaching jokes, tells him that he is a fool and even worse than a fool: 'I am a Fool, thou art nothing'. He succeeds only in driving him mad. The Fool has

already accepted the basic gross realities about his identity—the 'title' he was born with—and about the world. He has consciously reduced the sense of his own identity to one of being a fool. It is not threatened by any further reduction. He knows that he is a fool, and that he is in a world where he cannot expect any justice. But he cannot understand 'how hard a man who *is* able to expect justice can stick by his right to get it'. With his limited vision he is as incapable of rising to the highest demands on life as of entertaining any illusions about it.[5] And yet, he too makes his impossible choice of clinging to Lear with a loyalty that ironically contradicts his own common-sense view of life. In his montage of the dialogues—figuring Lear, Fool, Goneril, Fool, Lear, Goneril, Fool, Lear, Fool, Lear, Fool, Lear, Goneril—Shakespeare allows the feeling to gather its full intensity beneath the surface of these dialogues till it suddenly bursts out in Lear's 'Darkness and devils!'—which itself infers it and does not strictly contain it. It has been pointed out that such montage is characteristic of *King Lear* and forms its continuous technique.[6]

But it needs to be realized that these conflicting and tensional responses of dialogue and action are made because with each protagonist the consciousness of his own, or as in the case of the Fool, of another's (say Lear's) identity is threatened by reduction-revaluation. In fact Shakespeare's montage is the selection and mounting and dramatic patterning of tensionally interrelated dialogues, events, scenes, settings and even stage-directions in order to release a dynamic pattern of more and more intense and liguistically inexpressible feelings on the wave of the reductive-revaluative movement that breaks beyond the frontiers of our consciousness. In all their intensity the feelings are not only felt on our pulses but also *seen*; they are held up for our contemplation through their relation to the conflicting values, or senses of 'justice' and meaning held by the various protagonists. In accordance with his sense of 'justice' and meaning, which is also his sense of his own identity, his 'particular way of being humanly alive in *and to* the world' (Goldberg), each protagonist has to make his impossible choice. But it means only choosing how far his

vulnerability to life extends, excluding in himself and in the world certain possibilities which he cannot risk in his bid to master or at least cope with life. It is these possibilities that inevitably confront him to force an answer to the reduction of his meaning of life to *nothing*. But his irreducible humanity, which is *the thing itself*, is revealed both in his capacity of acting upon the world and being acted upon by it. In the end, the humanity of each self in the *King Lear* world is revealed, not only in its mustered-up strength 'to master life or at least cope with it, but in its most deeply hidden and subtly defended capacity to answer to it— the necessary ability, that is, to *break*' (Goldberg).

In the last scene of Act II Lear's confrontation with Regan and then with both the daughters is mounted upon Lear's witnessing of Kent in stocks which is as wounding and insulting to his self-conscious dignity as it is unbelievable - 'tis worse than murther,/To do upon respect such violent outrage.' What is much more 'worse than murther' follows. While the Fool persists in pushing at him more and more painfully the facts of his folly and utter loss— 'Fathers that wear rags' etc.— Lear's inability to acknowledge his helplessness against the 'marble-hearted fiend' of ingratitude in the midst of affliction is turning his wounded and impotent rage into a rising passion of madness. He is trying hard to supprsss it: 'down, thou climbing sorrow' (the possibility of madness had already burst upon him after the quarrel with Goneril in the montage of I.v— 'O! let me not be mad: not mad, sweet heaven').

Regan, to whom he turns as a wounded child to his mother, harps on the same tune that he 'should be ruled and led' by the discretion of those that discern his 'state' better than he himself does. She asks him to return to her sister and seek her forgiveness— and his feelings again burst out in curses upon Goneril. Regan even tells him, when he turns to the 'fiery Duke' who stocked his servant, that 'being weak', he must 'seem so'. As Goneril, who is a disease in his corrupt flesh, joins her sister, the two daughters push his helplessness at him with absolute heartlessness and to the breaking-point. As they mercilessly strip him of every last shred of external 'authority'

with which he might identify himself heap peals in vain to their sense of 'offices of nature', of 'dues of gratitude' etc., and then threatens them in vain the next moment. 'I gave you all—' 'And in good time you gave it' is Regan's cold, brutal reply. They bargain with him, horrifyingly mirroring his bargaining of the Opening Scene, which he did out of all good intentions. With her allowance of twenty five Knights Regan tosses him back at Goneril who had allowed fifty. But Goneril says: 'What need you five and twenty, ten, or five...' 'What need one? says Regan.

> O! reason not the need...
> Allow not nature more than nature needs,
> Man's life is cheap as beast's...
> But for true need,—
> You Heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!
> You see me here, you Gods, a poor old man,
> As full of grief as age: wretched in both
> .. fool me not so much
> To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,...
> I will have such revenges on you both...
> No, I'll not weep:
> I have full cause of weeping, *(Storm heard at a distance)*
> but this heart
> Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws
> Or ere I'll weep, O Fool! I shall go mad.

Lear cannot acknowledge to himself and to others that the 'true need' he has all along wanted others, and especially Cordelia, to satisfy is respect and love; that it is in conflict with other 'true needs' in himself and in others; and that he is helplessly impotent in making the world yield him satisfaction. His speech about 'true need' significantly breaks off when it brings him face to face with this impotence. He switches over to his need of 'patience'— to hold his tough sides and resist the rising madness, and *not* 'to bear it tamely' but with 'noble anger', His threats are like a child's, 'absurd and pathetic in their grotesque vagueness'. He has full cause of weeping, but he tries to deny his very capacity to weep, so that his helpless impotence, which he cannot acknowledge, may not be exhibited. In the face of this unacknowledgeable impotence his

'noble anger' will only drive him out into the heath, by way of a crucial impossible choice, and finally into the very madness he has been trying to resist—it will strike inwards, and his heart will 'break into a hundred thousand flaws', on seeing the image of his plight in Poor Tom.

The montage of this scene, which releases these maddening feelings in Lear, also brings out the crucial pressures of the reductive alternatives behind them, the crucial pressures that are involved in his crucial impossible choice. If Lear chooses to live with his daughters on their unkind and humiliating terms, they would force on him the reduction not only of his self-conscious, authoritative', dignity to a beggarly nothing—grovelling for 'raiment, bed, and food'—but, with the thrust of their reductive logic, even of his basic human dignity, which even 'our basest beggars, maintain by having something more than the beast. He has already made us see the dignity due to his age as a fundamental human claim in II.iv. 191-94 (O 'Heavens,/If you do love old men.../Make it your cause'). But at this point in our response to the play, the King and the universally representative human being in Lear fuse to elicit our deepest imaginative sympathies, and in the direction of the affirmative movement, too. The other alternative for Lear is to choose his reduction, which again the daughters force on him, to 'unaccommodated man' by flinging himself out of the protective fold of civilized society and abjuring 'all roofs'. That Lear chooses the latter alternative is a measure of the greatness of his spirit and of his grandeur as a tragic hero. In both these respects he remains unsurpassed in literature.

In the third Act the whole sequence of scenes is a *tour de force* of montage effects cumulatively united by the reductive-revaluative movement which is carried to a critical extremity of intensity where *nothing* is now directly answered by *the thing itself*. The movement proceeds through increasing fragmentation of the world and of the conscious, but universally representative, self of Lear, giving him and us nightmarish glimpses into the fractured mirrors that pass before his eyes—the fool, Poor Tom, Gloucester: these figures which reflect the reduction of human identity to rock-bottom nothingness.

The third Act begins the universalization of all the themes by assimilating them to a universal movement of reduction-revaluation which proceeds through the increasing fragmentation brought about by the violent conflicting elemental energies of the micro-and the macrocosm, which the protective, delimiting and reductive institutional structures of the Lear culture had shut out. The human self which includes, and is included by, the world can separate nature and man only to see them in terms of one another. This is what Lear does as he contends with and responds to the storm and its world. Lear has been clinging to the accommodating and self-deluding idea of himself being a good man rewarded with gross injustice (It is not so much his guilt as the fact of his utter loss— and this is what the Fool insistently pushes at him— that constitutes the consciousness of his affliction before and during his madness). He cannot rationally accommodate himself to this world where no 'justice' is possible and no human need is paramount and separable from the rest to have any validity by itself. So he is driven to madnees:

> O Regan, Goneril!
> Your old Kind father, whose frank heart gave all—
> O that way madness lies; let me shun that; (III. iv. 19-21)

It comes upon him when in the image of Poor Tom he sees such injustice as a universal fact. That still he is not devoid of self-pity and self-will and other egoistic concerns, which are all accommodating devices to protect himself from the awareness of his own helpless vulnerability, indicates that there is little spiritual progress in his case. But in the universal context of the storm scenes his self-pity extends into pitying others— Kent ('go in thyself'.), the Fool ('In boy; go first. You houseless poverty') and then the 'poor naked wretches'. When he confronts Poor Tom he can comprehend what he would regard as universal only in terms of the personal: 'Didst thou give all to thy daughters?... Couldst thou save nothing? Would'st thou give 'em all?'—'Nay, he reserv'd a blanket, else we had been all sham'd', says the Fool to drive home the painful stab of his joke. Lear first identifies Poor Tom with him, as Goldberg rightly points out. A little later when he identifies himself with

Poor Tom, it is by then quite clearly an act of madness, his sense of helpless injury driving him to deprive himself of everything—to reduce himscef to *nothing*, rather as Edgar did ('Poor Tom,/That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am'—II. iii. 5ff). Lear does so 'out of a significantly divided impulse— partly to 'justify' his ofsessive, limitless sense of injury, and partly to satisfy his correspondingly obsessive urge to 'punish home'- 'twas this flesh begot those pelican daughters.' The same divided impulse drives him to the 'unaccommodated man' speech. The insight of this speech, it has been rightly observed, 'is not spoken to us by Lear so much as embodied to us in his actual presence', as he makes a desperate effort 'to divide the indivisible both in himself and in his world'. For us who notice the ambiguities of the dramatic presentation the insight boils down to a realization, made at a critical point of extremity, of the interdependence of the nihilistic and the affirmative vision. Indeed, it is the insight of *nothing* being directly answered by *the thing itself*. It does mark a point of extremity where the movement of reduction is seen to be directly involved with the movement of revaluation. Such points have got to be the points of highest intensity in the play:

> *Lear :* Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with thy uncover'd body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow'st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! here's three on's are sophisticated; thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come; unbutton here.
>
> *(Tearing off his clothes.)*

Lear is not conscious of the self-defeating paradoxes he is struggling with; nor of the ineluctable existential realities from which they arise— the interdependence of his self and the world, and the interdependence of all things in the universe, even of human values and needs and identities. Man's very capacity to think, to judge, that he is a 'poor, bare, forked animal' speaks for the fact that he is more than an animal. Man is a rational creature who uses his rationality, rather his very capacity for symbolic fabrication of experience into meaning, as 'clothing' or 'art' to accommodate himself to the external

world, both for the sake of his animal existence and his dignity as man, and in doing so, as the dramatic irony of Lear's speech infers, he preys upon his fellow-creatures (This is looking forward to: 'A plague upon you, murderers, traitors alll'). His 'clothing' or 'art', without which he would not be able to experience anything at all so as to become absolutely invulnerable, would not be able to think, feel, want meanings and values at all, both manifests and hides his deepest vulnerability in these respects; both manifests and hides his *nothing-thing itself* reality— including its sexual innuendoes which both the Fool and Poor Tom keep suggesting not only through their speeches but also through their very presence. Lear's tearing of his accommodating clothes shows 'how little he can endure to face' this vulnerable reality, but it also shows 'how little he can endure not to know' it. At this point of extremity, the more intensely he needs to protect it the more intensely he needs to declare, 'in the midst of pain, that he really needs nothing to protect him from the world'. Ironically enough. Lear does not know that Edgar's 'unaccommodated' condition is a rational, 'accommodating' disguise to protect himself and make him 'invulnerable in his visibly total vulnerability'. For us Lear's real madness acquires its significant intensity by its contrast with the image of Edgar's rationally feigned madness (Goldberg).

But in his turn Edgar himself realizes that his fancy of the foul fiend's world is too real to bear. In answering to Lear's agony his owh 'horn' runs dry. He realizes that everyday things in this world can be mysteriously 'charged' with a terrifying menace. The foul fiend possesses this world. Men should defy him; but they can do nothing against him to alter the world. They can only wait for the visitations of this evil spirit to pass by (Goldberg).

Through its dramatization of the to-and-fro conflicting elements the third Act shows how the significance of everything is defined and intensified through its reduction and limitation by its counterpart. Thus, for example, Lear's sense of 'justice' becomes most intensely real when It is reduced by the world to a universal *nothing*, which drives his will, pressed as it is

by its own helplessness, against the world in a blaze of mad disorder. The Fool's commonsense view of life is defined and intensified through its reduction and limitation by a loyalty and buoyancy of spirit that go beyond commonsense. Edgar's need to protect himself becomes real and active when it collapses into the impulse to protect another. So is the case with Gloucester's panicky anxiety for self-protection. Each self reveals its own particular humanity only when it acts upon the world with the necessary ability to *break* and get reduced.

