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# THE ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

## CONTENTS

*A.A. Ansari*

# TIME IN SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

Primarily concerned with beauty and human relationship in love in all its complexity and uniqueness, Shakespeare's Sonnets— based as they are on a process of quasi-dramatic meditations — do not form an integrated whole, are not of a piece, but fall into three distinct groups of varying length. Those forming the first group (1-17) constitute variations on a more or less conventional pattern, embellished with conventional ornaments, the second group (18-126) relates to matters pertaining to the rival poet and Shakespeare's involvement in and cogitations about his own poetic art, and the last group (127-154), supposed to reflect his fitful point of contact with the teasingly enigmatic figure of the Dark Lady is coloured by bitterness, astringency and the sense of a multiple and divided personality : he seems to be entangled in a see-saw of emotions. The Sonnets betray an unconscious endeavour to externalize and objectify something that hangs heavy on him or is urging the poet to give his emotional turbulence and excitement a body and a form. Marked by intensity as well as controlled effervescence (excepting, perhaps, the early ones) they share some semblance of thematic unity and, as surmised by T.S. Eliot, may be viewed as an act of dragging something out of the subliminal deeps into clear articulation as also only dubious success in it. The subdued anguish as the price of confronting the full flood of personal experience is engendered by the triangular love-relationship – a Gordian knot any way — in which the poet, the Young Man and the Dark Lady are participants of equal relevance and value : they all have their indisputable claims on our allegiance. Speculation regarding Shakespeare's excursion into biography in the sense of our determining the identity of the participants in this shadow play does not seem nor is required to contribute substantially to the evaluation of the intrinsic merit of the Sonnets as art pieces. One can very well do without attempting to reconstruct the contours of these figures : the Sonnets had better be approached as a series of explorations into the widening and

deepening of experience and as a complement to an identical process observable in the plays composed round about this period and which seem to touch upon kindred themes.

Among the various themes and motifs that consistently engage Shakespeare's interests, one of major significations is Time and its mutations to which everything on earth is subject, and this specific theme is inextricably bound up with beauty and the reaction it sets up in the form of love and both are inwoven into the very stuff of these poems. Shakespeare's persistent concern with Time is brought out with urgency and emphasis in plays such as *As You Like It*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry IV Pt. II*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Macbeth*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, in particular, as the late plays are visualized and enacted as a totality in the twin perspectives of time and tempest. What he is painfully aware of is the way the experience of love, like many other objects in the physical world, is not only not impervious to the fluctuations of Time but stands in danger of being totally crushed by it like the delicate texture of a flower to be despoiled by the blast of wind. Time is a category that forces itself on our attention in all that we do and live by in our mundane existence : one does not, however, know anything about its origin nor where it will lead us ultimately. One may at the most guess that it begins with the emergence of human consciousness and ends up with Eternity or Infinitude : these being the two poles between which it seems to oscillate : 'Thou by thy dial's shady stealth mayst know/Time's thievish progress to Eternity.' (77) Shakespeare is specially intrigued by its impersonal, destructive, role in the goings-on of the universe, by its perpetual holding in subjugation all our desires, volitions and movements : it undermines one's faith in stability, permanence and order which is the source of all values.

What is highly distinctive of Shakespeare as a dramatic poet, as one who keeps a keen vigilant eye on the flux of phenomena in which human beings are enmeshed and on the intricacies of their psyche, is that he nowhere considers Time as a philosophical concept or proposition, not even in the great Tragedies, but as a mode of change and alteration as it is manifested in the giddy and unstable structuring of the events and occurrences of everyday life. In other words he is more gripped by the contingent than the Absolute, more intrigued by what has an immediate and close bearing on the experiential self than by the darkly unfathomable

and the mysteriously incomprehensible. His thinking is largely done in terms of images and symbols and he is lured by the concrete envisioning and enactment of things than by abstractions pure and simple. Growth and decay are parallel and complementary processes and he is fascinated by the analogy offered by the rhythm of gestation and non-existence in the biological world for what is experienced in human relationships :

When I consider everything that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment . . . .
When I perceive that men as plants increase,
Cheered and check'd even by the self-same sky,
Young in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
And wear their brave state out of memory.
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
Where wasteful time debateth with decay,
To change your day of youth to sullied night; (15)

Over and above the successive images of 'increase' and 'decrease', of 'day' of youth and 'sullied night' and the harmony and symmetry of life mediated through these, what absorbs one's attention instantaneously is the pervasive and irresistible awareness of transience or mutability of life — 'the conceit of this inconstant stay' : the endless wrestle between growth and annihilation and the withering sense of gloom that is inevitably implied or entailed by it. Spenser in the second of two cantos of 'mutabilite' in the *Faerie Queene* puts it thus :

. . . . . within this wide great vniuerse
Nothing doth firme and permanent appeare,
But all things lost – and turned transuerse :
(Book vii)

Similarly, the impact of the ceaseless flow of Time on the cycle of seasons, for instance, is vividly realized thus :

For never-resting time leads summer on
To hideous winter and confounds him there;
Sap check'd with frost, and lusty leaves quite gone,
Beauty o'ersnow'd, and bareness everywhere : (5)

What goes on in the physical world day in and day out and the chemical processes operative in it reinforce the sense of change and decay. Something that is likely to withstand 'death's destroying wound' (*King Richard II*, iii, ii, 139) inflicted through the mediation of Time, is termed in the earliest of the Sonnets, as 'increase' or 'breed', for it is this which may defeat its annihilating purposes in so far as it contains in it the seeds of continuity or perpetuation - a theme that finds frequent expression thus :

> .... thou among the wastes of time must go,
> Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake,
> And die as fast as they see others grow;
> And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence
> Save breed to brave him when he takes thee hence. (12)

In the earliest group of Sonnets, supposed to be obliquely addressed to the Earl of Pembroke,Shakespeare seems to be dead opposed to long-continued virginity of woman and more so to abstinence and self-containment in man, for both these eventuate in barrenness, infertility and incapacitation for reproduction which he regards as not only unnatural but also perverse and sinful. Later on William Blake came to visualize that negation, repression and restraint constituted Evil. Shakespeare therefore seeks to persuade the Young Man to make the adventure of going out, achieving self-fulfilment through the gesture of creation and thus carrying over and bequeathing his own share of loveliness and beauty to his progeny. This is one effective way of renouncing self-centredness, a strategy of repaying one's debt to primordial Nature. This is also the means of circumventing the fear of extinction that is hourly instilled into the mind of man by the irreversible march of Time. His emphasis falls on the process of generation, growth and expansion: his formula would, therefore, appear to embrace beauty-love-procreation in a graduated scale. He deplores self-abnegation and self-sufficiency in the purely biological sense : this he designates as 'niggardliness' and opposes it to legitimate and measured indulgence in sex as something desirable and normal. Shakespeare looks on human life in terms of two basic polarities : perfection and self-sufficiency leading on to stagnation, and imperfection linked with change and variation, and the latter

is to be preferred to the former anyway. Change, movement and the throw-up of ever-new forms and species in the course of the evolution of life is what he values more as against infertility, non-proliferation and barrenness that imply negation and constriction and are, therefore, obnoxious. He visualizes human life - and may be even death - as a continuous process and not as something made up once for all and thus bearing the mark of the deadlock of perfection on it. This leads on to the narrowing of perceptions and an impoverishment of the quality of life that has been allotted to us.

Discernible in the life led by us from moment to moment is the split that lies at the heart of human passion and this erodes it little by little. Shakespeare keeps his hawk-like gaze steadily fixed not only on the nexus of human relationships but also on the apparently solid and permanent objects of Nature and on the human *artefacts* into which has gone so much effort, skill and ingenuity and all these are exposed to being consumed by the savage appetency of Time:

> When sometimes lofty towers I see down-raz'd.
> And brass eternal slave to mortal rage,
> When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
> Advantage on the kingdom of the shore.
> And the firm soil win of the watery main,
> Increasing store with loss, and loss with store ..... (64)



It may be worth pointing out that here 'lofty towers' and 'brass' are both symbols of endurance and imperishibility and these lines may incidentally be paralleled with lines of similar import—an insightful observation loaded with melancholy—uttered by King Henry IV *apropos* of the 'revolution of the times' as reflected in its impact on the physical surroundings and , inferentially, and in a wider context, on the human condition in general. At this stage the disillusioned king is poignantly sensitive to the ineluctable realities of age, disappointment and decay—determinants of his bruised psyche at the moment—while the shadows of imminent death seem to be hovering over him and he feels the helplessness and futility of it all :

> O God: that one might read the book of fate
> And see the revolution of the times
> Make mountains level and the continent.

Weary of solid firmness—melt itself
Into the sea: and other times, to see
The beechy girdle of the ocean
Too wide for Neptune's hips: how chances mock,
And Changes fill the cup of alteration
With diverse liquors: (*King Henry IV*, Pt II, III, I, 45-53).

The lines dwelt upon already (64) through which is mediated the sense of devastation and whittling of things in Nature are followed, as a pretty logical consequence, by this harrowing speculation :

When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay,
Ruin hath thus taught me to ruminate,-
That Time will come and take my love away ;

In this context the word 'state' in the second line : 'Or state itself confounded to decay', as suggested by Frederik Turner, may be deemed to be equivalent to 'existence' or 'identity' or 'soul', and this seems to contain the distillation of the havoc wrought by Time and reminds us surprisingly of these words from Eliot's *The Dry Salvages* :

We cannot think of a time that is oceanless
Or of an ocean not littered with wastage
Or of a future that is not liable
Like the past, to have no destination.

Acutely conscious of the impact of 'the wreckful siege of battering days' on all around us and observing that

When rocks impregnable are not so stout
Nor gates of steel not so strong, but Time decays (65)

he is of necessity driven to this 'fearful meditation':

where, alack,
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid ?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back ?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?

In other words he discovers an analogy for the foredoomed ruination of his own love in what he observes of Time's wreckage in all forms of things lying out there in space at the various strata of the created world and this raises in him a sort of primitive horror. Very often he calls Time both 'devouring' and 'sluttish', and the familiar image that occurs so frequently in the Sonnets is the ominous scythe of Time, and the verb usually employed is 'mowing' that obviously connotes the act of severance and knocking out. One of the well-known Sonnets (19) opens with this forceful, kinetic image :

> Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws
> And make the earth devour his own sweet brood :

in which the sharpness of the lion's paws gets quietly and ingeniously transferred to Time so as to make it look like a menacing and marauding power and the act of devouring insinuates the sinister, physical voracity to gulp everything falling within its range. Likewise the image of 'mowing' has been used to splendid and devastating effect in this way :

> Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
> And delves the parallels in beauty's brow:
> Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth;
> And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow: (60)

This is a vision of total, unrelieved despair evoked by the fact that Time chooses its victims relentlessly and without any exercise of partiality and its gains are achieved without any hindrance or obstruction.