In the montage of the third Act Lear's sense of 'justice', his vision of judgment and even the phantasmic vision of trial and anatomization acquire their intense significance not only by the horrifying nihilism of the fiendish world that he himself experiences but also by the retrospective savage irony of the alternating sub-plot scenes which, in the words of Ruth Nevo, 'cast upon the scenes of the agony on the heath the hideous mockery of a demon's laughter'. Still the demon keeps laughing, and 'still through the hawthorn blows the wind'; but all this cannot put out the spirit of acting and suffering humanity. The last scene of the Act carries the demonic to an extremity where its nihilistic movement is directly answered by the affirmative movement of common humanity. It is the scene of the gouging out of Gloucester's eyes and his extremely painful reduction— 'corky arms' bound and 'vile jelly' out— to rock-bottom nothingness, 'all dark and comfortless'. But this is immediately answered by the revolting humanity of Cornwall's own servant, Again at this extremity the reduction is directly involved with revaluation.

But the third Act leaves us with a sense of horrifying mystery about this universe of to-and-fro conflicting elements both in the microcosm and macrocosm. With these elements the universe is just 'given'. Lear can find no cause for 'hard hearts', just as he will find 'no cause, no cause' for kind and loving hearts.

Gloucester's panicky anxiety for self-protection becomes intensely significant, and much more so in the horrifying consequences of his action, as it collapses into the impulse to protect Lear. He makes his impossible choice because he can-

not bear the self-mortifying reduction of his own sense of humanity by obediently complying with the wishes of Lear's daughters with regard to their inhuman treatment of their father. As Edmund informs against him in order to climb into Cornwall's favour he is forced to suffer what he has feared all along in the awareness of his vulnerability, and this in the most horrifying and painful way. He thinks his helpless suffering can be answered only by a suicidal, all-reductive leap from Dover Cliff— into the abyss of nothingness the image of which is held up for our contemplation through Edgar's imaginative description. In his imagination Edgar is looking down into the abyss to see things getting gradually reduced to incomprehensible nothingness; he is looking down, as it were, into the very horror of the Black Hole:

> I' ll look no more,
> Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight topple down headlong

That the abyss does not actually exist *there* makes little difference for us in terms of its symbolic significance— though for Gloucester's life it does make all the difference. The image is central to the play, for it is an image of the extremity of *nothing* answered by the humanity of the acting and suffering *thing-itself* in Gloucester. It mirrors Lear's own increasingly intense experience of the abyss till, with Cordelia's death, he reaches beyond the frontiers of consciousness down to the absolutely incomprehensible and unbearably painful extremity of *nothing* which is answered by *the thing-itself* of his own irreducible humanity through his self-laceration and death.

Gloucester's experience is said to be the paradigm of Lear's *experience.* It represents the physical and moral pain that man can neither evade nor bear. But Lear is Lear and Gloucester is Gloucester. Gloucester is fearful of life, tends to withdraw from what is unbearable and to turn to heaven or the will of Gods for explanation. He is uncertain, wavering, confused, submissive; passive and resigned. He lacks Lear's largeness of spirit; his tremendous capacity for action and suffering beyond the rational frontiers of consciousness, and also for rising to the highest demands on life through his

passionate claims for an all-comprehensive justice and an all-meaningful human dignity; lacks his tremendous strength of will for commanding, challenging, and protesting against the world. Again, he lacks Lear's titanic agon; his molten 'noble anger; his passionate abiliiy to reject a world which is incomprehensibly brutal: and his persistent questionings of the nature of man and the nature of this world, and of the justification for his own plight.

The palace, the heath and Dover symbolize the dramatic phases through which the reductive-evaluative movement passes. As it breaks out within the institutionally structured and delimiting fold of the palaces it flings us out into the disintegrating 'pudder' of the heath within and without to bring us to an extremity of its dialectical intensity (both in the main plot and the subplot), and then it leads us across the heath through the antiphony of its dialectic, the alternating rhythms of reductive-negation and revaluative-affirmation, and from one extremity of intensity, in which the two rhythms meet, to another extremity, and finally to the absolute extremity of intensity of 'the promised end' at Dover.

The fourth Act which takes us across the heath to the country near Dover with the antiphony of its dialectic of affirmation and negation, comfort and despair combines pathos and irony of the situation in a complex orchestration. We can also see it, if we like, as a complex montage of alternating contrasts. The affirmative and the nihilisttic realities will always be iimited and defined by one another through conflict because each excludes certain forms of life which the other embodies to wreak its 'justice' upon it. No one sense of 'justice' can prevail, and an all-comprehensive justice is not possible. Thus the affirmative consolations that Edgar and Albany see and work for are always undercut by the devastating irony of nihilistic events.

Edgar's consciousness of his skill in the art of physical and psychic self-preservation is the source of his self-complacent optimistic philosophizing— of enduring with free and patient thoughts in the hope of reachring to the 'ripeness' and 'fullness' of some opportune time. He takes recourse to such philosophi-

zing again and again. His self-consolation being 'at the worst', at rock-bottom nothingness where he has nothing to lose, is undercut by the pitiful entrance of his blinded father. He realizes that he has fallen down from 'worst' to 'worse': 'the worst is not/So long as we can say 'This ts the worst;. He makes us discover that the rock-bottom nothingness is itself continually falling, along a minus scale, down and down into the measureless abyss, as it is being continually knocked off by the devastating ironies of conflicting realities— as if what he took for rock-bottom was an ever-descending lift down the abyss of the Black Hole, bringing him to worse and worse images of nihilistic horror till it will bring him down to 'the promised end' or, in his own words, 'the image of that horror', which is absolutely shattering.

Edgar who practises the art of psychic self-preservation on his father by stage-managing a 'miracle' meets him as a poor man at the imaginary bottom of the abyss, casts an imaginary glance upwards, and tries to save him from death-wishing despair. From here he works his way upwards, symbolically, towards affirmative philosophical consolations; reversing the reductive process of stripping to put on, with his ability of transposition, various role-playing disguises one after the other— from Poor Tom and then Poor Tom of the 'altered' voice he has become a poor man, and now he becomes in succession a peasant(to Kill Oswald)a poor man again, a soldier, a dueller (to kill Edmund) and finally a would— be King. But his affirmative consolations are undercut again and again by the devastating ironies of nihilistic events, which throw him further and further down into the abyss, For example:

Edg. Bear free and patient thoughts. But who comes here?
Enter LEAR, *fantastically dressed with wild flowers*
Edg. O thou side-piercing sight!

Edgar thinks that he has cured his father of despair; but he has only succeeded in turning his characteristic tendency of 'evasion' (Cf. Edmund's soliloquy in I.i). or withdrawal from life into 'resignation' to the will of Gods. Which tendency turns into madness-wish (Gloucester does not understand that Lear's affliction has been intensified, instead of being blotted out, by

madness) or death-wish again— he wishes Oswald's 'friendly hand) to 'put strength enough' to his sword; and later on he wishes to be left to 'rot even here'. Edgar makes his 'Ripeness is all' speech. But in looking forward, self-deludingly, to 'ripeness'—as if men were fruits— he keeps delaying the disclosure of his identity to his father, and thus he keeps prolonging his agony. And when he makes this disclosure, fearing that afterwards the time for making it may never come because of the battle he is going to and hoping that it should be now, 'ripeness' and all, he causes his father, whose weak heart is unable to support the conflict 'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,' to drop dead into absolute nothingness— like an overripe (or 'rotten'?) fruit. With this Edgar himself drops further down into the horrifying abyss, to have his heart being gnawed at by remorse— 'O fault!' (V.iii. 188 ff). This is what the affirmative 'ripeness' philosophy comes to. This is how it gets directly *defined* in its ironical intensity by nihilistic reductions.

This was once again an image of extremity. Edgar goes on to speak of a 'top extremity'— the plight of Kent who comes at the scene, his ethical and human 'endurance' bringing him to breaking-point: 'and the strings of life began to crack. In fact all these images of extremity have been preparing us for the absolute extremity of the last scene of the play.

But it should be noted that, as Edgar's 'upward' movement itself indicates, the fourth Act has reversed the terms of the extremity: now affirmative- revaluation is being directly answered by nihilistic - reduction. Even Lear's nihilistic vision in IV. vi is the direct answer to his affirmation: 'I am the king himself'. As he enacts, with his characteristic ebullience, the business of kingship in his kingdom the vision becomes, as Michael Long has pointed out,[7] a 'tragic critique of Law', of all the pretensions and assumptions of the 'sophisticated', of their whole Institutional fabric of kingship, authority, culture, morality and justice, which is nothing but a hypocritical pageantry of the beastly riot of power and appetite. The irony which, for example, notes that the trivia of Kingly whims can summon up fussing attendants ('Look, look! a mouse') modulates into pathos as Lear speaks of his vulnerability

which he was so painfully forced to recognise: 'I am not ague-proof'. Responding to Gloucester he reinforces the affirmation: 'Ay, every inch a king'. But the vision shows that he is the madly human king of an animal kingdom, as his 'human' subjects are indistinguishable from animals. Lear, who has been forced to focusing his gaze, schizophrenetically, only on the lower nature of man rejects the fiendish world of his vision in nauseating horror, and after realizing that authority is like a dog which is 'obeyed in office' and that justice is a hypocritical sham he reaches the distorted logic of his moral: 'None does offend, none'. This coda to the whole phantasmagoric composition underscores the pathos of human frailty and vulnerability, and thus makes way for another extremity of the affirmative movement.

In passing let us note that Gloucester's experience also mirrors Lear's experience in respect of the reduction–revaluation of language to make it function only 'feelingly' and with tremendous resonance of meaning: 'I have no way, and therefore want no eyes:/I stumbled when I saw'. The language is reduced to 'a condition of complete simplicity', stripped of all rhetoric and reduced to bare, metonymic counters of sensory experience in which feelings are crystallized, concentrated and intensified. Obviously, the reduction involves a revaluative transformation of language, through these intensely charged and resonating metonymic counters, into the most transparent symbolic forms of experience discovered beyond the frontiers of consciousness and beyond all formulations of language. For example, when Gloucester wants to kiss Lear's hand he says: 'Let me wipe it first, it smells of mortality'. The resonant intensity of this metonymic language evokes not only the infernal smells of sinful mortality that Lear rejected in nauseating horror, but also the rawness, the imperfection, the pathetic frailty and vulnerability and finiteness of his mortal existence in the flesh, which pathetically limits and *defines* the greatness and dignity of his suffering and infinitely desiring self.

The tempo of dramatic events increases after the blinding of Gloucester and the murder of Cornwall. The nihilistic business of Goneril, Regan and Edmund bursts into hectic, and

even self-destructive, activity after the 'foolish' affirmative 'text' of Albany in Iv.ii, who in his revulsion against the monstrous daughters has divided nature into the 'barbarous' and the 'normative'. Though he is overcautious, he supports the cause of the latter which is what Lear's cause means to him. But he cannot realize that humanity has been preying upon itself like monsters of the deep even in the murder of Cornwall which results from a clash in opposing senses of 'justice' informed by the same violent impulse of nature. Ironically enough his affirmative consolation: 'This shows you are above,/You justicers' itself brings him to the realization of the nihilistic: 'But, O poor Gloucester!/Lost he his other eye?'

All the images of the extremity of affirmation– answered– by negation are in themselves pathetically self-defeating or unrealizable in actuality because of their exclusion of certain disrputive possibilities of life in the self and the world. There is the meltingly beautiful image of the sorrowing Cordelia, a miniature model of 'fullness of being', which cannot become actual for the same reason— it will be destroyed the moment she herself acts. It is only the image of an affirmative extremity held up for our contemplation just as the image of the nihilistic extremity represented by Edgar's imaginary abyss is held up for our contemplation.

The reconciliation scene is an affirmative extremity presenting an irreducible possibility of loving kindness – of the value of the 'bond',— just as Gloucester's blinding is a nihilistic extremity presenting the irreducible possibility of predatory cruelty. The intense significance of this affirmative extremity is defined in relatlon to the still opposed and still unresolved powers of violence and self-assertion and rage that have been excluded. Their nihilistic answer is the imprisonment of Lear and Cordelia. Thus the possibility of this affirmative extremity is evoked and not realized. That or whatever is possible in human experience cannot annul its value, which is radiated back and forth in the play. The reconciliation event is a genuine miracle (Cf: the stage-managed 'miracle' for Gloucester). It marks the transformation, shall we say rebirth, of Lear's self, through an acknowledgment of the 'wheel of fire' he had

bound himself to, into a new stability. It makes his authority a mark of his actual being, dissolves the fear behind his rage and also the fear of Cordelia's independent selfhood. He has still not become a full human being; but at least he has come to a condition in which he can acknowledge to himself and to others all his weakness in age, folly and ignorance, all his helpless dependence on others for his needs; a condition in which he can bear to forgive and give love and even to forgive himself to receive forgivenes and love— love not on a payment-repayment basis, but love for 'no cause'. This love has come to him only when he can acknowledge his helplessness in needing it.

The next image of affirmative extremity emerges in Lear's 'let's away to prison' speech which has its place in the play after Edgar's philosophizing about 'ripeness' in the previous scene. It is an image, and just an image, of the possibility of fulfilment, with Cordelia becoming the one centre of values and meaings: 'We two alone will sing like birds i'th 'cage'. The possibility is visualized with sentimentally unreal assumptions– as if the prison were a country retreat, as if life could be so walled to keep its happy aspects inside and its unpleasant aspects outside; and as if both Lear and Cordelia wers physically and spiritually invulnerable. That Lear's self is still incomplete is betrayed not only by these unreal assumptions but also by his gloating feeling of superiority— for example in the emblematic visualization of worldly men as 'gilded butterflies'—his engagement in protecting a particular consciousness of self; and his aggressive impulses— 'the good years shall devour them'. The powers of self-assertion and violence in 'them' are excluded not only by Lear but also by Cordelia. It is these powers that irrupt with terrifying suddenness to wreak their 'justice' on her life, and thus to make their nihilistic answer to the whole movement of affirmation.