In the Sonnets Shakespeare seems to be haunted by the intuition that human life, with all its appurtenances, hangs by the delicate thread of precariousness and extreme uncertainty and is, therefore, likely to be cut short any moment and without any warning. The only consolation the poet can afford to have is that he may be allowed to counteract Time's continuous decay and wreckage by eternalizing his friend's beauty and his own constant enthrallment to it through his verse. He is persuaded to believe that poetry, though embodied in an earthly, physical medium belongs, not unlike Truth, to an undying, imperishable order and may thereby

prove efficacious in preserving beauty against the pitiless onslaught of Time and also make it look most refulgent :

> Not marble, not the gilded monuments
> Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rime:
> But you shall shine more bright in these contents
> Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time. (55)

*Apropos* the 'confounding age's cruel knife' juxtaposed to the potency of 'these black lines' something even more audacious couched in very unequivocal terms, and ringing with a note of self-assurance comes out in these lines :

> For such a time do I now fortify
> Against confounding age's cruel knife,
> That he shall never cut from memory
> My sweet love's beauty, though my lover's life :
> His beauty shall in these lines be seen,
> And they shall live: and he in them still green (63)

Equally spiritedly he invokes his 'resty Muse' to deploy all his resources to let both beauty and love survive the creeping and insidious taint of dissolution brought on by Time and make its spoils look deplorable as well as unworthy of attention :

> Rise resty Muse, my love's sweet face survey
> If Time have any wrinkle graven there,-
> If any, be a satire to decay
> And make Time's spoils despised everywhere :
> Give my love fame faster than time wastes life
> So thou prevents his scythe and crooked knife. (100)

With Time as its concomitant is linked the concept of Death, and it, too, goes along with the experience of decay, corruption and waste that cleaves to the very roots of life and human race can in no way escape confronting it : 'where wasteful time debateth with Decay' (15). In the fabric of creation, designed by Providence, one

generation follows at the heels of another, one cycle of birth and growth yields place to the next one, and this process seems to be unending, limitless and almost stretched to infinity. Death is the fruit that ripens on the tree of life, and ultimately the axe falls on what was quick, vigorous and flourishing only a moment ago and did not look flawed. Time is the measure of movement and change and also the means employed by Death for achieving its own ends till it leads on to the oblivion of eternity. It may be conceived as a pattern of moments that follow one another incessantly and irrevocably in an order and sequence that can neither be seized upon nor arrested and liquidated. Time may legitimately and, in a manner of speaking, be regarded as Janus-faced, rooted in a palpable paradox : it helps in growing and burgeoning and simultaneously it also seems to accelerate the process of degeneration and withering away as the wry and caustic Jaques puts it laconically, with shrewd commonsense and an air of unconcern : 'And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe and then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot' (*As You Like It*, II, iv, 26-27). Shall we say then that the secret of Time is its dependence on polarity. The sense of disgust, nausea and irrelevance produced by the spectacle of life placed in the perspective of Time is given a lucid and memorable expression in 'Macbeth's 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow' speech that comes at an agonizing moment of experience in his life—a sort of finale to the hectic, tempestuous and flurried course of events, and it also seems to have a metaphysical dimension to it. But in the Sonnets Shakespeare is merely contented to registering his basic intuition that the tide of Time, with all its eddies and swirls, carries everything relentlessly in its swift onrush. The sense of irrevocable waste or of the 'increase of entropy', in the parlance of modern Physics, is very much borne in on us but it is also skilfully suggested that the sense of its havoc can at best be partially compensated by belief in the eternality of love as against the transience of beauty that is vulnerable indeed to the impact of Time :

> Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
> Within his bending sickle's compass come;
> Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
> But bears it out even to the edge of doom. (116)

The superb confidence exuding from this celebrated Sonnet : Love's not time's fool' (the tinge of assertiveness about it is partly its

blemish, too) brings to mind, by way of contrast, the last words of the dying Hotspur at Shrewsbury (*King Henry IV*, Pt, I, v, iv, 80-82)–a sort of leave-taking, replete with a sense of tragic emptiness :

> But thoughts, the slaves of life, and life time's fool,
> And time, that takes survey of all the world,
> Must have a stop.

Another apt and vivifying analogy is provided by Andrew Marvell's riddling 'The Definition of Love': 'I was begotten by despair/Upon Impossibility' which is packed with allegorical metaphors and in which the sublunary passion of love, the 'geometry of necessity' and the fatal form of the terrestrial world are all fused into a terse and subtle economy of utterance. Inspite of 'Magnanimous Despair' being essential to the dialectic of love the dominant or presiding tone of the poem is one of defiant resoluteness that arises from an acceptance of fate as an inescapable datum and thus despair, which is distinct and superior to misery, ceases to be earth-bound and becomes an existential reality. Shakespeare's statement, too, rings with triumphant assertion in exultation. It may, however, be added that Marvell's fate becomes in Shakespeare equivalent to policy : 'It fears not policy, that heretic' (124) and policy connotes planning, expediency and self-will. Whereas Shakespeare is annoyed by Time's 'tyrannic sway' Marvell speaks sprightfully of Fate's 'tyrannic power' ( Its Iron Wedges'). Further, Marvell is persuaded to believe in love as the 'Conjunction of the Mind' (the sexual overtones are unobtrusively smuggled in) and 'Opposition of the Stars'. Shakespeare regards it, on the contrary, as 'the marriage of true minds' : a form and *exemplum* of perfect mutuality and as 'an everfixed mark that looks on tempests and is never shaken'. The over-arching figure in Marvell is that of Fate (linked with necessity) and once it is accepted despair burts into resoluteness, and this despite the fact that both Despair and Impossibility are progenies of Time. Shakespeare never bothers to perplex the mind of the reader with subtleties of logic or use of geometrical axioms (as Marvell very much does by talking of *Oblique* and *Parallel* lines or of Planisphere for making us believe in the primacy and sovereignty of love, though for both of them Time is the arch enemy and Marvell is also over-awed by 'Time's Chariot hurrying near'. (*To his Coy Mistress*).

The defiance of Time and in spite of its spoils and ravages belief in the authenticity of love is further underlined thus :

But reckoning Time, whose million'd accidents
Creep in 'twixt vows, and change decrees of kings,
Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,-
Divert strong minds to the course of altering things;
Alas, why, fearing of Time's tyranny,
Might I not then say, 'Now I love you best'. (15)

Here 'the millioned accidents of reckoning Time' reflect the changes in man's behaviourial and civilizational attitudes and processes no less than in the forms of beauty but love alone has the capacity of transcending the tyranny of its unalterable laws. It may be worthwhile to add that the truth or authenticity of love continues to be asserted to the very end and even in the teeth of Time's injurious functioning in the transactions between the lover and the beloved :

Thy registers and thee I both defy,
Not wondering at the present nor the past;
For thy records and what we see doth lie
Made more or less by thy continual haste.
This I do vow, and this shall ever be:
I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee. (123)

This is more or less a categorical statement and the last line clinches the argument and seems to resolve the conflict by which the poet's mind and soul have been harassed so long and hence pulled in opposite directions. Shakespeare frankly concedes the thwarting and destructive role of Time but he nevertheless tends to believe that true love is superior to the ascendency of Time and Change. His belief in the ultimacy of love derives from the fact that he looks upon it not only as a matter of physical urges, appetites and passions but as a communion of the essence with the essence: in the course of his meditations beauty comes to be internalized by him and the I-thou relationship is deified in the sense that all man's energies are harnessed in its service. It is not equivalent to adoration in the hackneyed Petrarchan and Spenserian manner and there is nothing bathetic about it : it is simply 'itself and true' - something of real and sterling worth, and stripped of egoism, becomes an independent entity and acquires for itself a degree of transcendence. Towards the very end of the series (146) the

dichotomy (if it ever was there) between the soul and the body (Marvellian Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure) is ended with the eventual triumph of the former over the latter. The soul which is 'the centre of my sinful world' is called upon to

> Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross :
> Within be fed, without be rich no more :
> So shall thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
> And Death once dead, there's no more dying then. (146)

The exhortation to 'buy terms divine' and to 'be fed within' is a clear and unambiguous indication of the fact that Shakespeare, as pointed out earlier, too, conceives of true and ideal love not so much in terms of the body as in terms of essence or identity or soul. And this essence which can, on account of its invulnerability to change, exhaustion and decay, feed itself on Death or mortality is in no way subservient to the vagaries, or mutations or jumps of Time. Viewed from this angle of perception Time, in Hotspur's unforgettable words, 'must have a stop' and this true or idealized love seems to transcend the barriers put in its way by Time. Its ravages are neutralized or done away with not only by the magic and potency of poetic art—the solvent *of* personal experience—but also by the advocacy of a love which is disdainful of the shackles and accidents of Fate and Change and the physical and bodily constraints. It is nourished in a soul cleansed of all impurities and dross and finds its habitat in a region fully expanded and enriched. It is neither sensual nor ego-centred, it is brought forth more in giving than in receiving, it is a spontaneous and creative acceptance of mutuality and is like entering an altogether new mode of experience and existence, for it turns its back on all that is petty, circumscribed and involves mere bartering. It is very much like calling of the alone to the alone in the depths of being and effects a transformation of identities unsuspected and unanticipated before contracting this bargain and putting the seal of sanctity on it.

*'Gulfishan'*
*Allah Wali Kothi*
*Civil Lines*
*Aligarh*

*Chiramel P.Jose*

# CHAUCER TO SHAKESPEARE : THE TRADITION OF *UT PICTURA POESIS*

Of all the traditions and theories of Literature, the tradition of *ut pictura poesis* has been the most permeating influence on literary men of all language, and especially on the English writers. This study purports to analyse the origin and development of this tradition and to evaluate the influence it played in the works of Chaucer, Spenser, Sidney, and Shakespeare.

*Ut Pictura Poesis* is a phrase invented by Horace (*Ars Poetica* 361), though the idea was not new, suggesting that painting and poetry are comparable or similar arts[1]. The simple word 'art' is usually associated with those arts which we distinguish as 'plastic' or 'visual', but properly speaking it should include the arts of literature and music. On the basis of this inclusiveness we can talk about the art of painting, the art of literature, the art of music and so on. Hence, we speak of similar arts in *ut pictura poesis* tradition. Right from Horace down to our own time, there has been a steady outpour of critical literature on the *ut pictura poesis* tradition or the sister arts tradition.[2] Painting, architecture, sculpture, poetry, music, and dancing are arts so much inter-related that they can rightly be considered sister arts. The relationship of poetry or literature with other fine arts is highly complex and various. Sometimes poetry draws inspiration from paintings or sculpture or music or dance. Like natural objects and persons, other works of art may become the subject of poetry. Poetry in its turn can become the subject of other arts. Well might Rene Wellek and Austin Warren observe:

> Beyond these obvious questions of sources and influences, inspiration and co-operation, there arises a more important problem : literature has sometimes definitely attempted to achieve the effects of painting — to become word-painting, or has tried to achieve the effects of music — to turn into music. At times, poetry has even wanted to be sculpturesque. A critic may, as did Lessing in *Laokoon* and Irving Babbitt in his *New Laokoon,* deplore the confusion of genres; but one cannot deny that the arts have tried to borrow effects from each other and that they have

been, in considerable measure, successful in achieving these effects. One can, of course, deny the possibility of the literal metamorphosis of poetry into sculpture, painting or music.[2]

Of these sister arts, painting and poetry have the greatest affinity. Therefore, it is proposed to survey critically the tradition of *ut pictura poesis* form Simonides of Ceos and Plato down to Shakespeare.

The seed of this tradition may be traced to the famous dictum of Simonides that 'Painting is a dumme Poesie.' Simonides lived around 556-467 B.C. But his dictum was obliterated until it found its way to England in the sixteenth century. The phrase *ut pictura poesis*, by which it came to be known later, was unheard of in Plato's time. However, Plato in his *Republic* did remark that a poet is like a painter:

Then plainly the imitative poet isn't naturally directed toward any such part of the soul, and his wisdom isn't framed for satisfying it ..... Therefore it would at last be just for us to seize him and set him beside the painter as his antistrophe. For he is like the painter in making things that are ordinary by the standard of truth.[4]

Plato, however, dismissed both poetry and painting from his Republic because they are thrice removed from the world or being and can only copy what are themselves copies of ideal forms.

Artistotle in his *Poetics* referred to the similarity between poetry and painting. Speaking about poetry including Epic poetry,Tragedy,Comedy and Dithyrambic poetry he refers to the affinity between poetry and painting in the following passage :

Just as colour and form are used by some, who (whether by art or constant practice) imitate and portray many things by their aid, and the voice is used by others; so also in the above mentioned group of arts, the means with them as a whole are rhythm, language, and harmony - used, however, either singly or in certain combinations ..... or in verse, either in some one or in a plurality of metres.

(On Poeties. 1447. a 19-1447.b 1)[5]

Again, speaking about the personages of Polygnotus, Panson, and Dionysius, he says they are better, worse or ordinary "in the same way, as with the painters" (p.681). It should be remembered that the term 'Mimesis' and 'Mimetic' got into literature with Aristotle

as he stated that tragedy is an imitation of an action. Accordingly mimetic criticism "regards literature as imitating or reflecting life and therefore emphasizes the 'truth' and 'accuracy' of its representation, its REALISM in a general sense."[6] Aristotle, however, removed the pejorative meanings of mimesis or imitation in poetry and painting, which had been suggested by his master Plato.