Through the reductive– revaluative movement informing the composite montage of the whole play, which involves the reductive-revalutive montage of language, not merely of verbal language but the overall theatrical –dramatic language which is the composite symbolic form of the play— through this

reductive-revaluative movement the play proceeds, like all great art, by a continual concretion and intensification. It proceeds from the palace, through the heath, fo Dover for the absolutely intense reduction–revaluation of all symbolic forms of experience to point through their complete simplicity to what lies beyond their frontiers, the 'vexed sea' of ineffable *nothingness*.

After having glimpses of love, integrity and harmony in Cordelia we are made to confront her sudden death. She is hanged in prison. And this brings us to the absolute extremity of *noting-thing itself*. This is of course preceded by an affirmative consolation. First, Albany speaks of the judgment of heavens' at the deaths of Goneril and Regan—Goneril dying of suicide and Regan of poisoning by Goneril. On realizing that 'yet Edmund was beloved' he means to do 'some good' in his dying moments 'Despite of mine nature' (which his downfall has revealed to himself and to the world). He discloses his 'writ...on the life of Lear and on Cordelia'. Somebody runs to the prison with Edmund's sword as a 'token of reprieve' But:

Re-enter LEAR, *with* CORDELIA *dead in his arms*.

This is absolutely shattering. Lear's whole being is focused on the one centre of all meanings and values: Cordelia's existence. And it has become *nothing*. Through language reduced to a condition of complete simplicity in its metonymic counters Lear gropes for the absolutely basic and sensory facts of knowledge, all other knowledge— of Kent, of his daughters etc— having become irrelevant or unnecessary: 'I Know when one is dead, and when one lives;/She is dead as earth'. Yet it is unbelievable. He calls for a looking-glass, and when it fails a feather. For a moment all meanings and values and all affirmative compensations 'of all sorrows/That ever I felt' seem to depend on the slight stirring of a little feather. kent who could never comprehend the tremendous dimensions of Lear's experience makes a pathetically obtrusive but vain effort to make Lear recognize him as the loyal Kent who followed him in disguise. It is said that Lear is out of his mind again. But it seems to me that his state is beyond our categories of sanity and insanity. His mind is so extraordinarily sensitized and all its energies so focused— as if through a laser-beam— on one

point of absolute intensity as to be ready to notice and respond to the slightest metonymic wave-lengths of sense experience — the momentary stain of Cordelia's breath on the looking-glass stone; the slight stirring of a little feather against her nostrils; the very ghost of her soft, gentle and low voice —'Ha!/What is't thou say'st'?— and finally the infinitesmal movement of her lips!

Lear is confronted with what is beyond his capacities of suffering and understaning: an absolute *nothing*. His *ultimate* question is as much an inconsolable protest against what he sees as an incomprehensibly unjust universe, as a helpless cry out of unbearable pain:

> Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
> And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
> Never, never, never, never, never!

All symbolic fabrications of meanings and values come to nothing at this absolute extremity of intensity that lies beyond the frontiers of consciousness— even 'the poetry does not matter', though it is only through a reduction-ravaluation of poetry that the intensity can be dis-covered. These fabrications fail to accommodate Lear to the fact of Cordelia becoming *nothing*. They are therefore torn into shreds— 'Pray you, undo this button'—to dis-cover on the outside what he wishes to suffer fully, the brutal fact in all its horrifying and unendurably painful *nothingness*, on the inside the nakedly suffering and infinitely desiring human self of the 'poor, bare, forked animal', the *thing itself* in all its awful purity, its absolute plight and absolute moral (and dramatic) authority. But let us not forget that the *thing-itself* acquires all its human and moral significance only in relation to the *nothing* it confronts and answers to. Lear answers it with his life. What kills Lear is the intensest agony which arises out of the tension between his human need to suffer the unbearably painful and absolutely unmitigable fact of Cordelia's death and his human need to comprehend the absolutely incomprehensible reality of this fact.

With his universally representative human self King Lear who passionately demands the all of meaning and justice sees,

out of his infinite desire and finite capacity, a life-shattering vision of *nothingness* on Cordelia's lips, which is analogous to Edgar's vision down the imaginary abyss. We who look through Lear and also at him are carried through the tragic dynamics of the reduction-revaluation movement beyond the frontiers of our consciousness to discover, feel and contemplate the reduction-revaluation of the conflicting possibilifies of life in mounting tragic intensity and even to the point of the absolute extremity of tragic intensity. The reduction-revaluation movement informs the play by enacting through a complex montage the reduction-revaluation of the composite symbolic form of the play to a condition of complete simplicity which makes it most resonant and most transparent. Thus the reduction– revaluation movement is the technique and the theme. Rather, it is the technique which is the theme as discovered, in its form and pressure, in the total response of our consciousness to the dramatic world of *King Lear*.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. S. L. Goldberg: *An Essay on King Lear* (London, 1974), p. 110ff. My frequent borrowings from this illuminating book indicate that I am more indebted to it than I can acknowledge.
2. I have picked up the concept from Ruth Nevo: *Tragic Form in Shakespeare* (Princeton, 1972)
3. See Michael Long: *The Unnatural Scene* (London, 1976) p. 163ff.
4. Ruth Nevo, *op. cit.* p. 268
5. S.L. Goldberg. *op., cit.* pp. 90-91
6. M T Nowsworthy, 'Some aspects of the Style of *King Lear*' in Shakespeare Survey 13, 1960
7. Michael Long, *op., cit.*, p. 197ff

Kathleen Raine

THE CITY IN WILLIAM BLAKE

William Blake occupies an unique place among the Romantic poets in being before all else a poet of the city; and among all English poets his conception of the city is without precedent. Blake was a Londoner born, and but for three years spent in the village of Felpham on the Suffolk coast employed (as an engraver) by an uncomprehending patron, William Hayley, a country squire and biographer of the poet Cowper, lived all his life in his native city. Not indeed that he loved the city and was indifferent to nature: on the contrary, there are passages of nature poetry in his work of the greatest beauty. Rather he saw the city as the tragic and terrible scene of human struggle and suffering, of good and evil, of the heavens and hells of human experience; and for Blake 'Nature without man is barren': yet the city was, for Blake, of supreme concern because the city is the human creation, the total expression of the human imagination, in its heights and in its depths. Man is born in Eden— nature—and toils to create the city which shall embody and express the thoughts and visions of the inner order of the human mind; an invisible order, not to be found in nature, the uniquely human universe. Above all, for Blake, the city is alive; it is not merely an embodiment, in works of art, of thoughts and visions, dreams and imaginings: it is these thoughts and imaginings themselves, the collective life of a people or a nation. What Blake wrote about London has little to do with what a town-planner or a writer on architecture might have to tell; for Blake a city is a living being, 'a human awful wonder of God' as he wrote. The city is not its outward form but the inner life of its inhabitants as these interact upon one another for good or ill. Of this living city composed of a myriad lives the city of stone and bricks, of streets and build-

ings, of palaces and churches, is only the image and realization. For Blake his native city is therefore a Person, a collective Person rather than a place:

> I behold London, a Human awful wonder of God!
> He says: 'Return, Albion, return! I give myself for thee.
> 'My Streets are my Ideas of Imagination.
> 'Awake Albion, awake! and let us awake up together.
> 'My Houses are Thoughts: my Inhabitants, Affections,
> 'The children of my thoughts walking within my blood-vessels'
> (J. 38. 29. K. 665)

Throughout his life Blake continued to listen to the unspoken thoughts of his city's collective life and to that of 'The Giant Albion', the English nation— a 'giant' because made up of many lives, past, present and to come:

> So spoke London, immortal Guardian!
> In Felpham I heard and saw the Visions of Albion.
> I write in South Molton Street what I both see and hear
> In regions of Humanity, in London's opening streets
> (J. 38. 40. K. 665)

In South Molton Street, in the heart of London, near Oxford Street, Blake himself lived for a number of years.

Every city has its collective identity, its special human character:

> Verulam! Canterbury! venerable parent of men,
> Generous immortal Guardian, golden clad! for Cities
> Are Men, fathers of multitudes, and Rivers & Mountains
> Are also Men; everything is Human, mighty! sublime!
> (J. 38. 45. K. 665)

—and he names other cities, 'Edinburgh, cloth'd with fortitude'. York, Selsea, Chichester, Oxford, Bath, Durham, Lincoln, Carlisle, Ely, Norwich, Peterborough— all the principal cities of England, and each with its own human character. The city, then, is for Blake a living spiritual entity; he called this interior London 'Golgonooza', from the root *golgos*, a skull; because the city's existence is not outside but within us, in the human brain:

> ...Golgonooza the spiritual Fourfold London eternal,
> In immense labours & sorrows, ever building, ever falling
> (M. 6. 1-2. K. 485)

Terrible and beautiful, this interior city is a continual striving and creation:

> Here, on the banks of the Thames, Los builded Golgonooza,
> Outside of the Gates of the Human Heart...
> ... In fears
> He builded it, in rage and in fury. It is the Spiritual Fourfold
> London, continually building & continually decaying desolate
> (J. 53. 15. K. 684)

(Los, in Blake's mythological system, is the time-spirit who like the Indian Shiva is creator and destroyer of all that is manifested in time; his consort Enitharmon is space).

The city of Golgonooza is fourfold because we are ourselves fourfold. Blake had already understood the fourfold nature of the human psyche before C. G. Jung made the human quaternity familiar to our century under the names of reason, sensation, feeling and intuition. The whole mythological action of Blake's Prophetic Books revolves round the interplay—the strife and the harmonizing—of these 'four mighty ones' who are, he says, in every breast', and whom he calls the Four Zoas-- the Living Creatures of the vision of Ezekiel and the similar Apocalyptic beasts in St. John's vision of the New Jerusalem. As the human psyche, so the human city. Golgonooza therefore takes the form Jung has named a mandala; much like St. John's fourfold city, with its four 'gates' and sacred precinct. Blake describes this structure at length, though he never drew it. In fact the city is four dimensional, each of its 'gates' themselves fourfold, and the fourfold orientation is endlessly repeated in every 'inhabitant' and everything within the city:

> And every part of the City is fourfold; & every inhabitant,
> fourfold.
> And every pot & vesset & garment & utensil of the houses,
> And every house, fourfold;

—that is to say we experience the city not only with our physical senses but with heart, mind, and imagination.

> ...but the third Gate in every one
> Is clos'd as with a threefold curtain of ivory & fine linen & ermine.
> (J. 13. 20. K. 633)

The 'Western Gate'— that of the physical senses— is closed by the physical body (the ivory bones and woven fibres of the mortal 'garment' of flesh) until man's rerurn to Paradise, when the senses also will open into the 'eternal' world of human consciousness and not, as now, into the transient world of time and space.

In this and other respects Golgonooza differs from St. John's holy city; for Golgonooza is not the heavenly archetype but work in progress towards the building of Jerusalem on earth—*Jerusalem*, the 'bride' of Blake's 'Jesus, the Imagination' gives its title to Blake's last prophetic book; and Vala, the 'goddess nature' to his first; Vala's other name is Babylon, the secular city built not according to the heavenly archetype but by mortal humanity forgetful of the inner worlds. For Blake the human task on earth is to realize in time an image of eternity; to build the outer city in the image of the inner city, or, to use the phrase of the Irish mystic A.E. (George Russell, early friend of Blake's greatest disciple, W. B. Yeats,) to make the 'politics of time' conform to the 'politics of eternity.' This has been the theme of Plato, of Aristotle, of St. Augustine, and of Blake's own teacher, Swedenborg: who also described his vision of the fourfold spiritual London, and whose detailed description of its quarters and their inhabitants was no doubt the immediate inspiration of Blake's Golgonooza. In St. John's Holy City (which is also a mandala) the central symbol is the Tree of Life and the four flowing rivers of Paradise; while in the City of Golgonooza the centre is the palace of Los, the time–spirit, surrounded by a moat of fire. There Los labours at his 'furnaces' to give concrete form in space and time to whatever humanity imagines. Los and Enitharmon (as time and space) are the parents of all who come into the world of Generation. At the end of time the furnaces of creation will become fountains and the four rivers of life flow again where Los's 'furnaces' now blaze.

'The male is a furnace of beryll; & the female is a golden loom'. On Enitharmon's looms are woven the bodies with which she clothes the generating spirits, while 'The Sons of Los clothe them & feed & provide houses & fields.' (M. 26. 30.

K.512). With every new birth a new region of experience comes into being, each, unique; for though we live in the same city, we have each our own 'houses and fields', our especial vision of that shared world, and through the interplay of all these unique inner worlds, none alike, the city is built and sustained:

> And every Generated Body in its inward form
> Is a garden of delight & a building of magnificence
> Built by the sons of Los...
> And the herbs & flowers & furniture & beds & chambers
> Continually woven in the Looms of Enitharmon's Daughters,
> In bright Cathedron's golden Dome with care & love & tears.
> (M. 26. 31. K. 512)

All born into this world have the opportunity to share in the 'labour' of building the City, whose 'houses & fields' are not, of course, those bought and sold by property-dealers, but regions of humankind's living experience.