Horace, from whom the phrase *ut pictura poesis* originated, spoke of poetic and artistic freedom in the opening verses of his *Ars Poetica*: 'To painters and poets there has always been (allowed) an equal allowance of attempting whatever they like.'[7] He observes : 'We know this, and we both ask (as poets) and grant (as critics) in turn this privilege : but not that savage mate with tame, nct that serpents may be coupled with birds, lambs with tigers' (p. 470). Horace makes it clear that no unwarranted licence is granted to the poet or the painter. The poem or picture must be in some way corresponding to reality or nature. After emphasizing this essentially mimetic nature of both poetry and painting, he goes on to say :

> Poetry is like a picture (*ut pictura poesis*); there will be some (pieces) which will strike (attract) you more, if you stand nearer, and some if you stand at a greater distance. This loves the mark; this will wish to be viewed under (in) the light, which dreads not the subtle judgement of a critic; this has pleased once; this will please ten times repeated (p.474).



Obviously, great tribute is paid to the kind of poetry enriched with pictorial vividness, where each word comes alive eternally to be viewed under the light and which dreads not the judgement of critics. Such poetry will please ten times repeated, or it will please men of all ages.

In no time this desirability of visual images and pictorial images in words found its vogue almost all over the world. Moreover, this theory of mimesis in poetry, as the critics termed it, this theory of imitating sensual and especially the visual images from nature, soon took the form of imitation of nature to be sure, but also that of nature already methodized. A note on the word 'imitation' will not be out of place in this connection. Derived from the Latin *imitare* = to imitate, three meanings are usually discerned for the word

imitation in literary criticism :(1) A work such as Pope's *Imitation of Horace* (1733-8) or Robert Lowell's *Imitations* (1961) in which a poet provides a loose translation of another work, transposed into his own contemporary and personal situation : the pleasure is in the accuracy of the translation; (2) The belief that poets should in general 'imitate' the classics and other models of excellence in any genre which precede them. 'Imitation' in this sense was a tenet of the eighteenth century Neoclassicism and of most views of poetry until the nineteenth century. Something more than mere copying is implied : the poet must catch the form and spirit of his models, but animate them with his own genius; (3) Imitation is the keyword in mimetic views of literature which follow Aristotle in regarding poetry as an imitation of human action. Literature holds a mirror upto life, or is a 'true' a model of life. Again, this view was common until the end of the eighteenth century, though what literature should imitate and how, were subjects for controversy. A true artist cannot ignore nature and life already methodized by previous artists, whether this methodization has been done by the poet's pen, the engraver's or sculptor's chisel, or the painter's brush or by any other tools of operation.

Phidias carved the statue of Zeus, his masterpiece, not from a living model but from his imagination stimulated by the description of Zeus by Homer in the *Iliad*. He made this statue for the temple of Zeus at Olympia, and it is known only from its representation on coins of Elis. It is said that when asked what model he was going to use for the likeness of Zeus, he replied that he would model it on Homer's lines.[9]

Homer word-painted Zeus speaking in answer to the prayer of Phetis on behalf of her son, in the following passage : '(Zeus) the Son of Saturn bowed his dark brows, and the ambrosial locks swayed his immortal head, till vast Olympus reeled' (Book I. 528). No better cues were needed for Phidias to carve out the life-like statue of Zeus. Phidias, certainly was imitating, but not imitating sheer nature, but nature methodized by the immortal poetry of Homer. The above quoted description of Zeus by Homer in *Iliad* is the classical example of what is generally understood as 'iconic poetry'. Such poetry, of which a work of graphic art is the subject can be distinguished as iconic poetry. The use of powerful icons

was continued in the pictorialism of middle ages which was christian oriented at one level and sharply classical oriented on the other.

Within Christianity, Byzantium provided the best example of the fruitful and intimate collaboration of the several arts with a christian orientation. And in Dante Alighieri's iconic poetry he embodies both these strains of the medieval pictorialism, namely, the peculiarly christian and the classical. *Purgatorio* is replete with verbal icons in the classical tradition and in *Paradiso* the verbal icons are coming nearer to the christian or religious tradition. Consider the description of sunset in *Purgatorio* (Canto II, 1-9) :

The Sun now reached the horizon whose meridian circle covers Jerusalem with its highest point; and the night which circles opposite to him was issuing forth from the Ganges with the Scales which fall from her hand when she exceeds; so that where I was the white and red cheeks of the beautiful Aurora were becoming orange through too much age.

Here, Purgatory and Jerusalem are antipodal, and the Ganges or India is arbitrarily assumed to be their common horizon, the Western horizon to the one, and the Eastern to the other. The night is considered as the point of heavens opposite to the Sun, and the Sun being in Aries, the night is in the Libra. Various other passages in *Purgatorio like* the figure of Thymbraeus or Apollo drawn out in the single line 31 of Canto XII, and of the 'foolish Arachne' who was converted to a spider by Athena whom she had challenged to a trial of skill at the loom, depicted in line 43 of the same canto are best examples of Dante's economy of lines in providing verbal icons. We may quote one example from *Paradiso* (canto XIV ll. 28-32) where describing the angels singing the praise of the Trinity, Dante wrote :

That One and Two and Three which ever lives, and ever reigns in Three and Two and One, uncircumscribed,, and circumscribing all things, was thrice sung by each of those spirits with such a melody that for every merit it would be adequate reward.

Nowhere else can be found such exquisitely graphic and vivid description either of the Trinitarian euology eternally sung by the

angels, or of the Trinity itself. Thus Dante's icons were not merely representations of natural forms, but also mystical and symbolical.

Quoting from Dante's *Convivio* II, i, Northrop Frye invites us to search for the profoundest meaning of poetry, which Dante called anagogy (*senso anagogica*) in the sense that "even in the literal sense, by the very things it signifies, signifies, again some portion of the supernal things of eternal glory."[12] When the prophets and Psalmists speak of their deliverance of their people from Egypt, they are concerned only with the 'anagogic' meaning of that event, which according to Dante is 'the exit of the holy soul from the slavery of this corruption to the liberty of eternal glory" (*Convivio* II, i). All moral, historical, political, biographical and other interpretations should lead us directly from the superficial to the complete understanding of the same thing, the single image of reality which the work of art is. Thus, the fact that, the geology of Dante's hell, the geography of his purgatory, or the astronomy of his heaven are all impossible, or the rejection of *Divine Comedy's* theology in part or *in toto* does not at all affect Dante's *Comedy*. In the words of Northrop Frye, "the permanent form of the poem which survives all the vacillations inseparable from 'belief' is allegory addressed to the intellectual powers. The same is true of all other works of art wherever."[13]

Considering the whole *Comedy* Wylie Sypher observed regarding its pictorial quality :

> At the portals of any gothic Cathedral we feel the ambience of human beings. the pathos and dignity of those philosophers Dante met in Limbo, antique people 'with slow and grave eyes, of great authority in their looks; they spoke seldom, and with soft voices,' There in the dim silence are Socrates and Brutus and Plato, and Ceasar in armor with his grefalcon eyes. These people of Dante's always live and move in a certain quality of light, whether the dusk of Limbo, the tempests of Hell, the saphire dawn of Purgatory, or the flaming glory of Paradise; for Dante's art is also pictorial. In the *Comedy*, as in the porches of Amiens, the tensions are complex between an abstract system, a plastic humanity, and a painterly vision.

Truly speaking, Dante's poem can be considered to be a passage or a linear traversing of space effected scene after scene. Dante's time, on the other hand is a linear extension taking the course of jouney. The pilgrim is led gradually to the eternal through time. Dante's poem has the quality of 'figural realism' in the sense

that his external system including both heaven and hell is a framework for concrete human experiences and his timeless order is densely packed with anecdotes of human history as revealed through the events of Italian life. Every steep ledge of purgatory can be considered a theatre for human beings striving to master their human passions with human effort, in an attempt to bring their will to peace. Especially worth mentioning of high pictorialness are the last few cantos of *Purgatorio* which describe the flame-enclosed Earthly Paradise, and the entire *Paradiso*, and surely cantos 28 to 33 which describe Dante's vision of the Empyrean. It is interesting to note that William Blake was fascinated by Dante's work and had done illustrations for Dante's work. Comparing Dante's Paradise and Blake's Eternity, Richard Green has observed that "though Blake's remarks and illustrations show that Dante frequently antagonized him, the two poets' conception of Paradise *are* substantially the same."[15]

The use of powerful icons was continued in the pictorialism of middle ages, sharply classical-oriented at one level and christian-oriented on the other. With Chaucer, the father of modern English poetry, classical-oriented pictorialism came to its fruition. He not only borrowed time–honoured devices and motifs from the classical Greek and Roman authors, but also created verbal pictures that added to conventional form, the freshness of first-hand observation and response. "Convention and realism in the make-up of many of Chaucer's characters are defined, significantly, as 'iconography' and 'delineation from life' and illustration is again drawn from sculpture and manuscript painting."[16] In the dream description of a May morning in the *Book of the Duches* one can easily trace the exact parallelism of Chaucer's poetry with painted backgrounds :

> And sooth to seyn, my chambre was
> Ful wel depeynted, and with glass
> Were al the windows wel yglased
> Ful clere, and not an hooli ycrased,
> That to beholde hyt was gret joye.
> For hooly al the story of Troye
> Was in the glasynge ywrought thus,
> Of Ector and of Kyng Lamedon,

And alle the walles with colours fyne
Were peynted, both text and glose,
Of al the Romance of the Rose (ll. 321-34).[17]

Or again consider the following lines :

My windowes were shette echon,
And through the glas the sonne shon
Upon my bed with bryghte bemes,
With many glade gilde stremes;
And eke the welken was so fair-
Blue, bryght, clere was the ayr,
And ful attempre for sothe hyt was;
For nother cold nor hoot yt nas
Ne in al the welken was a clowde (ll. 335-43).

This description of the *welken*, argues Salter, is a "precise verbal equivalent of another convention of medieval art, - the intense, plain, blue background which is often an alternative to plain gold."[18]

Speaking about *Troilus and Crise Yde* W. Sypher has observed that the "situation in Chaucer's poem, like the situation in a painting by Van Eyck, is not completely rationlized or unified, and the figures fit a little loosely into their melieu, as if the scene were organized about a vanishing area of axis, rather than a vanishing point. There is an exciting effect of approximation, as if the point of view wavered."[19] In the pictorial poetry of Chaucer it is important to note that both kinds of images, the mimetic and the iconographic, are present. This aspect is well examined by V.A. Kolve, with special reference to the first five Canterbury Tales.[20] Interestingly, Blake in his *A Descriptive Catalogue* has lauded Chaucer's pictorialness in the description of his pilgrims, saying that Chaucer's characters are "the physiognomies or lineaments of universal human life, beyond which Nature never steps;"[21] and describing Chaucer himself as "the great poetical observer of men, who in every age is born to record and eternize its acts" (*K* 569). Moreover, Blake pictures the pilgrims on his fresco true to Chaucer's description, making only minimal alterations. About Chaucer's Nonne, Blake

wrote, "her person and face Chaucer has described with minuteness" (*K* 568) which was very important for Blake.