Blake's spiritual fourfold London, therefore, is neither St John's Holy city, nor the 'waste land' of that later poet of London, T. S. Eliot, although there are indeed passages in Blake's writing— and especially in his latest work, *Jerusalem* – as dark as any in Eliot's poem, passages which no doubt provided a prototype for Eliot's 'unreal city'. Behind both Blake and Eliot stands Dante, whose beloved and hated city of Florence peopled the three regions of hell, purgatory and paradise; these also, as for Blake— and indeed for Eliot– not places in the natural world but states of being.

For Blake, as for Dante and indeed for Eliot, his denunciation of the London hells was somethtng more than political; it was in the light of the politics of eternity that he judged the politics of a time for the most part forgetful of humanlty's inner worlds. Economic forces, material interests, the distribution of wealth and property were not for him causes but effects produced by human attitudes; and while Blake denounces a society that enslaves the poor to wretched wages, forces children to labour in factories and conscripts young men into armies waging useless wars, he saw these things as not curable by material or political changes alone. They are the inevitable consequence of false ideologies. No words of Blake's are

better known and more often quoted than 'those dark Satanic Mills'; felt to be so apt a description of England's industrial landscape that few have troubled to examine Blake's own use of the phrase. These words do not in fact describe fhe mills and factories of an industrial landscape (which in Blake's lifetime had scarcely come into existence) but the philosophy, the ideology— which was to give rise to these; that of mechanistic materialism, which Blake identlfied with the names associated with that deadly ideology which was to dominate the next hundred years, the names of Bacon, Newton and Locke. The 'mills' of Satan are the universe of mechanistic causes, ever producing mechanistic effects, the world as a machine envisaged by Newton and philosophisrd by Locke, unmitigated, unenlightened by any vision of humanity's inner kingdom, the archetype of the Holy City which the inhabitants of Golgonooza labour to realize. Therefore Blake calls Satan (who is 'the mind of the natural frame', oblivious of the inner spiritual kingdom) 'the Miller of Eternity', and with a direct allusion to Newtonian astronomy.

> ...Prince of the Starry Hosts
> And of the Wheels of Heaven, to turn the Mills day & night.

This world, deprived of spiritual llfe, conceived as an inhuman mechanism, a mechanism to which men & women are perforce enslaved, is Blake's hell. Blake leaves us in no doubt what the ideology is which he holds responsible for this mechanisiic scheme of thought, soon to image itself in nineteenth century utilitarian England, thence to spread throughout the world, taking with it desolation. The final outcome of a mechanization of nature can only be the mechanization human beings also. Los, the time- spirit, asks Satan, his 'youngest-born', the modern mentality.

> Art thou not Newton's Pantocrator, weaving the Woof of Locke?
> To Mortals thy Mills seem every thing... (M. 4. 11-12. K. 483)

— and dismisses him with the prophetic words

> Thy Work is Eternal Death with Mills & Ovens & Cauldrons.
> Trouble me no more; thou canst not have Eternal Life.
> (M. 4. 17. K. 483)

The desolation of the landscape created by Blake's Satan is that of Dante's City of Dis, and Milton's Pandemonium, these likewise cities built in hell, which is the place and state cut off from spiritual vision. Blake saw, and foresaw the dark landscape to come, contrasting labourers enslaved to the machine with the pastoral world industry was beginning to replace.

> And all the Arts of Life they chang'd into the Arts of Death in Albion.
>
> The hour-glass contemn'd because its simple workmanship
> Was like the workmanship of the plowman, & the water-wheel
> That raises water into cisterns, broken & burn'd with fire
> Because its workmanship was like the workmanship of the shepherd;
>
> And in their stead, intricate wheels invented, wheel without wheel,
> To perplex youth in their outgoings & to bind to labours in Albion
> Of day & night the myriads of eternity; that they may grind
> And polish brass & iron hour after hour, laborious task,
> Kept ignorant of its use: that they might spend the days of wisdom
> In sorrowful drudgery to obtain a scanty pittance of bread,
> In ignorance to view a small portion & think that All,
> And call it Demonstration, blind to all the simple rules of life.

While indeed Blake protested against the enslavement of labour it is above all the spiritual bondage he deplores; high wages would not, in his eyes, sufficiently compensate for the soul-destroying effect of such mechanical tasks on life itself. 'His machines are woven with his life' is Blake's terrible prophetic reflection on the Giant Albion, the English nation for whose awakening and recovery he laboured.

Even in Blake's early *Songs of Experience*, the poem *London* gives no description of the appearance of the city but evokes its essence in human terms:

> I wander thro' each charter'd street,
> Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
> And mark in every face I meet
> Marks of weakness, marks of woe.
>
> In every cry of every Man,
> In every Infant's cry of fear,
> In every voice; in every ban,
> The mind-forged manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new born Infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

(K. 216)

The walls of London churches are blackened by the soot from chimneys swept by small boys on whose wrongs the church is silent; and those who from places of government make wars bear the reproach of the blood of the hapless soldiers who fight them. The laws of property impose helplessness on the inhabitants of the 'charter'd' streets, while prostitution is the offspring of poverty and social hypocrisy.

London, in *Songs of Experience*, is depicted as an old man led by a little child; and Blake used the same depiction many years later in *Jerusalem* illustrating the words

I see London, blind & age-bent, begging thro' the Streets
(J. 84. 11. K. 729)

Thus the city is always described in terms of states of being For Blake Chelsea Hospital was not Wren's fine architecture but 'the place of wounded Soldiers'; 'London's darkness'— for Blake the only darkness is spiritual darkness—is made up of

The Solder's fife, the Harlot's shriek, the Virgin's dismal groan,
The Parent's fear, the Brother's jealousy, the Sister's curse.

Under the influence of an ideology that does not hold life to be sacred a society has no scruples in enslaving human labour in peace and in war. 'Battersea and Chelsea mourn'. 'Hackney and Holloway sicken' as their children are herded into armies; and the Giant Albion laments,

...I hear my Children's voices,
I see their piteous faces gleam out upon the cruel winds
From Lincoln & Norwich, from Edinburgh & Monmouth:
I see them distant from my bosom scourg'd along the roads.
Then lost in clouds. I hear their tender voices! Clouds divide:
I see them die beneath the whips of the Captains. (J.21.32.K.644)

No less terrible the enslavement of labour:

> They mock at the Labourer's limbs: they mock at his starv'd Children:
>
> They buy his daughters that they may have power to sell his Sons:
> They compell the Poor to live upon a crust of bread by soft mild arts:
>
> They reduce the Man to wants then give with pomp & ceremony.
> The praise of Jehovah is chanted from lips of hunger & thirst.

No poet has more precisely and more bitterly condemned his city than Blake denounced London, where he saw

> ...ell the tendernesses of the soul cast forth as filth & mire
> (J. 31. 21. K. 657)

Such is the city as it is built when the agent is not the Imagination and the human spirit, but by Satan 'the soul of the natural frame', whose wife is Vala, Babylon, the 'cruel' goddess Nature, principle of mortal generation, who weaves the 'black Woof of Death' as 'the veil of human miseries'. As Blake listened to the voices of London he heard much that was terrible: conscription of young men for useless war; industrial enslavement of women and children; at Tyburn the London crowds would gather to see the hangings of mere boys for small offences against property— all the sufferings and injustices of a society from which Jerusalem, the soul of the nation, was 'cast forth'

> ...upon the wilds to Poplar & Bow,
> To Malden & Canterbury in the delights of cruelty.
> The Shuttles of death sing in the sky to Islington & Pancrass,
> Round Marybone to Tyburn's River, weaving black melancholy as a net,
>
> And despair as meshes closely wove over the west of London
> Where mild Jerusalem sought to repose in death & be no more.
> (J. 41. 5. K. 668)

Vala, the Goddess Nature, is the mother of bodies. Jerusalem the mother of souls; she is the bride of 'Jesus, the Imagination' or the 'Divine Humanity'— a term Blake took from his master Swedenborg. In the four quatrains that form the preface to the prophetic poem *Milton* Blake turns a tradition according to which Jesus had visited Glastonbury in the company of Joseph

of Arimathea to symbolic purposes, and asks (translating the poem into Blake's symbolic terms) whether once the Imagination and spiritual vision had not been present in his native land. Our Gothic cathedrals Blake deeply admired as monuments of 'spiritual religion,' in contrast with Wren's St. Paul's which he saw as a church of Deism – natural religion, product of the materialist ideologies he opposed. The hymn is known to millions and is sung at every meeting of the thousands of Women's Institutes throughout Britain;

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire.

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green & pleasant Land. (K. 480-81)

If such impassioned thought can be paraphrased in prose Blake is announcing his lifelong task— and incidentally the theme of the poem *Milton*— which is to take up spiritual arms against materialist mentality which he saw already dominating English life and thought. In the name of the spiritual city Jerusalem, the soul of his nation, whose fall into the 'deadly sleep' of a mechanistic science he saw as a spiritual sickness and as the cause of many evils. Jerusalem, the suffering soul of the alienated Giant Albion, found refuge in the humble house of Blake and his wife in Lambeth, on the south bank of the Thames. Blake knew himself to be that soul's champion and guardian. In a modest house in Lambeth Blake's earliest Prophetic Books were written; a house of hope and vision

and the love of his early years of marriage. In a hostile world Jerusalem

> ...fled to Lambeth's mild Vale and hid herself beneath
> The Surrey Hills...her Sons are siez'd
> For victims of sacrifice; but Jerusalem cannot be found, Hid
> By the Daughters of Beulah. (J. 41. 12. K. 668)

It is to be remembered that Blake was writing during the Napoleonic wars, seen by him as wanton waste of young lives in a doubtful cause; (he had in his youth been a supporter of the French Revolution, in the years before the Terror, but later saw that his early hopes had ended in a war that could bring no good to eithhr victor or vanquished).

Beulah is married love—a symbol taken from Swedenborg's commentaries on the Bible; and there follows a beautiful and intimate image of the relationship between Blake and his wife, who gave refuge to Jerusalem from a hostile world bent on war and conquest:

> There is a Grain of Sand in Lambeth that Satan cannot find,
> Nor can his Watch Fiends find it; 'tis translucent & has many Angles,
> But he who finds it will find Oothoon's palace; for within
> Opening into Beulah, every angle is a lovely heaven.
> (J. 41. 15. K. 668)

Blake is writing of a refuge not to be found in time or space—in 'nature,' Satan's kingdom; 'To see a world in a grain of sand' —in the dimensionless — is the gift of the imagination alone, and this gives refuge from Satan's world. Jerusalem is not built by rulers or town-planners, but in the secrecy of many hearts; and from humble beginnings Blake knew himself to be engaged in the laying of her foundations; as history has since proved, in the ever-growing number of those who in this century look to him as England's great prophet.

> We builded Jerusalem as a City & a Temple; from Lambeth
> We began our Foundations, lovely Lambeth. O lovely Hills
> Of Camberwell... (J. 84. 3. K. 729)

True though it is that from Lambeth Blake and his wife could

walk into green fields of Camberwell, it is not on account of its natural beauty that Blake calls these places 'lovely' but because of his spiritual labours and human happiness in these otherwise obscure suburbs of London. It is ever in secrecy that the foundations of the City are laid, and in a passage of great beauty (where, again, Lambeth is invoked) Blake perfectly and eloquently expresses all he felt about what a human city is, in its inner essence, as a building of human souls each individually and all collectively labouring to embody a vision whose realization will be only when all is done 'on earth as it is in heaven', according to the archetype of the Human Imagination. The soul — Jerusalem — is called 'the lamb's wife' and the bride of Jesus because she perceives the 'Divine Human' present within every individual as the image of God in which, (according to the first chapter of Genesis) unfallen man was created. Because that archetype is 'the human existence itself', reality itself, (and not, like the illusory ideologies of the empirical human ego, cut off from that living ground) it is impossible for Blake to despair, since reality must finally prevail over illusion. It is the Imagination who presides over the Last Judgment, in which error is exposed in the light of Imagination's ultimate truth. For similar reasons— because that signature of the Divine Humanity is in every human being, Blake never presented the building of the City of Jerusalem as the work of afew men of outstanding genius or so-called 'originality' or inventiveness. The city is, rather, the work of all its inhabitants, the 'golden builders':

> What are those golden builders doing? where was the buryingplace
> Of soft Ethinthus? near Tyburn's fatal Tree? is that
> Mild Zion's hill's most ancient promontory, near mournful
> Ever weeping Paddington? is that Calvary and Golgotha
> Becoming a building of pity and compassion? Lo!
> The stones are pity, and the bricks, well wrought affections
> Enamel'd with love & kindnees, & the tiles engraven gold,
> Labour of merciful hands: the beams & rafters are forgiveness:
> The mortar & cement of the work, tears of honesty: the nails
> And the screws & iron braces are well wrought blandishmets
> And well contrived words, firm fixing, never forgotten,
> Always comforting the remembrance: the floors, humility:

The ceilings devotion: the hearths, thanksgiving.
Prepare the furniture, O Lambeth, in thy pitying looms,
The curtains, woven tears & sighs wrought into lovely forms
For comfort; there the secret furniture of Jerusalem's chamber
Is wrought. Lambeth! the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, loveth thee.
Thou art one with her & knowest not of self in thy supreme joy.
Go on, builders in hope, tho' Jerusalem wanders far away
Without the gate of Los, among the dark Satanic wheels.
(J. 12. 25. K. 632)

Because Blake's Jesus is the human Imagination his holy city is a city of the arts—these being, within Blake's terms, embodiments of the heavenly archetypes. For Blake morality (and he includes both civil law and the Church's law) is the domain of the God of This World— of Satan the Self-hood— whereas the works of poet, painter and architect are embodiments of visions of heavenly originals. 'One thing alone makes a poet', Blake declared, 'Imagination, the Divine Vision'. Blake followed the Platonic tradition in holding that humankind has lost paradise not through sin but through forgetfulness; and the artists are among those who have not (in Platonic terms) drunk too deep of the river of matter—the draught of forgetfulness on entering this world. Transposed into Biblical terms, Blake writes that Noah and his sons 'represent Poetry, Painting & Music, the three Powers in Man of conversing with Paradise, which the flood did not sweep away'. (Notebook p. 178 K. 609)— the flood' of the five senses, which obscures the vision of the soul, as he elsewhere writes. For Blake therefore true art is the mirror of Imagination, mediated by those 'daughters of Inspira tion' who are his muses. Yeats, whose own Byzantium is a city of the arts, wrote in similar vein, following his master Blake, that 'truth cannot be discovered, but may be revealed'. Works of art– copies of 'heavenly originals'– the archetype– serve in turn to awaken recollection, in the Platonic sense of the word *anamnesis*, in those 'sleepers'— again the term comes from Plotinus–who cannot themselves perceive directly the originals 'laid up in heaven'. It is said that Pythagoras could himself 'hear' the music of the spheres, but invented musical modes in order to communicate these to his disciples; just as Mozart

perceived in his mind a whole opera, which he could then transcribe into instrumental music. Hence works of art are a human necessity, if the human race is to be reminded of the heavenly originals and withheld from falling into what Blake calls the 'deadly sleep' of forgetfulness of our own spiritual universe and nature.

Thus the City of Golgonooza is called the city of human 'Art and Manufacture'; it has 'mighty Spires & Domes of ivory and gold' embodying visions the Sons of Los labour to realize. These beautiful works form mental regions—'houses' in Blake's terms— which we may enter and 'live' in— as we may 'live' not only in architectural buildings but also in works of music or poetry or within 'regions' created by artists of imaginative insight. 'Poetry'; as I.A. Richards wrote, 'is the house we live in'. The betrayal of the true task of the artist by those who work without any vision of the archetype, or who deliberately proffer some reductionist or perverted vision of the human spirit are thus failing, not merely to amuse or instruct, but to create an environment in which the soul can live. So Blake, with an allusion to Shakespeare's lines about the poet who 'gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name', describes the task of the artists as builders of the City of Golgonooza:

> Some Sons of Los surround the Passions with porches of iron & silver,
>
> Creating form & beauty around the dark regions of sorrow,
> Giving to airy nothing a name and a habitation
> Delightful, with bounds to the Infinite putting off the Indefinite
> Into most holy forms of Thought; such is the power of inspiration.
> They labour incessant with many tears & afflictions.
> Creating the beautiful House for the piteous sufferer
> (M. 28. 1. K. 514)

The 'piteous sufferers' are the forgetful souls who in this world have lost the recollection of the eternal order. For Blake the true environment of the human spirit is the inner regions created by works of art, A utilitarian city can provide only 'housing' but not, in Blake's beautiful sense, 'houses and fields' of the imagination, sheltering and sustaining the soul as well as the body.

'Los's Halls', built throughout the 6,000 years of the world, are our inheritance of works of the Imagination, where inhabitants of the spiritual city may find the records of all human history. We inhabit not only a temporal present and the ruins of time but all that timeless world that Imagination has created, a spacious world. In the 'halls' of the time-spirit all that has been realized in the life of the imagination remains:

> All things acted on Earth are seen in the bright Sculptures of
> Los's Halls, & every Age renews its powers from these Works
> With every pathetic story possible to happen from Hate or
> Wayward Love; & every sorrow & distress is carved here,
> Every Affinity of Parents. Marriages & Friendships are here
> In all their various combinations wrought with wondrous Art,
> All that can happen to Man in his pilgrimage of seventy years.
>
> (J. 16.61.K.638)

Perhaps Blake, who as a painter and engraver, naturally thought in terms of the visual arts, here uses the symbolic image of 'sculptures' because these are of all the arts the most permanent; and it is the timeless permanence of the records of the human imagination that he is here evoking. There is a somewhat similar passage in Dante's *Purgatorio* Canto Xii, where in the pavement of the circle of the proud are chiselled reliefs showing examples from classical and biblical antiquity of pride laid low— Saul, Arachne, Rehoboam, Alcmaeon and Sennacherib; this gallery of the past with its pathetic stories of hate and wayward love might have inspired Blake's eloquent evocation of the creations of Los and his Sons in the halls of time, carved in the records of

> ... the City of Golgonooza & its smaller Cities,
> The Looms & Mills & Prisons & Work-housas of Og & Anak,
> The Amalekite, tbe Canaanite, the Moabite, the Egyptian,
> And all that has existed in the space of six thousand years,
> Permanent & not lost, not lost nor vanish'd, & every little act,
> Word, work & wish that has existed, all remaining still
>
> ...
>
> For every thing exists & not one smile nor tear,
> One hair nor particle of dust, not one can pass away.
>
> (J. 13. 56-14. 1. K. 634)

What Imagination has experienced and created remains for ever, not in the natural world but in the 'spiritual fourfold London eternal', and in every human city, the regions of humankind's inner universe of which the inhabitants of earth are the creators and inheritors in the 'halls' of Time.

Throughout his descriptions of the building of Golgonooza Blake insists on the toil, the great labours, of the builders; and not least on his own:

> ... I rest not from my great task!
> To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes
> Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought, into Eternity,
> Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination.
> (J. 5. 17. K. 623)

Blake supremely admired Michaelangelo and the other Florentine architects and painters who were, with the builders of the Gothic cathedrals, working, so Blake understood, according to the true forms of Imagination; recognized by all because innate in all. He would gladly have used his gifts as a painter in the service of his own city, as did the architects and painters and sculptors of the cities of Italy, and— specifically—would have liked to paint great frescoes comparable to theirs in Westminster Abbey. He was never given the opportunity to do this, and was bitter and angry in his protest against the commercial values of England where money and not vision dictated the quality of the city, its buildings and its works. He lamented the absence of such enlightened patrons as the Papacy and the Medicis who had set the great Florentines to build and adorn the cities of Italy:

> The Artist wishes it was now the fashion to make such monuments, and then he should not doubt of having a national commission to execute these two Pictures [the spiritual forms of Nelson and Pitt] on a scale that is suitable to the grandeur of the nation, who is the parent of his heroes. in high finished fresco, where the colours would be as pure and as permanent as precious stones, though the figures were one hundred feet in height. (Descriptive Catalogue II, The Spiritual Form of Pitt. K. 566)

Blake would have liked to 'make England What Italy is, an Envied Storehouse of Intellectual Riches'. (Notebook p. 20, Public Address).

But a commercial nation encourages impostors, since true discrimination is lacking. However, scale being finally of little importance, it has surely come about that Blake's illustrations of the Book of Job, a few square inches in size, have created 'regions' of the Imagination no less spacious than Michaelangelo's Sistine chapel, and 'visited' by the imaginations of almost as many as those who visit the Vatican.

The Imagination is innate in all but gifts are unequal, and Blake was no friend of the envy latent in egalitarianism. In his early book *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* he wrote:

> The worship of God is: Honouring his gifts in other men, each according to his genius, and loving the greatest men best: those who envy or calumniate great men hate God; for there is no other God.
>
> (MHH. 22. K. 158)

To this he added 'if Jesus Christ is the greatest man, you ought to love him in the greatest degree'–Jesus being the universal Imagination itself, whose disciples, according to Blake, are 'all artists'. He had not changed his view when he wrote in his introduction to the concluding chapter of his last Prophetic Book, *Jerusalem*

> I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination, Imagination, the real & eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow... The Apostles knew of no other Gospel. What were all their spiritual gifts? What is the Divine Spirit? Is the Holy Ghost any other than an Intellectual Fountain?... What is the Life of Man but Art & Science? Is it Meat & Drink? is not the Body more than Raiment? What is Mortality but things relating to the Body which Dies? What is Immortality but the things relating to the Spirit which Lives Eternally?... to Labour in Knowledge is to Build up Jerusalem and to Despise Knowledge is to Despise Jerusalem & her Builders. And remember: He who despises & mocks a Mental Gift in another, calling it pride & selfishness & sin, mocks Jesus the giver of every Mental Gift, which always appear to the ignorance-loving Hypocrite as Sins; but that which is a Sin in the sight of cruel Man is not so in the sight of our kind God. Let every Christian, as much as in him lies, engage himself openly & publicly before all the World in some Mental pursuit for the Building up of Jerusalem.

'A Poet, a Painter, a Musician, an Architect: (he wrote) the Man Or Woman who is not one of these is not a Christian.' (The

Laocoon, K. 776). The golden builders can never rest from their labours,

> ... in Visions
> In new Expanses, creating exemplars of Memory and of Intellect;

—for these are the regions of every human city, whose life and continuity depends not upon its historic monuments, but on the continuity of the inner life of its inhabitants.

London, U.K.

Piloo Nanavutty

THE RIVER OF OBLIVION

In the Print Room of J. Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, there are three pencil sketches by Blake: one of a standing figure, the other a very rough sketch for Dante's *Hell*, Canto XVIII; and the third entitled 'The River of Oblivion' which is now shown to be an illustration of Dante's *Purgatory*, Cantos XXX-XXXII. It is with this last drawing, hitherto unidentified, and reproduced here for the first time, that the present essay is concerned.

The River of Oblivion is not mentioned by Rossetti in his annotated lists of Blake's pictures appended to Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake*. It rightfully belongs to the Dante series of illustrations, and should be placed among the three designs concluding the series for the *Purgatory*. The three designs just referred to are: 'Beatrice on the Car, with Dante and Matilda', Canto XXIX; 'Beatrice addressing Dante', Cantos XXIX and XXX; and thirdly, 'The Harlot and the Giant', Canto XXXII. 'The River of Oblivion; Cantos XXX-XXXII, would come chronologically before 'The Harlot and the Giant'. As John Linnell commissioned Blake, who was then in his seventieth year, to illustrate the *Divine Comedy*, 'The River of Oblivion' would date c. 1826.

Although unfinished, it is a very beautiful drawing, and would have been one of the finest if it had been completed. It requires detailed explanation, being crowded with incidents from Cantos XXX-XXXII.

The two central figures of the composition are Dante and Beatrice. Dante is seated on a stone, and turns his back upon Beatrice who is standing beside him. He stretches out longing arms into the distance. His brows are contracted in anguish, and the eyes, half closed, gaze into futurity. Blake obviously

has the following lines in mind:

> No sooner on my vision streaming, smote
> The heavenly influence,... then towards Virgil I
> Turned me to leftward; panting, like a babe,
> That flees for refuge to his mother's breast,
> If aught have terrified or worked him woe:
>
> (Canto XXX, 41-44; Cary's translation)

The accepted allegory is that when man draws near to Heavenly Wisdom, personified by Beatrice, he is in dread, and runs for safety to his former loves, poetry and the arts, symbolised by Virgil.

Distressed by his attitude, Beatrice admonishes Dante:

> Observe me well. I am, in sooth, I am
> Beatrice. What! and has thou deigned at last
> Approach the mountain? Knewest not, O man!
> Thy happniess is here?
>
> (Canto XXX, 71-4)

The gracious figure of Beatrice dominated the whole composition. She stands with her left arm raised high, and the right pointing down. Above her flies a young cherub, one of those 'hundred ministers and messengers of life eternal' whose function is to shower 'unwithering lilies' on Beatrice and her companions. Her 'white veil with olive wreathed' falls in cascades down her back. The olive wreath is outlined in heavier pencil round the crown of her head. Blake has scattered stars and crescent moons in the veil, suggested, perhaps, by the concluding lines of Canto XXXI:

> Whose spirit should not fail him in the essay
> To represent thee such as thou didst seem,
> When under cope of the still-chiming heaven
> Thou gavest to open air thy charms revealed ?
>
> (Canto XXXI, 143-146)

Her expression is one of mingled sorrow and severity as she bends her head towards Dante and rests her eyes upon him. The position of her arms is very significant. According to Joseph Wicksteed, by the right side Blake signifies the spiritual and eternal, and by the left the material and temporal. By raising her left arm to heaven Beatrice indicates that the

body must strive to attain the perfection of the spirit, and by pointing her right hand down she means to say that the spirit must descend to redeem the material[1]. Her answer to Dante's plaintive longing for Virgil is that poetry and the arts are not lost but transfigured by Heavenly wisdom. Occasionally, Blake permits himself the liberty of introducing his own symbols in interpreting the thought of another, even when he keeps strictly to his author's text as in the water colour illustrations for Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*[2], Milton's *Paradise Lost*[3] and *Paradise Regained*,[4] and in the pencil sketches for the *Book of Enoch*[5].