Following the continued strain of *ut pictura poesis* Leonardo da Vinci observed : "Painting is poetry which is seen and heard, and poetry is a painting which is heard but not seen. These two arts (you may call them both either poetry or painting) have here interchanged the senses by which they penetrate to the intellect."[22] Soon after this statement by Leonardo, Pomponius Gauricius is said to have flatly dictated that "Poetry ought to resemble painting.[23] In the apparent rivalry between the two arts Leonardo and Gauricuis gave the upper hand to painting. At the same time, arguing that mimesis or imitation in poetry was not merely naturalistic because the artist is creating an idealized second nature, Julius Scaliger argued in favour of poetic superiority. For him, "the poet must above all things behold the truth, so that he may in undertaking to represent individual things, be as close as possible to truth; he should imitate it in such a way that not only the very form and spirit of a thing appear but that very thing itself, appear in full lucidity."[24]

By the dawn of the fourteenth century, a sort of new humanism had already begun to make itself apparently present in the field of plastic arts or visual arts. All the same, the Art in England which always inclined to elegance could only gradually turn to sweetness, sentimentality and prettiness. At least, in the case of England, the growth of the sister arts - poetry and painting - was not at an equal pace. Whereas on the one hand English poetry began to flourish from the period of Chaucer, in the plastic arts England was lagging behind. Therefore when the critics of *ut pictura poesis* tradition dwelt on English poetry, they had to invariably turn to painterly artists abroad in order to find a picture–match for the English poems. Herbert Read explained this as resulting from the conveniency of importing plastic arts, whereas poetry cannot be imported :

> Poetry is firmly anchored to the language of a country, and must find expression within those narrow limits or not at all; painting and the other Plastic arts speak an international language, and therefore we (the English men) are not so dependent on a national expression, and can import our (English men's) art along with other fashionable goods[25].

In allowing this sort of conveniency of painting or plastic arts Herbert Read was not, however, placing painting over poetry. Rather he was only explaining in plausible terms, the lack of development of plastic arts in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

It was only in 1586 'Simonides' famous dictum found its way to England in E.Hoby's translation of Coignet entitled *Politique Discourses* :

> For as Simonides saide : Painting is a dumme poesie, and a Poesie is a speaking picture; & the actions which the Painters set out with visible colours and figures the poets recken with wordes, as though they had indeede been performed.[26]

Even before this dictum got currency in England, Chaucer, the father of modern English poetry as we have seen above, was knowingly or unknowingly, manifesting allegiance to the *ut pictura poesis* tradition, with his iconic and pictorial poems.

From Chaucer's time to Spenser and the Elizabethans and beyond Elizabethans to the Romantics and even thereafter, English poetry adopted the dictum of Simonides as a true guideline. It may be true that owing to the independent and fully national development of English literature, the course of art cannot in any way be compared to the course of poetry.[27] However, the fact that English poetry was closely following the *ut pictura poesis* tradition is undeniable. This will be more convincingly revealed even as we examine the works of English poets in the following pages.

Edmund Spenser should be considered a born painter who never held a brush in hand.[28] Fate gave him birth in England where the visual or plastic arts, as we have seen, were not to flourish until nearly two centuries after Spenser's time. One might readily think, reading his poetry, that had he been born in Italy he might have been another Titian or a second Veronese. Were he in Flanders, he would have led the way to Ruben or Rembrandt. But fortune made out of him a painter in verse, one of the best and most wonderful that ever lived. Spenser considered that the poet's wit in 'picturing the parts of the beauty daint' far surpasses that of the painter. Confronted with the difficulty of giving a real-enough description of Chastity, he wrote :

But living art may not least part expresse,
Nor life-resembling pencil it can paint,
All were it *Xeuxis* or Praxiteles :
His deadale hand would faile, and greatly faint,
And her perfections with his error taint :
Ne poet's wit, that passeth Painter farre
In picturing the parts of beauty daint,
So hard a workmanship adventure darre,
For fear through want of words her excellence to marre.[29]

(The Faerie Queene, III Proem, 2).

Although poetry or any human art cannot adequately depict such a delicate abstractness like Chastity, Spenser feels no hesitation at all to ascertain the superiority of poetry over painting. Moreover, in attempting what the painter could not achieve, nor he himself could not do, in the same instant he quite effectively steps himself into the shoes of the greatest painter. Who needs a picture after these suggestive lines by Spenser. More than flesh and blood could give, is already implied in the description. This quality of inviting the reader to frame a mental picture, without ever waving a brush, is the peculiarity of Spenser, permeating his poetry. After examining the pictorial qualities of *The Faerie Queene*, as revealed in many of the passages, Legouis concluded that they are not accidental; "they are the rule; they dominate and leave the other merits of the poem in shadow."[30]

To dwell on this aspect of Spenser a little further, we may consider the celebrated portrait of Belphoebe, the divine huntress as seen by Braggadechio and Trompart. The ten stanzas of Book II Canto III (22 to 31) is nothing but a picture on the grandest scale with wonderful profusion of colours and details filling each of the stanza. More than one stanza is devoted to describe her face, one for her eyes. One for her spear, bow and baldrick, one for her hair. There is not a single detail in all these stanzes that could not be expressed by a painter or sculptor, or which does not remind us of the portraints or statues of Venus.

Spenser's not being cryptic and short may be pointed out as his lack of economy. However, it should be remembered that Spenser was again feeling the dilemma of his incapability of

word-painting Belphoebe. As in the case of Chastity in the Book III, so also here that sense is anticipated :

> How shall fraile pen descriuve her heavenly face,
> For feare through want of skill her beautie to disgrace (II, i,25).

The fact that these lines come after the vivid description of her face, eyes, forehead and mouth, tells us that the poet is explaining his dilemma to intensify the reader's imaginative responses. Notice the passage describing her hair :

> In her rude haires sweet floweres themselves did lap,
> And flourishing fresh leaves and blossomes did enwrap. (II, iii, 30).

What a startling image : Not only the flowers caress her hair, but the leaves and blossoms are flourishing fresh in her hair, One could rightly say that here is Nature, "most innocent nature." "When we come to Acrasia's Bower (II, xii), there are no fresh leaves or blossoms, only 'painted flowres' (II. xii. 58) and the plucked flowers upon which Acrasia lies. Belphoebe's presence in the poem shows us that Nature must be redeemed.[31]

In a conversation that took place between Joseph Spence and Alexander Pope, in 1744, Spence observed : "After reading a canto of Spenser two or three days ago to an old lady, between seventy and eighty years of age, she said that I had been showing her a collection of pictures". Pope replied to these words : "She said very right, and I don't know how it is but there is something in Spenser that pleases one as strongly as in one's old age as it did in one's youth. I read the *Faerie Queene* when I was about 12 years with a vast deal of delight, and it gave as much when I read it over about a year or two ago".[32] This peculiarly charming pictorialness is the hallmark of Spenser's poetry.

Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* is a document almost unique in its high claims for the literary art. Sidney affirmatively declared :

> Poetry therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word *Mimesis*. That is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth : to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture : with this end, to teach and delight.[33]

F.G. Robinson has observed that this definition of poetry "as speaking picture, and his constant reiteration that poetic imitation amounts to 'feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else' were more than a nod to convention. It is precisely his ability to make ideas visible to the mind that secures the poet's pre-eminence."[34] Robinson has devoted his book's fourth chapter entitled "the Speaking Picture of Sidney's Prose and Poetry" to prove that Sidney's gnosis of poetry as expressed in his *Apology* did find its way into his *Praxis*.[35]

By means of words Sidney tried to convey exactly those effects which a painter achieves by means of light and shade. In his *Arcadia* Amphialus pays his 'lover' a visit in the room where she is imprisoned. Passionately in love with Philoclea in spite of her not reciprocating the feeling, Amphialus enters her room. He first describes Philoclea's dress (III.ii.1.) and then goes on to delineate her attitude presenting the reader a lucid picture of both.

And in that sort he went to Philoclea's chamber : whom he found (because her chamber was over lightsome) sitting of that side of her bedde which was from the windowe, which did cast a shadow upon her, as a good Painter would bestowe uppon *Venus*, when under the tress bewayled the murther of Adonis : her handes and fingers (as it were) indented one within the other : her shoulder leaning to her beds head, and over her head a scarfe, which did eclipse almost half her eyes, which under it fixed their beames upon the wall by, with sosteddie a manner, as if in that place they might well change, but not mende their object : and so remayned they a good while after his coming in, he not daring to trouble her, not/she perceyving him, till that (a little varying her thoughts something quickening her sense) she heard him as he happed to stirre his garment : and perceyving him, rose up with a demeanure, where in the book of Beautie there was nothing to be read but Sorrow : for kindness was blotted out, and Anger, was never there (III.iii.2).[36]

Reading the two above mentioned passages one is impelled to think together with Legouis that Sidney had inhis mind when he delineated these word-pictures, "some picture, which he had seen, or that a painter might here find all the elements of costume, light and shade, and composition ready to his hand."[37]

Robinson has pointed out that the poem beginning with "poore Painters oft with silly Poets joyne" of *Arcadia* (Book II Chapter 14) is one of the most obvious examples of an emblem in Sidney's work; and "as in all emblems, the poem that follow provides the key

to the meaning of the picture."[38] Rather, one may say that these emblems are more complex than impressions, involving a picture, a motto, and a poem, and they generally have a moral subject. Ideally speaking, the picture is obscure in itself but fully clear when seen in conjunction with the poem. Thus both in theory and practice, Sidney gave the upper hand to poetry, at the same time bringing out the affinity to visual arts.

Shakespeare pays homage to this tradition in his plays. His peoccupation with the visual arts is most conspicuous in *The Life of Timon of Athens* ; as the original title of the play appeared. But before coming to that we may dwell on a passage where Shakespeare verbalizes his appreciation of the power of the graphic arts. Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* is the mouthpiece of Shakespeare. Discovering the fair Portia's miniature in the leaden casket, he extols it in admiration :

> What find I here ?
> Fair Portia's counterfeit .... What demi-god
> Hath come so near Creation ? Move these eyes ?
> Or whether, riding on the balls of mine,
> Seem they in motion ? Here are severed lips,
> Parted with sugar-breath - so sweet a bar
> Should sunder such sweet friends : here in her hairs
> The painter plays the spider, and hath woven
> A golden mesh t'entrap the hearts of men,
> Faster than gnats in cobwebs - but her eyes;
> How could he see to do them ? having made one,
> Methinks it should have power to steal both his,
> And leave itself unfurnish'd: yet look, how far
> The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow
> in underprizing it, so far this shadow
> Doth limp behind the substance.(III, ii, ll. 115-30).[39]

Notice the lines "The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow / In underprizing it". Shakespeare apparently, but in earnest modesty, places the miniature work of art above his own verses; but even that relatively superior art is only 'this shadow.' And 'this shadow' doth limp behind the substance. The total image projected, invites the reader to look upon the substance itself, upon

Portia herself in her delicate beauty. Shakespeare's poetry in its turn defies the graphic art, in invitting us to the substance of Portia's fairness.

Now, let us turn our attention to the opening scene of *Timon of Athens*. The poet and the painter are engaged in a considerably long and highly technical discussion of the sister arts. The whole argument of this discussion will look certainly "disproportionate if the sole function of the introductory scene is to show Timon's uncritical bounty to his friends. Their argument concerns the mystery of these arts."[40] The painter has brought a painting to Timon. The poet was taken up by the picture, and had to acclaim that it was livelier than life :

**Poet**: Admirable : How this grace
Speaks his own standing; What a mental power
This eye shoots forth; how big imagination
Moves in this lip; to the dumbness of the gesture
One might interpret.

**Painter**: It is a pretty mocking of the life
Here is a touch; is't good ?

**Poet**: I will say of it.
It tutors nature; artifical strife
Lives in these touches, livelier than life

(I.I. 11 33-41)

Here according to Shakespeare, art is improving upon nature, but this mimesis of nature accomplished in the painting is still more perfected by the verses of Shakespeare for the simple reason that it presents the reader with an excellent verbal picture of the whole scene. If the artist's touches are 'livelier than life'. the poet's touches are simply superb and 'the liveliest'. Something more beautiful than the pieces of art in the two passages are projected by Shakespeare's verse on the mental retina of the readers.

Almost the same technique of projecting the beauty of the person described on the readers' mind is employed in many of Shakespeare's sonnets. Consider the lines from Sonnet 17:

If I could write the beauty of your eyes
And in fresh numbers number all your graces,
The age to come would say 'This poet lies:
Such heavenly touches ne'ver touch'd earthly faces'....
You should live twice - in it, and in my rhyme.