Turning back to 'The River of Oblivion,' it will be seen that Lethe flows at the bottom of the page. In its waters swims a beautiful, nude female. She is Matilda whom Dante first saw culling flowers and who led him to Beatrice. Dante's text describes Matilda as plunging him into the stream while she herself sweeps along, swift as a shuttle, bounding o'er the wave.' Characteristically enough, it is this abandonment of movement which Blake has portrayed in his delineation of Matilda in the pencil sketch at the Morgan Library. To her left, float three human heads with distraught expressions upon their countenances. They represent, presumably, those souls who are for ever drowned in the waters of oblivion.

On the right, Dante, having bathed in Lethe, is seen climbing up the river bank towards a group of maidens, very roughly sketched. They are the seven nymphs who form 'a cloister' round Beatrice. They symbolise the four cardinal virtues, Prudence, Fortitude, Justice, and Temperance; and the three evangelical ones, Faith, Hope, and Charity. In their upraised hands they hold 'tapers of gold,' representing the Seven Sacraments or the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Dante's left hand is held to his forehead and covers his eyes. The nymphs seem to be warning him of some danger. Blake is illustrating the following lines:

> So tangled, in its customed toils, that smile
> Of saintly brightness drew me to itself:
> When forcibly, toward the left, my sight
> The sacred virgins turned; for from their lips

I heard the warning sounds: 'Too fixed a gazel'
Awhile my vision laboured; as when late
Upon the o'erstrained eyes the sun hath smote:
(Canto XXXII, 7-11)

The usual intepretation is that when an individual gazes too intently upon Heavenly Wisdom, his intelligence is blinded by the light rather than illumined by it.

In the foreground, and on the extreme right, are three tall trees, bare of leaf and flower. At the foot of one of them is seated Beatrice, 'sad and sighing,' with uplifted eyes and open mouth, and arms raised above her head in lamentation. This tree, 'despoiled of flowers and leaf on every bough,' is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Behind the gigantic trees, rises the 'high wood, now void.' The boughs overarching the seated Beatrice, however, are just beginning to sprout. Blake is here referring to the miracle which transforms the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil into the Tree of Life, a miracle which Dante is not permitted to see because of overpowering sleep, the effect of being washed by the waters of oblivion. On coming to himself he enquires from Matilda the where-abouts of Beatrice and is told that she is 'beneath the fresh leaf, seated on its root.' This is exactly where Blake has placed her in his sketch.

In the top left hand corner, Blake has drawn the whore and the Giant of Canto XXXII. A voluptuous female, with double neck and bestial face, reclines in languor upon a bank. Besides her, in extremely faint outline, is a male figure, half reclining. He has a large, bald head, and piggish eyes, and thrusts out his tongue. The outline is very slight, however, and would, in all probability, be obliterated in reproduction. Blake is illustrsting the well-known lines:

Methought there sat secure as rock
On mountain's lofty top, a shameless whore,
Whose ken roved loosely round her. At her side,
As 't were that none might bear her off, I saw
A giant stand; and ever and anon
They mingled kisses. (Canto XXXII, 146-151)

Blake realised that he could nol develop this theme in the

restricted space at his disposal, so decided to make a fresh start. The result was 'The Harlot and the Giant,' which, as Rossetti justly remarks, contains 'a good deal of curious material'.

Even as it stands, 'The River of Oblivion' delights the eye, and is worth including in a future edition of Blake's pencil drawings.[6]

New Delhi

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5. Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. For the symbolism in these sketches, see Allan R. Brown, Blake's Drawings for the Book of Enoch, *'The Burlington Magazine*, September 1940, pp. 80-84
6. See the fine examples reproduced under Mr. Keynes's careful supervision: *Pencil Drawings* by *William Blake*, edited by Geoffrey Keynes for the Nonesuch Press, London, 1927

N. M. Rao

YEATS'S 'AMONG SCHOOLCHILDREN': TEXT AND CONTEXT

Yeats's 'Among Schoolchildren' is one of the most intriguing of modern texts. The complexity of modern life makes the poet, as Eliot said, force, dislocate—if necessary—language into meaning. There is evidence of no such exercise in Yeats's poem. Although 'Among Schoolchildren' does not have the linguistic or syntactic complexities that would create the the obscurity associated with modernist poetry, 'it is amongst the most difficult of all Yeats's poems'.[1] John wain says, 'The main subject of the poem is the relationship, or interpenetration of matter and spirit.' The question of 'the confused relationship of matter and spirit is...brought up, but it is not the function of the poem to propound a solution....Its purpose is to afford us...a bleak and chastening glimpse into the deep waters'.[2] Balchandra Rajan believes 'The poem is not as Yeats called it, a curse upon old age; but it is also not a justification of old age, or even of life. What it offers is not a solution but a response'.[3] Frank Kermode remarks, 'Among Schoolchildren' is the work of a mind which is itself a system of symbolic correspondences, self-exciting, difficult because the particularities are not shared by the reader'.[4] According to A.N. Jeffares, Yeats uses in this poem 'examples of famous men who both suit his mood of philosophy and the school theme of youth and age which runs through the poem; the result has an epigrammatic and closely packed meaning'.[5] These varied interpretations of the poem are an indication of the poem's difficulty and depth.

One of the reasons for this character of the poem may be its intensity of convictions. This paper is an attempt to consider

how the poet's personal experiences and consciousness have been responsible for making this poem what it is as a text. The starting-point for the poem was an incident in real life; Yeats's visit, as a Senator of Eire (The Irish Free State) to Waterford Convent School, early in 1926. The remembrance of this visit combined with other memories, thoughts and feelings, and resulted in a draft of the poem, about which Yeats wrote to his friend:

> Here is a fragment of my last curse on old age. It means that even the greatest men are owls, scarecrows, by the time their fame has come. Aristotle, remember, was Alexander's tutor, hence the taws (form of birch).
>
> Plato imagined all existence plays;
> Among the ghostly images of things;
> Solider Aristotle played the taws
> Upon the bottom of the King of Kings;
> World famous, golden thighed Pythagoras
> Fingered upon a fiddle stick, or strings,
> What the star sang and careless Muses heard—
> Old coats upon old sticks to scare a bird.
>
> Pythagoras made some measurement of the intervals between notes on a stretched string. It is a poem of seven or eight similar verses.[6]

The poem begins with the poet's remembrance of the conducted tour of the school during which he played the part of 'a sixty-year-old smiling public man,' being stared at by the children. He decides that in this situation, it is

> Better to smile on all that smile, and show
> There is a comfortable kind of old scarecrow.

But the children make him think of 'daughters of the swan,' or rather more particularly, of one (—Maud Gonne, though she is not named). That thought leads him on a journey into 'the dark and backward abysm of time', back in dream, to her youth, his youth, to Pythagoras, Aristotle, Plato, and to ancient myth. The old man recalls a particular incident: his beloved telling him, in a moment of great intimacy, 'of a harsh reproof, or trivial event/That changed some childish day to tragedy.' And, the poet remembers, at that moment 'it seemed our natures blent/Into a sphere from youthful sympathy.' With

this in mind, the poet turns to the children before him in the classroom; he tries to think of her childhood. His heart is 'driven wild' by this attempt. Her 'present image' comes into his mind, and he becomes painfully aware of the loss both of youth and of the woman he loved. His depression is comparable to what a young mother would feel if she could think of her child as he would be when sixty years old. Even the greatest men in the world have become victims of old age. That leads the poet to think how 'passion, piety or affection' all are betrayed by the disparity between the 'image' or imagined ideal, and the reality. The images are 'self-born', and, being perfect and unaging, they mock man's enterprise.'[7]

A rough paraphrase like the above, of stanzas I-VII of the poem indicates the straightforward progression of a narrative. The old man's journey ends with a meditation on the 'self-born mockers of man's enterprise.' According to Thomas Parkinson, the poem Yeats wrote about to Olivia Shakespeare may have ended with a version of lines 52-56,

> And Yet they too break hearts—The Presences
> That love or piety or affection knows
> And dead or living statuary symbolise
> Mock every great man and his enterprise

Such an ending, if Yeats had kept to his original intention of writing a poem on old age, would suggest 'a completeness, a full stop to the experience of the poem,' and, 'this would have been a sorrowful and fitting ending, though the poem would have been considerably less'.[8]

The poem, in this form, emphasizing the poet's awareness of old age and anger, would be true to life. This was a time (around 1925-1926) when Yeats was obsessed, in life and in poetry, with old age. 'The Tower', for instance, written late in 1925, begins,

> What shall I do with this absurdity—
> .....
> Decrepit age that has been tied to me
> As to a dog's tail?

This anger and impatience with old age is deepened by Yeats's sense of failure in love. His passion for Maud Gonne is a

well known fact of Yeats's life. The attempts to win that *belle dame sans merci* had been unsuccessful and had left him in a state of deep despair and anxiety. She had refused to marry him, whether from political or personal motives. As Yeats wrote, this left him, for a period, in deep depression; he passed through

> a time of great personal strain and sorrow. Since my mistress hnd left me, no other woman had come into my life, and for nearly seven years none did. I was tortured by sexual desire and disappointed love.[9]

His friend Lady Gregory tried to divert Yeats's attention to Irish folklore and to his own creative work. He had little peace even after his marriage in 1917. After his visit to Waterford Convent School in 1926 there seems to have been a resurgence of his passion. Perhaps this passion was now more for the ideal, the image of Maud Gonne, than for the real person. However, Yeats began to think once again about his disappointed love and his old age. These thoughts find a place in the early draft of 'Among Schoolchildren,' written late in the year. Such a relationship between the poem and his life is not accidental. Yeats wrote in 'A General Introduction to My Work.'

> A poet always writes of his personal life, in his finest work out of his tragedy, whatever it be, remorse, lost love or mere loneliness; he never speaks directly as to someone at the breakfast table, there is always a phantasmagoria. ...He is never the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast; he has been reborn as an idea, something intended, complete.[10]

Such comments on his poetic art point to Yeats's own readiness to put something of himself into his poems. They show how his personal experiences could be responsible in shaping his poem.

When Yeats suggests that his experiences did not go directly into the poems he wrote, it is possible to interpret his position in psychoanalytic terms. One of the commonest psychological happenings is the use of 'transference.' The 'harsh reproof' that Yeats speaks of in 'Among Schoolchildren; which 'turned some childish day into tragedy' for his beloved,

may be an echo of a 'reproof' he himself might have received from his father for slackness in reading:

> John Butler realized that his son was very malleable and decided to shape him. He took over his education, and finding him at nine years of age unable to read and a difficult pupil, boxed his ears, like his father before him.[11]

Also, in Yeats's boyhood days there were quarrels with his father, and as he says at the beginning of *Autobiography*, 'I could not fight my own father'; his psychological defence against such Oedipal urges was 'narcissism, or self-love. The story of the poet is 'above all a story of the vicissitudes of self-love and since it is also the story of a poet it suggests that aesthetic psychology is the psychology not of the oedipus complex but of narcissism.'[12] The unrequited love for Maud Gonne might have become transformed into love for the Muse. The 'narcissistic' personality, divided between the 'self' and 'the other,' suffers from 'chronic or acute feelings of emptiness and fragmentation.'[13] 'Among Schoolchildren' can be interpreted in psychoanalytic terms. In this poem, as Lynch says,

> narcissistic excitement and autoerotic fragmentation are being presented in the (relatively) direct form of apocalyptic metaphor, or have been converted into the depression and hypochondria that are the symptoms of the creative 'I'.[14]

To the narcissistic personality, it seems, things fall apart. However, things do not fall apart in the poem 'Among Schoolchildren', 'but instead are thrown together in the manner of a symbolist poem, reminding us of the derivation of 'symbol' from the Greek *sym* + *ballein* = 'throwing together.' The rich imagistic details that are crammed into the poem—paddler, scarecrow, Ledaen body, sinking fire, Plato's parable (altered), swan, Quattracento's figures, lovers, nuns and mothers—are astonishing in their variety. They are thrown together to collide and coalesce. It is this structuring beneath the deceptively simple surface of the narrative that makes the poem more than an autobiographical meditation or just 'a rage against old age.' The symbolist structuring which throws

images together to suggest meanings also gives unity or wholeness to the poem and to the poetic personality. Yeats's conviction that without contraries there can be no life refers to such a process. The poem here initially follows a pattern similar to that of 'Sailing to Byzantium'. There is the same despair at old age (–'a tattered coat upon a stick'), but without the compensatory benefit of song, the 'artifice of eternity'. Wholeness is achieved, however, in the final version of 'Among Schoolchildren', not by the mechanical golden bird but by the living symbols of Tree and Dancer. As in 'Sailing to Byzantium', the man is constrasted with what seem to be ageless: the dancer and the tree. Dancer and Tree, denoting continual motion and rootedness, are contraries. They are brought or thrown together in the last stanza. The poet's despair at old age is lifted into an ironic contemplation of man's endeavour which, in the last stanza, broadens out into the great question, 'How can we tell the dancer from the dance'?, suggesting perfect integrity. So does the divided personality of the poet achieve wholeness by merging into the 'otherness' that is greater and more perfect than the 'self.' The 'I' of Romantic poetry with which the poem begins grows into the 'we' of the last line. That itself is a sign that the poet's 'contraries' have been resolved into unity. In psychoanalytic terms, the 'narcissistic' personality has achieved integration and wholeness, a 'blossoming' into a new vitality, as the 'image of the blossoming world-soul suggests a transcendent *we*'.[15]