Here, the beauty of the person to whom the poet's verse is promising literary immortality, is already immortalized by the sheer quality of the poet's verse, whether 'the child' lives or not in order to bear testimony to it. This is what Nuttal meant while focussing on the unusual comprehensive nature of the poet's mimesis. "Shakespeare, more perhaps than any other writer, creates a cloud of alternative or overwhelming explanations round his figures."[41]

Shakespeare's verbal–pictures were to be resuscitated live— figures on the stage, to be brought to life both by the actors and the viewers. It is important to note that in a very much earlier play. Shakespeare had already emphasized this two–pronged enlivening of his verbal pictures. Through the spokesmen in the Prologue of *Henry V*, he had requested to the audience, "to piece out our imperfections with your thoughts' - to supply, "through imaginary forces, 'what stage and players cannot specifically provide."[42] In a way Shakespeare tried to mix together visual and verbal images, of course in his own way, in a manner different from what Blake did later through his illuminated works.

My attempt in the present essey was to highlight the influence of the ever present tradition of *ut pictura poesis* on four of the greatest early poets who verbally pictured their conceptions in English. The adjective 'ever present' is thoroughly justifiable with regard to the tradition under consideration. The tradition was continued by Ben Jonson, Milton (though in a lesser degree). Francis Quarles, Richard Crashaw, Dryden, Pope, Thomson, Collins, and Gray. And even after the staunch criticism raised aginst it by Edmund Burke and G.E. Lessing and the resultant avalanche of critical theories, the pictorial element in poetry was not neglected by the later poets. Though William Blake did not mention the phrase *ut pictura poesis* tradition, in practice he is the

supreme example of combining poetry and painting. It is also significant to note that the "picturesque" school in fact arose only after Burke and Lessing had written. Moreover, some of the greatest pictorial effects were achieved in the poetry of John Keats and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. It is from this vantage point that I have described the *ut pictura poesis* as a tradition which is ever present in English Poetry.

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25. Herbert Read, "The Parallels in Painting and Poetry," in In Defense of Shelley and other Essays (New York,1968), p.238.
26. Quoted in the Appendix by Gregory Smith, Elizabethean Critical Essays (London, 1959), I, 342.
27. Herbert Read, article cited, pp.237-38.
28. Emile Legouis, Spenser (1926 : Indian rpt. New Delhi :Rama Brothers, 1964), p.96
29. Quotations from Edmund Spenser follow the text of The Faerie Queene, ed. A.C. Hamilton (London & New York 1984).
30. E.Legouis, Spenser, p.119. See also pp. 101-8. For Spenser's allegiance to the tradition of ut pictura poesis see John Bender, Spenser and Literary Pictorialism (Princeton 1972); and Rudolf Gottfried, "The Pictorial Element in Spenser's Poetry," E.L.H. 19 (1952), 203-13.
31. A.C. Hamilton, The Structure of Allegory in the Faerie Queene (Oxford 1961), p.137.

[32.] Joseph Spence, Observations, Anedotes And Characters of Books & Men, ed. James M.Osborne (Oxford, 1966), I, p.182. Osborne has pointed out that the old lady referred to was Spence's own mother.

[33.] See D.J. Enright & Ernst De Chickera, ed., English Critical Texts : 16th Century to 20th Century (London 1962), p.9.

[34.] Forrest G. Robinson, The Shape of Things Known: Sidney's Apology in Its Philosphical Tradition. (Cambridge, Maschussetts, 1972 ), p.99.

[35.] Ibid., pp. 137-204.

[36.] Sir Philip Sidney, The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia, ed, Albert Feuillerat (Cambridge, 1922 ), pp. 367-68.

[37.] Emile Legouis, Spenser (1926, Indian rpt. New Delhi: Rama Brother, 1964), p. 100.

[38.] Forrest Robinson, op. cit., p. 149. It should be here noticed that Robinson's analysis is based on the song as found in the first version of Arcadia,the above poem being put in the mouth of the Shepherd Dicus. Robinson has only mentioned that this song occurs in the New Arcadia too, but has not discussed it further. In the New Arcadia (revised and amplified by Sidney himself for the most part) this poem is found in a prayer book (See P. Sidney The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia. pp. 239-40).

[39.] Quotations from Shakespeare follow the text of Peter Alexander, ed., William Shakespeare : The Complete Works (London & Glasgow, 1973).

[40.] W. Moelwyn Merchant, Shakespeare and the Artist (New York, Toronto, London, 1959). p.171.

[41.] A.D. Nuttall, A New Mimesis : Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality (London & New York, 1983). p.178.

[42.] Alan C. Dessen, "Shakespeare's Patterns for the Viewer's Eye : A Dramatology for the Open Stage," in Sidney Homan, ed., Shakespeare's More than Words Can Witness: Essays On Visual and Non-verbal Enactment in the Plays (London, 1980), pp. 92-93.

*Kathleen Raine*

# WILLIAM BLAKE—PROPHETIC VOICE OF ENGLAND

For more than half my long life my studies have been concerned with William Blake. If I were an academic I would say that Blake has been my "subject", but being myself a poet it is more true to say that Blake has been my "master" in the oriental sense of that word. I hope I have served him well, thrown a degree of light, for my contemporaries, upon his profound thought and the complex and obscure mythological organism of his entire work, both his writings and his paintings and engravings, which together form an indivisible whole. Be that as it may I must begin what I have to say in the traditional oriental manner of acknowledging my debt of gratitude to the teacher to whom I owe more than to any other among the great names of the Western tradition, Plato and Plotinus, and in my own country Shakespeare's inexhaustible riches, Milton whom Blake himself so revered, Shelley who alone of Blake's contemporaries drew upon many of the same sources within the one unanimous and universal tradition of wisdom, and W.B. Yeats, Blake's first editor and greatest disciple.

Indeed I am not alone in my generation or the younger generations that follow, in holding Blake's prophetic writings—for so he describes them—among the "sacred books" from which I have learned what those in my time and place have most needed to know. Indeed the very phrase "the New Age", now current in the Western and the westernized world, is surely taken from Blake's Introduction to his poem *Milton* in which he calls to the "young men of the new age" to rouse up and wake to a new vision stirring in the world, Blake was himself born in 1757, in which year the Swedish visionary Swedenborg declared that a "new Church" had come into being, the "Church of the New Jerusalem". Blake was, both at the beginning and at the end of his life, deeply influenced by Swedenborg and saw himself as the voice of that New Age which had begun in the year of his birth.

* The text of a lecture delivered by the distinguished poet and scholar in the Department of Enlish, Aligarh Muslim University on 17th January, 1994.

There are works of transforming power whose influence operates, it may be, on whole civilizations, like the Jewish Bible, the Koran, the Christian gospels; and within these larger contexts what one must call "minor prophets". Blake called his writings and poems "Prophetic Books"; he is the sole English poet to have made such a claim nor could such a claim be made for any other English poet. He remains the one English religious prophet. What is more, it is only in this century that the transforming power of his writings has manifested itself, and continues to do so among a younger generation who would in general accept the values of the so-called "New Age". This embraces the great numbers looking not for progress and development according to the received values of our scientific materialist civilization, but for a reversal of the premisses of that civilization, of the very grounds and assumptions on which it is established. Rene Guenon, the French metaphysician who at the beginning of this century made his radical challenge to the very premisses of Western civilization, called our age "the reign of quantity". Blake had made the same radical challenge a century before, not as a theorist but from the very heart of life itself. No other poet, neither Wordsworth or Coleridge or Byron had done so; Shelley alone who likewise challenged current values in the name of poetic truth, and may indeed have known something of Blake's writing through his marriage to Mary Godwin, daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, whom Blake had known, and two of whose books he had illustrated.

During his lifetime Blake's prophetic books remained unpublished, and existed only in the beautiful "illuminated" copies he made by a method of printing he himself invented, selling copies to a few friends. It was only a century later that their power began to operate on a generation themselves beginning to call in question the premisses of the mighty structure of a materialist civilization which has yielded such evident benefits in the sphere of technology. Blake lived and died in poverty, although he was known and honoured among his fellow-artists and by a group of young disciples, including Samuel Palmer and Calvert, and others who called themselves "the Shoreham Ancients", affirming their adherence to ancient and traditional sacred values, as against "the moderns"

who, then as now, were prepared to discard the wisdom of ages and put their trust in the new scientific experimental method.

Blake's rich and complex works can be studied from many standpoints—in the context of the revolutionary political events of his age; in the light of modern psychology, especially that of C.G. Jung which casts much light upon Blake's mythology of the inner worlds, the fourfold structure of the human soul whose energies he personified as his four "Zoas"—living creatures—of sense-perception, feeling, reason and vision, and his "spiritual fourfold London", the city of Golgonooza, whose structure is also fourfold. I have myself made studies in some of Blake's most important sources, Plotinus and other of the Neoplatonic writings translated by his contemporary Thomas Taylor the Platonist—indeed Blake can be seen in a certain sense as influenced by the Greek Revival at the end of the eighteenth century. Jacob Boehme, the great German Protestant mystic; Swedenborg, Paracelsus, Blake himself names as his sources. But I shall attempt today only to present the main outline of what I believe to be the essence, the underlying structure, of Blake's traditional yet revolutionary and transformative thought. For the perennial wisdom is itself revolutionary in an age that has lost its orientation to the abiding source. Obscure as he remained throughout his life Blake yet saw himself as a *national* prophet, not as his first editor W.B. Yeats was later to be, an initiate of esoteric knowledge, and never doubted that his work concerned his nation. "Truth cannot be spoken as to be understood and not be believed" he wrote. And in the *Descriptive Catalogue* of his one exhibition of paintings (held in 1809) he addressed himself to "the public" as against the professional critics of the day "whose narrow blinking eyes have too long governed art in a dark corner". Only a few copies of that catalogue were sold and yet time has been on Blake's side and he has become a revered national and indeed international figure.

There cannot be more than two or three great Painters or Poets in any Age or Country (he wrote) and these, in a corrupt state of Society, are easily excluded, but not so easily obstructed....if Art is the glory of a Nation, if Genius and Inspiration are the great Origin and Bond of Society, the distinction my works have obtained from those who best understand such things, calls for my Exhibition as the greatest of Duties to my country.

— and "the ignorant Insults of Individuals will not hinder me from doing my duty to my Art." These are not the words of a mystical dreamer, a poet living in some private world; he assumed the prophetic role not as a private but as a public task. Blake's "appeal to the Public" has been in the long run heard, and his name in England is a household name, his call "to build Jerusalem" (the holy city) "In England's green and pleasant land" on all lips, virtually a national anthem.

The Oxford English Dictionary describes a prophet as "One who speaks for God". The role is a public one, the prophet speaks to his nation, or to mankind as a whole, on matters of universal concern; and his claim to divine inspiration is not questioned by those civilizations who recognize a supreme mind from which truths may be "revealed" to humankind, may inspire its recipients with cosmic knowledge. In the absence of any such belief—in the context of a civilization dedicated to a materialist ideology, already well established in Blake's lifetime—the claim to prophecy can only be meaningless. Blake was unheeded by his contemporaries, or dismissed as a sort of madman. Yet his claim was clear, and the God for whom he speaks is the "God within", the inner light" of the Protestant mystical tradition, the universal spirit of the "Divine Humanity"—such was the term Blake used. At this time, the—individual minds of multitudes of human egos is paramount; psychologists both Freudian and Jungian make "individuation" their goal, whereas in traditional civilizations it was rather the purpose of prayer and meditation to open the individual to the universal mind. "If Genius and Inspiration are the great Origin and Bond of Society"—and such was Blake's belief, shared by few in his own or perhaps any age. Shelley has called poets "the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Such a belief in genius and inspiration imposes on poetry the role of prophecy, speaking for the universal mind on matters of this world, and this deep truth will always prevail. Current fashion is for ego-poetry, affirming each individual's narrow vision without regard to even the possibility of access to a greater mind. If Blake and Shelley believe poets to be the individual "unacknowledged legislators" and poetic genius as the "bond of society" this is because the final and ultimate arbiter of truth is this "God within". This universal mind Blake calls the Imagination; whose awakening in any individual or in humanity as

a whole, passes the final judgement on personal acts, and national acts. This "Last Judgement" is the theme of a great unfinished painting on which Blake was engaged to the end of his life, and on which he has written a long and illuminating commentary. "Jesus, the Imagination" appears as the Judge. The work is in many details based upon Michelangelo's great painting in the Sistine Chapel, but its mystical content differs in essentials from Michelangelo's conception of the Judge appearing as a human Person to aquit or condemn mortal men. Blake's "Last Judgement" is interiorized, and has nothing to do with the end of time: it is a "last" judgement because it is in its nature final and unanswerable when the highest arbiter within our own nature passes judgement on our finite mortal selves, so highly prized in the modern world - our "personalities". Thus "when the Last Judgement begins, its Vision is seen by the Imaginative Eye of Every one according to the situation he holds," (K604). It is the judgement of truth and reality on every kind of error and self-deception.