The stanza which completes the poem in its final version is a continuation and fitting conclusion of the design of the poem. The old man's despair is changed here into a joyous defiance of old age. Man becomes old, but he also creates ageless works of art. The old man, Yeats, resolves the conflict between the 'self' and 'the other', and achieves wholeness and unity by creating this poem – a dance of words. In bringing the images of the tree and the dancer together in the concluding stanza, Yeats has suggested a range of meanings. The tree suggests rootedness, integrity, vitality, growth, effortless blossoming into beauty, and a sense of perfect *being*. The

dancer suggests the identification of the artist with the work of art, and the attainment of perfection in and through art. She rivals the tree in her perfection and integrity. 'How can we tell the dancer from the dance?' is Yeats's supreme tribute to the unifying power of art. It is a rhetorical question that suggests the culmination of the artistic endeavour. The juxtaposition of the images of the tree and the dancer, like other images which are thrown together in the course of the poem, illustrates Mallarme's concept of the symbolist structure of conflicting images, 'relation entre les images exacte' which results in 'un tiers aspect fusible et claire.'[16] Tree and dancer suggest 'un tiers aspect', the immortality of art. The aging man experiences the ageless beauty of art through the creative endeavour of the poem. 'Among Schoolchidren' is clearly not a Romantic musing on the self, but a musing on the division of self and the clash of 'selves'. In the earlier draft of the poem there is an attempt at identifying the self first as a 'sixty-year-old...public man, 'who maintains for a while the detached and critical attitude proper to an official, and second, as a private individual giving way to nostalgic recollections, pursuing for a while his memories and thoughts and getting emotionally involved in the situation. The images of the past and present 'selves' clash, as the reality and the ideal do to break the hearts of mothers and nuns. It is only in the last stanza, which Yeats added later, that the self is identified as the artist, the poet. Has he not become a scarecrow because of his 'labour' as a poet? Yeats had said elsewhere:

> ...A line will take us hours maybe;
> Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought
> Our stitching and unstitching has been nought.[17]

But the labour has not been nought; it gives him a claim to immortality. The three conficting 'selves' of old man, lover and poet, clash to produce a feeling of defiance, gaiety and integrity. This integrity of personality, which is paralleled by the integrity of poem, tree and dancer, Yeats seeks to share with 'we', the readers. Such a sharing had not been possible for the Romantic poets. Some of the last words that Shelley wrote in his diary were:

Till the time
I/We shall...

Ironically, these lines remained incomplete and the symbolic distance between the poet and the reader remained. Yeats could attain an I/We position in 'Among Schoolchildren'. The poem can be seen as a carefully structured symbolist text in a context of personal conflict and psychological development.

Such a statement may appear strange as the Symbolist poets have claimed autonomy for the poem. It is viewed as self-contained, non-mimetic and non-referential. Mallarme, the best spokesman of the Symbolist mode, had the concept of the autonomous poem, free from reference to the outside world, which, like a piece of music, contains its own meaning. The Symbolist poem would be 'un mot total, neuf, etranger a la langue, et comme incantatoire'.[18] Non-referential and rarefied, the words of the poem would be like the notations of music— 'signes severs, chastes, inconnu'— inaccesible to the uninitiated.[19] A somewhat similar view of autonomy is expressed in Archibald Mcleish's lines—

A poem should not mean
But be.[20]

Yeats embodied such a conception of autonomy in the symbolist image of the dance; the dance is not the mimesis or representation of anything. It is neither descriptive nor discursive; nor does it refer to anything outside itself for its meaning. It is itself its own reality. Mallarme had attempted such autonomy in his poem, 'Le Cygne, where it is difficult to tell the swan from the snowy landscape in which it is immobilized. Later, Mallarme realized that in attaining autonomy— which was only an ideal— the symbol or poem melted into 'Le Neant' (nothingness). The dancer could attain perfection in and through her art, but there was also the possibility of the dancer dancing herself into extinction.

Like the dancer, the autonomous poem is also in danger of reaching extinction, that is, meaninglessness. This can be

prevented only by relating the meaning built up in the poem to a system of thought, or to life as it is lived by men.

Neither 'swan' nor 'dancer' are completely non-referential. The swan has references, directly or indirectly to the bird, to the poet as an archetypal figure, and to the idea of purity. The dancer similarly is associated with the archetypal artist, with the dancers Yeats had seen and read about[21] and with an idealized Maud Gonne. The poem 'Among Schoolchildren' is thus related to the poet's experience. There is also an external setting in the poem: the schoolroom and the children. This setting is the occasion for the poem, and gives it a title. The distinction between the setting and the experience disappears. The schoolroom is seen through the poet's eyes and exists in his impressions. The great universal question at the end of the poem arises out of his private experience, and concerns him personally.

The final stanza of the poem begins with the words 'labour is blossoming'; the poem 'blossoms' when the poet thinks of his own 'labour'. The labour of lovers, mothers and nuns may end in despair. Not so the artist's labour which results in immortal works of art. And, such works of art are the poet's gift to mankind. When he creates a poem it is as if he has given away part of himself. Contrary to Mallarme's prescription for the Symbolist poem,[22] the poet does not disappear from 'Among Schoolchildren'. The experiences of the poet, born 'in the foul rag-and-bone shop of his heart,' remain in the poem, though transmuted into a symbol. It is no wonder that the completed poem gives rise to many meanings. For, that is the nature of the Symbolist poem. John Unterecker, distinguishing 'symbol' from 'metaphor', says that while metaphor is like 'the relationship between (the) fixed feet' of a dancer, the symbol is like the dancer while dancing, it 'stands on one leg only; the other kicks at the stars... No symbol has a meaning.'[23] The leg on which the dancer stands, in this analogy, is the referential component of the poem which links it to the poet. But this poet in the poem is not 'the bundle of contradictions, accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast,'; his

poetic labour makes him 'part of his own phantasmagoria'. In the poem that he creates 'nature has grown intelligible, and by doing so a part of our creative power'.[24] The poem makes us, the readers, recover briefly that way of responding to life that was the poet's experience. In this moment of our 'creative power' the poet's feelings of despair and confusion become our own, and so does the feeling of wholeness that he achieves. The poem also completes the I-we relationship between the poet and the reader.

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16. Stephane Mallarme, *Oeuvres Completes*, edited by H. Mondor & G. Jean-Aubry, (Paris;Gallimard, 1945), p. 365 (Translation: 'the relation between precise images' which results in 'a third aspect, bright and easily absorbed'). The 'tiers aspect' is the total experience or reality suggested by the poem.
17. 'Adam's Curse',
18. Mallarme, *Qeuvres Completes*, p. 368 (Translation: 'a total word, new, strange to the language, and like incantation'.)
19. Ibid., p. 257 ('severely made signs, pure and unknown').
20. 'Ars Poetica'
21. Frank Kermode has shown, in *Romantic Image*, how the dancer (for example, Loie Fullar) developed into an obssesive image for poets like Mallarme and Yeats. In an early image Maud Gonne was described as of a bronze statue; Yeats conceived of 'her face fused, unified, solitary, the face of some Greek statue.' quoted in *Romantic Image*, p. 55)
22. Mallarme saw for the text a fully objective self-contained existence which 'implique la disparition elocutoire du poete.' (*Oeuvres Completes*, p. 366) (—implies the complete disappearance of the poet).
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BOOK REVIEWS

The Story-Teller Retrieves the Past by Mary Lascelles, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980

The explanatory part of the title of this thin volume that reads, 'Historical fiction and Fictitious history in the art of Scott, Stevenson, Kipling, and some others', provides us an idea of its scope which is further elaborated in the brief introduction where the author says that she wants to know how the past 'challenged' the imagination of the storyteller and that of his audience. Quoting from Sir Richard Southern's Presidential Address to the Royal Historical Society in 1972, she has hinted at the concept of history as a cure for alienation, and has duly emphasized the important role of 'imaginative writers' in this regard besides that of the historians. A distinction is sought to be drawn between historical novel and the novel 'set back in the world of the author's childhood', and also between historical fiction and fictitious history. The study mainly deals with some of the works of Scott, Stevenson and Kipling whom the author considers 'notably comparable'. Among the works chosen for detailed reference *The Heart of Midlothian* is perhaps the only novel that stands out, and the author seems to be conscious of the fact that the other novels and tales included in the study are of a lesser stature as she has defended their choice in the introduction.

In the first chapter: 'Access to the Past', it is maintained that the writer of historical fiction owes his reader an answer to the question as to what he has read while reconstructing what may be called history, and observed that both Scott and Stevenson relied a good deal on written records and legal documents. In fact Scott took delight in disclosing his sources. The people of Scotland (the author has admitted her chief preoccupation with the fictional works with a Scottish back-

ground), who have a distinct memory of the past, and like to trace the family history backward, saw a manifestation of this tendency in Scott and Stevenson both of whom had a considerable interest in the past of their respective families. Stevenson came of a distiningshed family of marine engineers and wanted to write a biography of his grandfather. What, according to the author, hindered Stevenson's development as historical novelist was 'essay writing'. About Scott she makes a revealing observation when she says: 'Scott was in love with history, but he could never resist the opportunity of a flirtation with romance of which he was not nearly so sure a judge'.

Aptly titled, 'A Sense of the Past', the second chapter seeks to move away the scope of the investigation from recorded history as source material for historical novelist. The sense of the past is projected as different from the sense of history, and is said to be dependent on the reader's response covering a wide range of common traditions and shared experience. Paying a rich tribute to Scott, the author declares that *Waverley* is quite unique in the history of the novel, and that the historical novel would not have existed without *Waverley* the theme of which is 'the persistence in the Highlands and the Isles of an almost unimaginably remote and ancient order of society' which is brought to light by the Jacobite cause. Since Scott's method was episodic, he could make a good use of the imagination's capacity to reveal 'the past modes of being' in fragments. Raising the question how time, particularly distant time, can be treated in fiction, the author has referred to the technique of first person narration in Thackerey's *Esmond*—a kind of novel in which memory and re-living of the past play an important role. Kipling, in his treatment of time, went outside 'the natural order of things', and cretaed characters who are neither just like us nor very different.

The distinction between a sense of past and a sense of history and the use of family history in the novels of Scott, Thackerey and Stevenson have been further considered in the third chapter, 'Historical Insight and the Story Teller'. A detail-

ed analysis of Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae* is offered with some remarkable insights into this kind of fiction. The author is of the view that Stevenson did not write sentimentally about Highland history, but he 'combined the historical issue and the family tragedy with other incompatible kinds of story'. Hence *The Master of Ballantrae* is not a 'unifying force', and 'the whole work is not greater than the sum of the parts'. Later a similar observation is made about Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*. As for Henry James' admiration for Stevenson's *The Master*, the author has an interesting explanation that James did not think of it as historical fiction. While one appreciates the intricacies of historical fiction and the complex problems involved in its writing and reading so clearly brought out in the book under review, one cannot help feeling that the author's scholarly approach might further localize the already shrunk interest of this brand of fiction. Returning to the initial question about the kind and degree of historical insight expected from the story teller, the author remarks that Scott, Stevenson and Kipling were poets, not philosophers— 'their vision was spontaneous and untaught'. The chapter also contains some observations about Stevenson's incomplete work *Weir of Hermiston* in which the author sees an example of the idea of family history as a binding force, but points out that the history of the weir family is considerably different from that of Stevenson's.

Weir of Hermiston figures again in the next chapter (the most illuminating part of the book) along with *The Heart of Midlothian*, as the author compares the two works to show 'the workings of historical inspiration' in a writer of fiction. She thinks that while these two novels represent the best achievement of their authors, both, in a way, 'disappoint'. Establishing the historical base of *The Heart of Midlothian*, and pointing out the source of Jeanie Deans' story, which Scott did not fully acknowledge, the author goes on to give a perceptive analysis of the character of David Deans, who embodies a consciousness of the past, and that of Jeanie's dilemma which is central to the story. It is stressed that Scott was

chiefly interested in studying the effects of the pressures of history— national as well as family— on the individnal soul. Jeanie's journey to London constitutes the very heart of the story, but Scott could not resist the temptation of melodrama and the tendency to invent irrelevant episodes— a drawback he shared with Stevenson. Hence much of the effect of *The Heart of Midlothian* is lost. The author's comments on the structure and artistic quality of this novel are a welcome and valuable contribution to Scott criticsin, particularly her observation that the contrived happy ending of *Midlothian* has a devastating effect on the story. However, she concedes that there is 'something precarious in the circumstances of the historical novelist'.

The author insists that the difference between Historical Fiction and Fictitious History is real and not merely a play with terms as she elaborates on the nature of fictitious history in chapter V. She holds that fictitious history, as it demands 'unconditional surrender of disbelief', goes beyond the normal scope of historical fiction by providing 'visionary insight into what might have been, What very nearly was'. It differs from history in kind, and is, perhaps, prompted by our desire for a neat pattern and a definite ending. The works chosen for illustration include *Red gauntlet*, *Esmond* and Kipling's *The Tree of Justice*, but the main attraction of the chapter lies in its consideration of a manuscript play *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, supposedly written by several dramatists including, perhaps, Shakespeare.

The final chapter, as is evident from its title, deals with the problem of language in the fiction seeking to recreate an era of history other than that of the story teller's. Both Scott and Stevenson have mostly chosen with care the idiom their characters speak In the novels set in the eighteenth century, for this spoken form of language greatly contributes to achieving that sense of the past which is so essential to these works of fiction. Even external symbols like peculiar phonetic and archaic spellings have their function in this regard and cannot be discarded. How the choice of wrong idiom can harm a tale is shown by an analysis of Scott's *The Highland Widow*. Quoting a

passage from Thackerey's *Esmond*, the author has drawn attetion to the tone of the nineteenth century voice–somethnig that affects adversely the authenticity of the novel for the twentieth century reader; and yet Thackerey's contemporaries would not have noticed it as we become conscious of the language of a period when we have sufficiently moved away from it in terms of time.