In an early work entitled "All Religions Are One" (1788), Blake makes it clear that he sees "poetic Genius as nothing less than the prophetic gift:

> The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius, which is everywhere call'd the Spirit of Prophecy.
>
> The Jewish and Christian Testament are An original derivation from the Poetic Genius: this is necessary from the confined nature of bodily sensation.
>
> As all men are alike (tho' infinitely various), so all Religions as all similars, have one source. The true Man is the source, he being the Poetic Genius.

Who then are we, and who this "True Man" who is called the "poetic genius" and "the spirit of prophecy"? Blake's "true man" is not the bodily man nor the empirical ego but the "God within" whom he calls the Imagination, and (Blake being a Christian) "Jesus the Imagination", and the "Divine Humanity". It is the Divine Humanity present in all that is the source of all truth and the Judge before whom all must stand.

In affirming that "All Religions are One" Blake is carrying his belief in the "Divine Humanity" who is the true Self in all to its

ultimate conclusion. In affirming that "Jesus is God" he is by no means speaking as a Christian fundamentalist; for he declares that "Antiquity taught the religion of Jesus", which religion was the universal truth which Jesus had taught, and by no means to be equated with the exoteric teachings of the Church or Churches.

In this bold restatement of the Christian teaching Blake had the authority of the eighteenth century Swedish visionary Emmanuel Swedenborg, from whom indeed Blake adopted the term the "Divine Humanity" which he has made so much his own that few of his readers are aware that in this and much besides Blake is following the teachings of Swedenborg. Indeed Swedenborg's, vision of the "Divine Humanity", whom he describes as "the Grand Man of the Heavens" (that is, of the inner worlds) is of great splendour, being the many-in-one and one-in-many of all humankind, who "from a distance" appears as one man, but from near at hand (so Swedenborg puts it) is seen to be made up of "the innumerable multitudes of eternity". This Grand Man Blake (Swedenborg also) identifies with "Jesus, the Imagination", and with the poetic or prophetic genius; but Swedenborg says that to many who have no knowledge of Jesus He is recognized, by other names, as "the Lord". This Jesus universal is the regenerative divine presence in all, by whose virtue each and every individual has access to the divine presence.

But, you may say, how can this innate divinity be equated with the prophetic gift which imparted the Law to Moses, the Koran to the prophet Mohammed, his teachings to the Lord Buddha? All sacred traditions recognize a number of levels through which the divine life flows into the created world, and in such societies it is recongnized that poets may be inspired from higher or lower regions of the mental worlds. Blake conceded that art not of a prophetic character was "seldom without some vision"; but he is insistent thoughout his writings that "One thing alone makes a poet: Imagination, the Divine Vision." There are many degrees between the great prophetic writings that have inspired whole civilizations, and the glimpses and flashes that come to us all, however rarely, But the reality discerned in such glimpses is the same reality as is more fully set forth in the great revelatory visions, and has nothing in common with the secular works which are self-expression of the

ego and its various degrees of alienation form this vision of a greater reality. Indeed it is because the one truth is written in us all that we respond to the sacred writings of all religious traditions and also to the great poets, Shakespeare, Dante or Rumi or the great epics of India or of all nations. It is a modern misapprehension that poets, musicians, architects—or indeed scientists and mathematicians—are the originators of their works, that poet "invent" their poems or musicians their music. Rather in moments of inspiration they *perceive* the realities their works embody. It is recorded that Dante *perceived* in such a moment the entire structure of his Divine Comedy, which he thereafter wrote over a period of years. In the same way Mozart received his musical inspiration as *wholes* which he thereafter wrote in detail. Those who ask how Shakespeare could have known so much about all kinds and classes of people overlook the nature of inspiration. It is said that Shakespeare "never blotted a line" but wrote at great speed and without reflection, which suggests that, like Dante and Mozart he had when he wrote access to that inspiration which comes not from individual memory but from universal mind. Spirit, according to St. Paul (Corinthians 2.ii) "searcheth all things." Blake himself claimed that his prophetic poems were often given to him "form immediate dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without premeditation & even against my will; the time it has taken in writing was thus render'd Non Existent, & an immense Poem exists which seems to be the labour of a long Life, all produced without Labour or Study," (K823). Those who have experience of imaginative thought will have no difficulty in believing Blake when, in more eloquent and figurative language he writes:

> In my brain are studies and chambers fill'd with books and pictures of old, which I wrote and painted in ages of Eternity before my mortal life; and these works are the delight & Study of Archangels. (K802)

This surely is what Plato means by *anamnesis*—that all knowledge is remembering what we already and for ever know. Blake was surely describing the access to the collective or universal mind of which the individual is (in Blake's words) but a "form and organ", the agent and recipient. It is true that few works issue from

this high source; but it is these which have their origin in that deep knowledge that speak wisdom to all times and places, by virtue of the universal nature of the divine truth and divine beauty which all share and recognize, in which all participate. Poetry and the other arts are, therefore, when they so originate, communications of the deepest wisdom, of which the mind of empirical ego is incapable. This empirical ego Blake calls, in constrast with the divine Humanity, "Satan, the Selfhood". It is characteristic of Blake that he spoke with a down-to-earth simplicity. He writes in *Milton.*

> There is a Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find Nor can his Watch Fiends find it; but the Industrious find This Moment & it multiply, & when it once is found It renovates every Moment of the Day, if rightly placed (K5Z6).

This is the moment of inspiration; and at the end of a passage building up a great edifice of the wondrous buildings of Time through the six thousand years of the world's history, Blake concludes:

> Every time less than the pulsation of the artery
> Is equal in its period and value of Six Thousand Years,
> For in this Period the Poet's Work is Done and all the Great
> Events of Time start forth and are conceiv'd in such a Period,
> Within a Moment, a Pulsation of the Artery, (K516)



This knowledge belongs not to history, to time, to experience, but to the cosmos. Nor is it only poets and musicians who are thus inspired but scientists, mathematicians, all imaginative thinkers. Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, who spoke to the students of the Institute of Architecture in November 1993 told me afterwards that her writings on the mathematical structure of Hindu temples were not at all of her own invention: "One day I just saw it", she said. These forms, be they temples or poems or any other structures within the cosmic whole exist in their own right within inexhaustible reality. We do not invent, but perceive them.

It is because the one reality is written also in us that we respond to such works, which serve (in Platonic terms) to "remind" us; as we do to the holy scriptures of whatever religion, or indeed to the deep insights of such poets as Shakespeare and Dante and Rumi or to the Mahabharata. And it is surely only in the modern West

that poetry and the sacred have become separated and the very idea of "secular" art has made its appearance—art without inspiration. Blake, so far as I know, is alone in his century in declaring that the inspiration of poet and prophet are one and the same and the source of that inspiration the Divine Human, innate in all. In fact that separation of the divine and the human is an article of Christain faith from which only a few mystics have deviated, like Eckhart, whose works were banned by the Papacy for declaring the divine principle to be within. Sufi mystics have been executed for saying as much, although in India the words "Tat Tvam Asi" (that art thou) is a fundamental principle of Hindu sacred writings. But Blake is a prophet of the modern world who had nothing worse to fear but neglect and incomprehension.

It may well seem strange, indeed unacceptable, to the religious thus to identify the prophetic with the poetic gift, to affirm that the great religions of the world are "each nation's different reception of the poetic genius", that the human imagination is the source alike of poetry and prophecy. "What is a Church and what is a theatre?" Blake asks, "Are they two and not one?" Surely this is to place the works of Shakespeare among the sacred books! The Protestant reformation rested on the dawning realization that the "inner light" and not the Church is the ultimate authority, but Blake carried this realization to its logical extreme, so far as I know unprecedented in the modern West, though what he affirmed would have caused no surprise to those Oriental thinkers for whom the universal and the individual Self are the same. In the mystical philosophy of Plotinus and the Neoplatonists, besides certain Gnostic Christians condemned by the Church, a comparable understanding is to be found. In the Indian subcontinent religion and art have been inseparably united until modern western secular ideas invaded that ancient unity of culture. There is a world of difference between "religious art" in the modern West, which since the Renaissance has often taken the form of mere narrative illustrations of religious stories and personages; and "sacred art", in the true sense of art inspired by a vision of the numinous in whatever mode. In the whole phenomenon of the sacred icons of the Orthodox

Christian tradition; or indeed in the Gothic cathedrals, established on sacred principles of geometry and number, "religious art" is true "sacred art" also. But in the centuries following the Renaissance the arts have moved ever farther from any idea that a vision of the sacred is a necessary ground for any work of art; and yet Blake wrote "One thing alone makes a poet: imagination, the Divine Vision." Such a definition gives to the arts an essential function as the language in which that "divine vision" is communicated from the inner to the outer world, where the arts so inspired in turn remind us of that imaginative knowledge innate in all our shared inheritance accessible, Plato taught, by "recollection" - *anamnesis.* Blake continually affirms the sacred function of the arts, in this sense. But in so doing he is by no means making a religion of art, in the sense of those artists of the late nineteenth century who proclaimed the value of "art for art's sake" - quite the contrary, it is by virtue of their function as the language of a vision of sacred things that the arts have value. "Poetry, painting, & Music, the three Powers in Man of conversing with Paradise, which the Flood did not sweep away", (K609) - the "Flood" symbolically understood as the sea of time and space which submerges the higher consciousness of humankind, the omniscient "God within" enthroned in every human soul.



Around the Throne Heaven is open'd & the Nature of Eternal Things Display'd, All Springing from the Divine Humanity. All beams from him' as he himself has said All dwells in him.

(K612)

The person on the throne Blake names "Jesus, the Imagination"; in other sacred traditions there are other names for the same reality.

Such a view of art is not possible in terms of a materialist civilization, for it presumes the recognition that within reality—and within man—there are other levels than that which forms the sole basis of our materialist Western civilization, whose mentality seems constitutionally unable to grasp the possibility that the measurable material world is not the ground and the whole

of reality. For the oriental religions it is equally self-evident that the perceiving mind and not the object perceived is a more fundamental principle. The innate assurance of the materialist mentaility is illustrated by the story of Dr Johnson thinking he had answered the arguments of the immaterialist philosopher Berkeley when he kicked a stone, saying "thus I refute him! There are many to this day who would still see this act of common sense as a valid refutation; but to modern physics stones are no longer so solid as they were in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries! In the same way, many Westerners engaged in the study of "artificial brains" are unable to grasp the difference between the brain—a physical organ—a machine simulating the brain—and consciousness itself—a difference not in degree but in kind; between the measurable and the immeasurable.

W.B. Yeats, who was Blake's first editor and greatest disciple, wrote that " the mischief began at the end of the seventeenth century when man became passive before a mechanized nature; that lasted to our own day with the exception of a brief period when imprisoned man beat on the door", (Introduction to The Oxford Book of Modern Verse", 1936, p xxvii). Blake was of course the great mind who refused to allow Imagination to be passive before the " mechanized nature" of Newton and Locke. He called himself indeed "The Voice of one crying in the Wilderness" (using the words of the Gospel describing John the Baptist) when he proclaimed his prophetic message of the primacy of the Imagination: "The true faculty of knowledge must be the faculty which experiences. This faculty I treat of," (K98). These words would cause little surprise east of Suez, on the Indian subcontinent, or in the Buddhist world, but one sees little evidence that they are better understood now in the West than in Blake's lifetime, unless perhaps by the most advanced physicists themeselves when they recognige that the perceiving mind is as important as the perceived.

But I am not qualified to digress into a discussion of scientific theory. To return to Blake, then, his contribution to the Western mystical tradition is radical and twofold: 1) Religions are declared to originate through the human imagination which receives the vision of higher worlds. 2) Poetry and the other arts

are placed in the same order or imaginative vision as are religious "revelations". The difference is not of kind but of degree, and both alike are visions of truth and reality. The visions of the Imagination are not "imaginary" in the common sense of the word—fictitious and unreal—and the great Ismaeli scholar Henri Corbin has coined the word "imaginal" to indicate this difference—the "imaginal" is an interworld through which meanings and values are embodied in forms communicable in this world. Because Blake equated Jesus with the Imagination he declares in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that "Jesus and his Apostles and Disciples were all Artists"—not because they practised some art or craft, but because they acted from inspiration at all times: "I tell you no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments. Jesus was all virtue, and acted from Impulse not from rules." Thus while other religions—and indeed the Christian church also—teach various methods of prayer and meditation as a means of "conversing with paradise", Blake proffered the practice of the arts as a form of what elsewhere would be called "yoga".

Art is degraded in a world which denies the sacred source and sacred function of the arts, be these the "fine arts" or the simplest crafts of cooking, carpentry, all the making and doing of human hands. And this is inevitable in a world for which reality is equated with the material order and that order seen as not a living but a mechanistic world. We have seen the decline of the arts of the modern West and westernized world from (to take only English poetry as an example) the total spiritual context of Milton to the personal devotion of the "metaphysical" poets Vaughan or Traherne, to the Augustan poets, Dryden and Pope for whom "reason" was supreme, to the descriptive Victorians and finally to Marxist "social realism", and in our own world the camera-eye a mechanism, not a perceiving being. There is little "poetry" in modern poetry thus denuded of values and meanings which are no part of passivity before a mechanized nature.

And yet we see a counter-movement among the younger generation who speak of the "New Age", and Blake would surely have been glad to see so many of the "sons" and "daughters" of Albion seeking to rediscover what has been lost, their own humanity. It was Blake himself who first used the phrase "the

New Age" and in his Preface to the poem *Milton* wrote "Rouze up' O young Men of the New Age" and admonishes these new men to reject those who "depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War." And he continues by summoning painters, sculptors and architects to be true to "our own Imagination, those worlds of Eternity"; and there follows the poem the whole English nation knows as *Jerusalem* summoning the people to "Build Jerusalem"—the holy city—"In England's green & pleasant Land."

The passage ends with a quotation from the *Book of Numbers,* "Would to God that all the Lord's people were Prophets." Such was the programme Blake set before his nation.

Blake made many illustrations of religious themes from the Bible and from the New Testament, besides the poems of Dante, Milton, Greek mythology, and the visionary world of Swedenborg. But for him "every thing that lives is holy" and his vision of the sacred is summed up in those four familiar lines,

> To see a World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour.



Perhaps Blake's greatest single work is his twenty-two engravings illustrating the *Book of Job,* made late in his life in the year 1825. You are probably familiar with these small but inexhaustibly rich work: and you will remember how they conduct Job, that good man, from the prosperity of his first state, through the progressive devastation of his world and his own reduction to near despair, to the vision of God which restores to him more than he had lost, in a deeper understanding of the divine nature. In the first plate we see Job and his wife, his sons and daughters, his sheep and lands as far as the eye can see, seated under the great Tree of Life studying the scriptures, all immobile, like a Victorian family portrait taken on the sabbath day when man is enjoined to do "no manner of work." Behind this pious group, on the spreading branches of the Tree of Life, hang musical instru-

ments, unnoticed and unused. Under the engraving the words are written: "The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life." Job's religion is clearly strict obedience to the letter. The last plate depicts Job after his bitter ordeal and final enlightenment, his sons and daughters about him, all playing instruments or singing in chorus; practising what Blake regarded as the true religion of the Imagination, the God Within. Addressing the concluding chapter of his last great Prophetic Book, *Jerusalem*, "To the Christians", Blake wrote:

> ...to Labour in knowledge is to build up Jerusalem, and to Despise Knowledge is to Despise Jerusalem & her Builders. 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."

For a poet for whom so great a claim is made—who himself claimed so high an inspiration for his work—it is bound to be asked, what was he as a man? Those who knew him all saw in him greatness that, in the words of his young disciple, the painter Samuel Palmer, "once known, could never be forgotten." I will conclude by reading you the description Palmer sent to Blake's biographer, Gilchrist, in 1855, twenty-eight years after Blake's death:

> In him you saw at once the Maker, the Inventor; one of the few in any age: a fitting companion for Dante. He was energy itself, and shed around him a kindling influence; an atmosphere of life, full of the ideal. To walk with him in the country was to perceive the soul of beauty through the forms of matter; and the high, gloomy buildings between which, from his study window, a glimpse was caught of the Thames and the Surrey shore, assumed a kind of grandeur from the man dwelling near them. Those may laugh at this who never knew such an one as Blake; but of him it is the simple truth.
>
> He was a man without a mast; his aim single, his path straightforwards, his wants few; so he was free, noble, and happy. His voice and manner were quiet, yet all awake with intellect. Above the tricks of littleness, or the least taint of affectation, with a natural dignity which few would have dared to affront, he was gentle and affectionate, loving to be with little children, and to talk about them. "That is heaven," he said to a friend, leading him to the window and pointing to a group of them at play. His eye was finest I ever saw: brilliant, but not roving, clear and intent, yet susceptible; it flashed with genius, or melted with tenderness. It could also be terrible. Cunning and falsehood quailed

under it, but is was never busy with them. It pierced them, and turned away. Nor was his mouth less expressive; the lip flexible and quivering with feeling. I can yet recall when, on one occasion, dwelling upon the exquisite beauty of the parable of the Prodigal, he began to repeat a part of it; but at the words, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him," could go no further; his voice faltered, and he was in tears.

Gilchrist's *Life and Works of William Blake*
(Volume 1 pp 344-5)

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# "THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL" : A NEW EXEGESIS

When William Blake's brother , Robert, died in 1787 (*Notebook* 1), Blake inherited *The Notebook*, also known as the Rossetti Manuscript. For the rest of his life, Blake maintained the *Notebook*, filling its pages with poems, drawings, and miscellaneous material. One of the poems in *The Notebook*, *The Everlasting Gospel*, remains an enigma within the Blake canon. David Erdman has done extensive work with *The Notebook*, looking at watermarks and stitch holes, themes and metre, in order to piece together the poem. According to Erdman's 1977 revised edition of *The Notebook* in facsimile, there are 9 fragments, lettered a through i, as well as three fragments, j through l, that were never of *The Notebook* itself (and fragment m, "What are those &c," assumed lost). In *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake,* edited by Erdman eleven years later, he adds two more fragments: n, originally thought to be part of g, and m, originally considered as an entirely separate piece named Poem 161 in *The Notebook*. Despite the indefatigable endeavours to edit *The Everlasting Gospel*, certain problems continue to exist. Apart from the inevitable difficulties of editing a poem never published or edited properly by the author, the problem of interpreting the poem has been less than fairly dealt with. Helms and Erdman look most carefully at the functions of each fragment within the poem. Only a few critics actually look at the poem itself. Of those few, no one, including Erdman (except for patches of textual notes at the end of *The Complete Poetry and Prose),* analyzes the poem in its entirety, looking at the poem as a whole, taking into account all of its fragments.

Erdman's examination of *The Everlasting Gospel* remains the foundation for all the work done on the poem. He suggests that the detached fragments j, k, l, were written first. The remaining 11 fragments, he surmises, were written in the following order : "i, (m), a (with some doubt), e, g, h (?), b, c, d, f (except that the lost m, if a variant of k, may have preceded i) " (Erdman 73). Before

continuing, a confusing problem must be cleared up. Erdman, in *The Complete Poetry and Prose,* does not use the same lettering as he uses in the 1977 facsimile edition of *The Notebook.* Therefore, for purposes of clarity, the lettering from *The Notebook* will be used here. Also, in *The Complete Poetry and Prose,* Erdman letters the Joseph of Arimathea fragment as m (disregarding the fragment, "What are those &c," which he calls m in his earlier works), and the "What can be done" fragment as n, although he switches the lettering at the beginning of his textual notes at the back of the anthology (though later in the notes, he switches the lettering back again). To avoid confusion, and assuming the second set of lettering is a typographical mistake, the Joseph of Arimathea fragment will be referred to here as m, and the "What can be done " fragment will be referred to as n.

Most of the confusion Erdman encounters when editing the poem can be traced to page 52 of *The Notebook* where sections from five fragments appear. Fragment d, "Was Jesus Humble," appears, with the title "The Everlasting Gospel," on the top right corner. On the far left, in the margin, written sideways, fragment m appears :

I will tell you that Joseph of Arimathea
Said to my Fairy was not it very queer
Pliny & Trajan what are you here
Come listen to Joseph of Arimathea
[continuing along the bottom of the page] Listen patient &
when Joseph has done
Twill make a fool laugh & a Fairy Fun.

Also, the last lines of fragment e continue on the left of the page, " In three Nights he devoured his prey/And still he devours the Body Clay/For Dust & Clay is the Serpents meat/Which never was made for Man to Eat." These lines end with the tally "94 lines." Below the tally, fragment g appears, "Seeing this False Christ In fury & Passion/I made my Voice all over the Nation." Erdman includes the line "What are those &c, " which appears between the tally line and fragment n, as the last line of g. However, a space occurs between g and the "What are those &c".

Compositionally. "What are those &c" is aligned with the fragment below g, fragment n. Also, Blake composed this line in the same sized handwriting as the lines form fragment n. Also, Blake

composed this line in the same sized handwriting as the lines from fragment n rather than fragment g. In the 1977 *Notebook*, Erdman labels g and n as the same fragment and then splits them apart in the 1988 *Complete Poetry and Prose*. He obviously disregards the physical spacing of these fragments. "What are those &c" clearly begins fragment n. Also, Erdman suggests that "What are those &c" is a cue for the line" For what is Antichrist but those "from fragment k. However, the other cues in the poem match perfectly to their corresponding lines. For example, the cue "Was Jesus Chaste or did he &c," at the end of fragment d on page 54 of *The Notebook*, leads right into "Was Jesus Chaste or did he/Give any Lessons of Chastity " at the beginning of section e on page 48. Thus "What are those &c" hardly seems to herald this line from k. Therefore, the first part of the fragment n, which seems to begin with "What are those &c," must be lost.

Most critics of *The Everlasting Gospel* deal most strongly with the editorial aspects of the poem; however, despite the various essays on the fragments in *The Everlasting Gospel*, anthologies rarely print the poem in its entirety. Even Erdman, whose *Complete Poetry and Prose* has been a primary source in most critical essays of the poem, doesn't include all the fragments in his final version of the poem. For example, although Erdman believes, as he states in his essay "Terrible Blake," that j, k, and l precede the other fragments, he does not include them in his edited version of the poem in *The Complete Poetry and Prose*. Erdman also excludes fragments c (because he believes it to be a revision of d), d, i, and e. Glancing at various anthologies which include *The Everlasting Gospel*, suggests that most editors choose not to include c, because it is a revision of d (although it contains one line that does not appear in d, and which, in fact, helps to explain some of the contrariety within the poem ), (Was Jesus born of Virgin Pure), or j. Interestingly, both Randel Helms and David Erdman agree that the "prose paragraph (j) is the seedbed of the poem" (Erdman 337). Yet if it so important to the rest of the poem, why do so many editors eliminate it in the final copy, especially Erdman himself ? The poem obviously needs to be looked at as a whole, taking into account all of the fragments, in order to give the reader a fuller sense of the poem itself.