The Story Teller Retrieves the Past presents Mary Lascelle's version of the problems that both the writer and the reader of the stories set in a real or imaginary past have to face. This thoroughly researched and well – documented little book, written in a language singularly free from jargon, must interest those who are inclined to have a fresh look at this genre of fiction. Though the study is confined mainly to three English novelists and one cannot be sure if the works taken into account are at all read, save by the specialist, it is quite possible that some of the general issues, related to the treatment of time, especially the past, as they crop up in the course of a more specific discussion of three or four novelists, would inspire more investigation into this common territory of literature history and philosophy.

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Shakespeare and the Experience of Love: by ARTHUR KIRSCH (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1981, X + 194 pp.

The book by Professor Kirsch does and does not belong to a recognizable genre: a study of Shakespeare in the light of comparable insights from related fields, both speculative and 'scientific'. Psychology comes next only to general philosophy (vitalism, existentialism, etc.) in providing speculative curiosity with analogues and parallels, the classic example, of course,

being Ernest Jones's study of *Hamlet*. The mantle of discipleship no doubt lay too heavy on the official British interpreter of psycho-analysis, and this notwithstanding his successful attempt to bring in Oedipus via Bradley and the main tradition of *Hamlet* criticism. Jones's interest, however, was primarily 'scientific' and illustrative, not critical and appreciative. Like the great master himself he was closer to the psycho-pathology of an exceptional life than to the imaginative vitality of a work of art. 'Since I read Freud's Leonardo', said Koestler, 'I can't help seeing the Giocenda as a pathological exhibit.' Such reductivist application of psycho-analytic or other ideas to Shakespeare is a little rare now at least in major criticism. That Professor Kirsch employs Freudian concepts such as 'dream-work', 'dream displacement' and 'dream condensation', and makes pervasive use of Freud's view of human sexuality, helps place his book within the generic norm of analogical studies. That, on the other hand, he would not indulge in the task of 'updating' Shakespeare (as the parallelists and analogists generally tend to do) reveals that his main concern is with the plays themseves within their immediate historical context. Instead of updating Shakespsare Professor Kirsch significantly antedates Freud and involves him in Renaissance theology. He refers to Nabokov's contemptuous characterisation of 'the fundamentally medieval world of Freud' and turns it into a compliment by injecting into 'medieval' some of the implications of Johnson's use of 'primitive' ('primal') with reference to the universal aspects of Shakespearian drama. Shakespeare was no theologian, nor was he Dantesque in his use of intellectual frameworks. A pragmatist to the core, he explored ideas existentally as they impinged on dramatic situation and would have made short shrift of pre-conceived unitive frameworks and metaphysical patterns. Professor Kirsch rightly and insistently uses the phrase 'dramatic thinking' for whatever goes under the name of 'ideas' in Shakespeare's plays. It was in the transmuted form of 'dramatic thought' that medieval and Renaissance theological (and simultaneously psychological) ideas and insights made themselves available to

Shakespeare. That Shakespeare's imagination was given form and substance through an early exposure to medieval mystery and morality drama is now firmly established. Enshrined in that dramatic tradition were insights, both psychological and spiritual, that may be found to approximate to certain concepts in Freudian psychology. Thus it is that modern psychology and Renaissance theology come together in the late medieval dramatic tradition to serve as relevant analogues for Shakespearian drama.

The links between medieval and Renaissance drama are, as Professor Kirsch says, extremely diverse and complicated. An imaginative perception of this relationship, such as the one that gives critical pith to the celebrated lecture on *Hamlet* by the late Prefessor C. S. Lewis, is perhaps more difficult to come by than heavily documented, scholarly ones. The brief application of Freudian concepts to such medieval plays as *The Second Shepherd's Play* or *The Castle of Perseverance* in the Introduction (and to five of Shakespeare's plays in the main body of the book) belong to the imaginative rather than the scholarly category. Freud is, in a sense, in the direct line of descent from Schaupenhauer and Nietzsche who together explroed the interior of the human psyche and gave shape and substance to a mythology of inner life that was different from, and at the same time closely resembled, Christian mythography of the spirit.

Freudian concepts of the Unconscious and libidinal force derive ultimatetly from the vitalistic idea of the turbulent, primordial energies associated with Dionysius. Notwithstanding the fact that vitalism eschews the kind of eschatology that is integral to Christianity in all its forms, there is little doubt that Pauline and Neoplatonic Christianity come very close to this nineteenth century movement in their etiological concern with love. Professor Kirsch suggests the many points of contact between Freudian psycho-analysis and Christian theology specially as it must have been available to Shakespeare. There is no denying the fact that Freud himself would not have welcomed the suggested comparisons. Specific disavowal, how-

ever, may not be discouraging in such cases. An Indian reader may remind himself of the Iqbalian characterisation of Nietzsche as 'a Prophet without a Book'. Professor Kirsch is not alone in discovering analogies between Christianity and psycho-analysis. Psychoanalytical ideas have profoudly influenced a number of Christian theologians in modern times. Analogies have been suggested between Freud and St Paul. The latter, for instance, recognizes 'the presence of a force in his life superior to his conscious will, which he says 'dwelleth in me' and which he calls 'the law in my membera' (p. 176). In his recognition of an unconscious will that directed his psychic energies towards rationally uncontrollable ends, St Paul probably came very close to the Freudian concept of the unconscious. St Paul's apprehension of the 'law in my membera' is not specifically sexual or sinful but it closely resembles Freudian idea of the Oedipal conflict as a source of guilt.

Professor Kirsch points out a number of other analogies between Christian thought and psycho-analysis. Some of them relate to the myths that constitute the fabric of Christian thought. Though Freud's characterisation of paradise as a group fantasy of childhood was made in the spirit of modern de-mythologising trends, yet some of his own conceptions come close to religious myths and have a similar sweep and substance. Freudian conception of primary narcissism, Professor Kirsch poinis out, operates much like the Christian idea of a quest for return to Eden.

The analogies suggested above may or may not be valid but the fact is that they are not much relevant to the study of Shakespeare. The heart of the matter— relating specifically and centrally to Shakespeare— lies in the close parallelism that might fruitfully be established between the Christian (Pauline) conception of love and the role assigned to Eros by Freud in the dynamics of human life and civilisation. Professor Kirsch quotes Freud from *Civilisation and its Discontents*: 'Civilisation is a process in the service of Eros, whose purpose is to combine single human individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples and nations, into one great unity, the

unity of mankind'. This passage of Freudian diagnosis is juxtaposed with St Paul's celebrated comment in his first Epistle to the Corinthians : 'Though I speake with the tongues of men and Angels, and have not love, I am *as* sounding brasse, or a tinkling cymbal'. Etymologically, Christian charity may have been analogically related to Sanskrit *Kama* (pure erotic love) and both may speculatively be found allied to and proceeding from the primordial sexual energies, thus establishing a clear parallelism between theological and psychoanalytical thought, the fact nevertheless is that in his sacramental conception of marriage St. Paul comes closest to the Freudian conception of liberation through the proper manipulation of the dynamics of erotic energies in the service of individual and social health. It is this conception of marriage and of romantic love that constitutes one of the major, though not the sole, preoccupation of Shakespeare throughout his work. Professor Kirsch rightly comments : 'Romantic love in Shakespearean drama is the human image of the charity that St. Paul describes : it has the same plenitude, the same belief and endurance, the same luminousness, the same vision' (p. 180). All of the plays that Professor Kirsch chooses for detailed analysis 'present experiences of erotic love that are continuous with those of charity, the love that stems from and is directed towards God' (0.180). Though it may be doubted, if Shakespeare's exploratory, human and intensely improvising art could ever rest content within the bounds of a single framework. he does at moments seem to be in profound sympathy with certain inherited and traditional ideas. Consistency— in relation to these ideas— he probably did not possess; intensity he certainly had. Metaphysicise Shakespeare would not since— as Masson, the now little-known biographer of Milton remarked— he had 'metaphysicianed' the entire spectrum of human life only and marvellously by lending it imaginative transcendence.

Professor Kirsch rightly insists that the validity of his argument is to be tested by the tact with which he interprets the particular plays. And certainly it is in his tact in inter-

preting specific plays that the real value of Professor Kirsch's book lies. The studies are representative' covering Shakespeare's work in almost all its phases— romantic comedy, problem tragi-comedy, tragedy and the final romances. Thus there are detailed analyses of *Othello*, *Much Ado about Nothing* *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Cymbeline*. In almost all these studies there are valuable insights gained from the application of the particular framework— modern psycho-analysis, Renaissance theology and medieval drama,

The allegorising imagination is at work in *Othello* just as it was in late medieval drama. It is with reference to a contemporary account of a performance of *The Cradle of Security*, a non-extant late medieval morality, that Professor Kirsch isolates some important characterisrics of the drama that may rightly be inferred to have shaped Shakespeare's imagination. That the characters are abstractions goes without saying as also the fact that these abstractions have the vitality of real men and women. What is not generally recognised, however, is the important truth that the moral of the story is the story itself, and also that the story is a depiction in concrete images of an action within the soul of the protagonist.

We have, Professor Kirsch argues, in morality plays a literalisation 'of the scaffolding of a human life' (p. 5) and the cast of the plays represents 'a conspectus of elemental human experience'. What impresses in the drama (in *The Castle of Perseverance*, for example) is a living, dynamic image of a human soul, the interaction of 'primitive' [primal] qualities. We also find in this dynamic allegorisation of the inner lanscape an analogical resemblance with Freud's diagrams depicting the composition of the psyche (p. 5).

The main line of agrument in the study of *Othello* may generally be found to be valid. That both Desdemona and Iago are projections of the inner components of Othello's psyche acquires point from the fact that Iago's temptation makes the protagonist destroy Faith— symbolised by Desdemona's unconditional and absolute love for him inspite of the

difference in age and his dark complexion. Othello's colour is of paramount importance for Shakespeare's imagination and he makes of it— through scriptural overtones— a testing ground of Faith. Othello's age as also the handkerchief are similarly symbolically charged. In Cinthio, Professor Kirsch rightly points out, the handkerchief remains only a handkerchief, and there is nothing 'above or below' the surface of the love story (p. 174). In Shakespeare the loss of the handkerchief leads to a psychomachic process, a re-enactment of the Fall which, according to St. Augustine, was a disorder of the soul by which reason becomes subjected to passion. Professor Kirsch finds in this Shakespearian and Christian insight an analogue of a similar process described by Freud : 'The guilt is the agression of the unconscious... in which Iago represents one part of Othello and Desdemona another and in which the destruction of Desdemona is a literal enactment of [Othello's] ultimately self-destructive agression against himself' (p. 35).

It is in a 'polarised erotic universe' – Iago and Desdemona – that Othello plays out his tragic story of self-destruction. Professor Kirsch rightly points out that Othello's environment is not normal; both Venice and Cyprus are guilt-ridden. Iago's view of human sexuality — disjuncted from love and faith– is shared by almost all the characters in varying degrees. Desdemona herself, however, is no adolescent fantasy (like some of Hemingway's heroines) and, equally, does not deserve denigration like that of Auden's. She lives out the ideal combination of affection and sensuality, the combination that makes marriage a sacrament. By losing faith in her Othello loses the chances of redemption through love. He is guilt-ridden, in Freudian terms, through his alienation from primal innocence, and is now at the same level as the rest of the Venetian society. Professor Kirsch is right— though here he might be echoing Professor Holloway's anthropology-oriented study – when he says that through his death Othello becomes for the Venetian society 'its victim and its heroic sacrifice'(p.37)

There are perceptive comments on the three major charact-

ers in Professor Kirsch's study but the main drift of his argument focuses on the erotic content of the play and what Shakespeare makes of it. It is in this context that the Freudian dimension is most relevant. That the basic schism in the psyche caused by the Oedipal conflict in infancy is the major source of the discontents of civilisation may or may not be a momentous insight. Not that one is totally out of sympathy with speculation of this order—though, one might suggest, Freud made too much of infant sexuality haunted as he was by the modern 'scientific' myth of a general unifying principle, a substitute for the older unitive vision. Freud's insistence, however, on the great disjunction between affection and sensuality and the difficulty in harmonising the two is certainly valuable and of universal validity. Professor Kirsch is right in finding a parallel for it in medieval notions of psychomachia and in the Christian insistence on the sacramental nature of marriage. The disjunction between the two, between charity and animality, constitutes the drama of values in *Othello* and is the prime source of its tragic conflict.

The above references to Professor Kirsch's study of *Othello* are only representative. There is not space enough here to deal with his other studies though they are stimulating and balanced. One is pleased with the passing disapproving reference to the 1974 Stratford production of *Measure for Measure*; there was too much of Idi Amin in the Duke. One is also satisfied with a probable revaluation of *Cymbeline* as in this book Professor Kirsch does not seem to believe that Shakespeare is 'less distractingly present' in this play. On Professor Kirsch's general approach and on the ideational framework of his book it may only be fair to say that Freud is for the more adventurous and St. Paul for all with a serious interest in Shakespeare.

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