Most critics attempting to interpret *The Everlasting Gospel* first begin with Biblical allusions. However, as Michael Tolley states, "Biblical references cannot take the reader the whole of the way, they are essential in taking him [only] part of the way" (Tolley 176). Ultimately and inevitably, Blake's own canon of work must be studied in order to fully understand the meaning of the poem. Using both the Bible and Blake's own canon, even the best critics find themselves weighed down by the poem's fragmentation. Both Erdman and Helms remedy this by studying the poem fragment by fragment (looking more at the fragments than at the meaning of the poem). Others choose to study a theme within the poem, but lose sight of many of the smaller fragments. In the end, their themes do not apply to fragments they have omitted and thus their explications become invalid.

The most difficult problem, if not the one barrier that prevents a consistent interpretation of the poem, is the character of Jesus Christ. Who is he and why does he seem so different in one fragment as opposed to another ? Jean Hall attempts to confront this dilemma but only manages to list contradictions in the poem rather than explaining them. The solution to this problem is that there are two main characters : there is a Blakean Jesus and a historical Jesus, often referred to as Christ or Antichrist.

If Erdman's theory that fragments j,k, and l were written first is correct, perhaps Blake intended to use these fragments to define his two characters at the outset of *The Everlasting Gospel.* Erdman and Helms believe that j is the nucleus of the poem because it contains the theme " "Forgiveness of Sins This alone is the Gospel & this is the Life & Immortality brought to light by Jesus." Hazard Adams points out the fragment j also

> suggests perpetuation of the Orc cycle of endless revolt and reaction unless that cycle be broken by the act of forgiveness itself. Not to forgive is to murder the divine image, to re-enact the primitive sacrifice of revenge, to force the cycle around through the inevitable return of the revolutionary.
>
> (Adams 182)

However, this theme functions more efficiently as a way in which the reader can see the distinction between the Jesus Christ who forgives sins (hereafter called Jesus for the sake of clarity) and

the Jesus (hereafter named Christ) who, in fragment I, inculcated "The Moral Virtues [that] in their Pride/ Did over the World triumphant ride/ In Wars & Sacrifice for Sin/ And souls to Hell ran trooping in." This Christ is "The Accuser" who points out sin and cries, "Crucify crucify." The book of Revelation identifies Satan as the accuser of Christians : "the accuser of our brothers is overthrown, who day and night accused them before our God" (12 : 10). Jean Hall suggests that "for Blake, sin essentially is not the violation of conventional moral codes, but the self-righteous conviction that one knows what right and wrong behaviour should be for others" (Hall 65). Blake's Jesus, on the other hand, "rose & said to Me/ Thy sins are all forgiven thee." At first, Blake wrote that Jesus "rose and said to men," but changed it to "Me." The familiarity of the word "me" demonstrates not only how this Jesus is Blake's own definition of the Saviour, but also how this Jesus speaks to the individual rather than waving a proud and passive hand over the world's problems. In fact, this unBlakean Christ advocates Moral Virtue which, according to Blake, "Formed the Cross & Nails & Spear." "For Moral Virtues all begin/ In the Accusations of sin."

Fragment k, numbered "I This to come first" by Blake, summarizes Christ: "If Moral Virtue was Christianity/ Christs pretensions were all vanity." Christ, or Antichrist, is the opposite of the "Sinners Friend." This Antichrist rules a hell in which Rhadamanthus bars the gates. Rhadamanthus was "a son of Jupiter...noted for his justice...[and] appointed a judge in Hades...He punishes first, then listen afterwards to the miserable..." (Damon 349). Blake relates the Antichrist to the notion of Moral Virtue: "Moral Virtues are continual Accusers of Sin & promote Eternal Wars & Dominency over others" (Annotations to Berkeley's *Siris* 215). He believes that the Antichrist exhibits pedantry. Furthermore, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake exclaims that "no virtue can exist without breaking [the] ten commandments : Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse not from rules" (pl. 23-4).

Pilate and Caiaphas, often appear in these first fragments. They 'represented to Blake the twin evils of State and Church. Founded upon morality, their principles were contrary to those of Jesus" (Damon 326). Pilate believed Jesus was innocent, but to pacify the public, perhaps even with some sense of moral duty to

his people, "he handed Jesus over to be crucified" (John 19 : 16). Thus Pilate represents the "Virtuous State" run by the Antichrist, a state of hypocrisy and pretension disguised as morality. James Flynn, in a socio-political interpretation of *The Everlasting Gospel*, looks at the role of Pilate as part of a multitude of "Political organizations [that] command loyalty and cynically manipulate their members...In conjunction with each other, Religion and the structure of the state conspire against the individual and in their joint effort the greatest pressure is exerted" (Flynn 60). Thus, Flynn exclaims, "Blake's Christ lives in conflict with the structures of society" (Flynn 59). Accordingly, Blake's Jesus, in *The Everlasting Gospel*, will defy accepted views of Christ, illuminating the real Christ who spoke to Blake and forgave him his sins.

Although Erdman has suggested a sequence in which the fragments were written, this sequence does not represent the arrangement Blake probably intended for his final version of the poem (if he had intended a final version, of course). After initially defining the two main characters in *The Everlasting Gospel*, Blake might have chosen to give some examples of the two characters in order to develop the differences between them. Fragments a,b,c,d, and i do exactly this: they offer opposing visions of Christ. Fragment a presents the two opposing Christs to the reader. Some critics suggest that Blake's Christ contrasts with the biblical Christ because his "has a snub nose like to mine." However, Blake clearly means more than this. In section a of the poem, he compares the Blakean Jesus with "The vision of Christ that thou dost see [which]/ Is my Visions Greatest Enemy." His vision of Jesus is completely different from the traditional, accepted vision of Christ. Christ reflects the Mosaic laws, the Church, the institutionalized religion that he opposes. Blake's Jesus "speaks in parables to the Blind" trying to help those who cannot see truth or who need "faith, hope, charity" (I Cor. 14 :13). Blake's Jesus hates the world created by law and institution; he comes to help the individual. In other words, though Christ may seem to represent the moral, virtuous, holy Jehovah of the Bible, he is only a creation of the Church to keep the masses in their place. According to Blake, his Jesus represents the only spiritual solution to the corruption of society by the institutions of religion.

Fragment i begins with "Was Jesus Born of a Virgin Pure," a question more aptly asked by those who believe in Christ rather than Jesus. Helms believes this query reflects Blake's concern "with the nature of a Christ born fully of and by the flesh" (Helms 130). He suggests that the Johannine idea of the Antichrist preoccupies Blake's thoughts:

> Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God : and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now is it already in the world.
>
> (I John 4 : 2 - 3)

However, Blake is *not* concerned with the origins of Jesus whose importance for Blake lies in his spirituality rather than his lineage. Christ, on the other hand, is an historical person. The question, "Was Jesus Born of a Virgin Pure" clearly is meant to mock those who would ask such an irrelevant question. No matter who gave birth to him, Jesus still had "A Body subject to be Tempted/ From neither pain nor grief Exempted." In other words, Jesus had to suffer the indignities of a human body whether or not he was born of an Harlot. But despite the human temptations Jesus faced, "he never fell." Jesus went on and defied what was expected of him : "He mockd the Sabbath & he mockd/ The Sabbaths god & he unlockd/ The Evil spirits from their Shrines/ And turnd Fisherman to Divines." Jesus did these things to show the people that they were worshipping and believing constructs of the Church.

When Blake includes an episode from Jesus' infancy, he attempts to again show the difference between his Jesus and Christ. When Jesus says to Mary, "Woman what have I do with thee/ No Earthly Parents I confess/ I am doing my Fathers Business" Flynn suggests that he is trying to free "himself from all the restraints of family life" (Flynn 63) by breaking the commandment stating how you must "Obey your Parents." This is not an example of a hypocritical Christ. This incident separates the biblical Christ (Luke 2 : 4-52), who does not use these exact words, from Blake's Jesus, who specifically notes that Mary and Joseph are his "Earthly parents." In one of Blake's *Songs of Experience*, "To Tirzah," he

tries to describe the spiritual importance of Jesus : "Whate'er is Born of Mortal Birth,/ Must be consumed with the Earth/ To rise from Generation free;/ Then what have I to do with thee" (Blake 30). Jesus has a spiritual mission, one led by his "Father" about whose business he intends to go. He scorns "Earth parents scorn Earth's God/ And mockd the one & the others Rod" so that "he might live above Controll."

Fragments c, d, and b begin with the same episode from Jesus' youth as fragment i. Fragments c and d are so similar, though, that c seems to be a revision of d. These fragments are riddled with examples of Christ juxtaposed against Jesus. Again, Blake begins with the infancy episode to describe Jesus and his spirituality. Then, to distinguish Jesus from Christ, he describes Christ immediately after:

> When the rich learned Pharisee
> Came to consult him secretly
> He was too Proud to take a bribe
> He spoke with authority not like a scribe
> Upon his heart with Iron pen
> He wrote Ye must be born again.

This is a Christ who acts from pride. The words he speaks carry **authority**, and the **rules** he writes are engraved with **iron**. These are not words that describe a kind, merciful Jesus. They describe a biblical Christ, an authority figure, a law-maker. No matter what this Christ says, no matter how "meek & lowly of heart" he claims to be, he only "acts with triumphant pride" in the end. In fact, "this is the Reason Jesus died." Because people must see the true gospel of the saviour and because those who have the authority will make this Christ their token figurehead, Jesus had to die so that his spiritual message might live on. Moreover, Jesus died because, as he himself said in *Jerusalem*,

> ...Wouldest thou love one who never died
> For thee or ever die for one who had not died for thee
> And if God dieth not for Man & giveth not himself
> Eternally for Man Man could not exist, for Man is love:
> As God is Love....
>
> (Blake 256)

Blake calls this proud Christ the "Antichrist creeping Jesus" who would "have done anything to please us," answering Helms' confusion, "could Christ ever be Antichrist?" (Helms 153). Christ would have been "Humble toward God Haughty toward man." But Blake insists that "He who loves his Enemies hates his Friends? This is surely not what Jesus intends." Blake even includes a line in c, he later deletes from d, that explains this further: "He must mean the meer love of Civility/ And so he must mean concerning Humility." In other words, Jesus, in Blake's eyes, could not ask a person to love his enemies in the same way as he loves his friends. "The love of our Enemies which troubled Blake, was, as he himself well knew, an impersonal love" (Murray 321).

Blake adds many lines to fragment d, lengthening it into an exegesis of humility. Although the biblical Christ exhibited humility, Blake wants the reader to understand that "Humility is only Doubt" (N54). People like "dr Priestly & Bacon & Newton" or "Sr Isaac" "believed that all we can see, or hear, or feel, are certain limited transmissions from an entirely material world" (Hall 67). The doubt that these philosophers must have caused by their experiments "discourage individual ethical judgment" (Hall 67). Furthermore, "To teach doubt & Experiment/ Certainly was not what Christ meant," Blake contends. Blake elaborates on page 21 of his *Notebook*:

> ...Newton says Doubt
> Aye thats the way to make all Nature out
> Doubt Doubt & dont believe without experiment
> That is the very thing that Jesus meant
> When he said Only Believe Believe & try
> Try Try & never mind the Reason why.
>
> (Blake 501)

Hall turns to Blake's "Auguries of Innocence" to further illustrate Blake's views on these Deists: "He who Doubts from what he sees/ Will neer Believe do what you Please/ If the Sun & Moon should doubt/ Theyd immediately Go out" (Blake 492). In addition, Hall submits that,

> If each individual is the only one who perceives the data upon which his thought and decision depends, then it follows that only he can make the relevant judgements. So ethics becomes a predominantly personal, rather than community-conditioned, matter.
> (Hall 66)

All the reductive theories of the Enlightenment philosophers whom Blake opposed ultimately "[lead] you to Believe a Lie/ When you see not thro the Eye."

At the beginning of fragment b, the infancy episode changes slightly from the previous ones. After Jesus claims, "No Earthly Parents I confess" he goes on to say "Ye understand not what I say/ And angry force me to obey." Helms believes the poem begins to fail at this point because of several problems that appear. For instance, he explains, "Mary and Joseph are not angry when searching for Jesus, but are rather 'sorrowing,' desperately seeking a lost and beloved son. They may not understand what he says but they force him to do nothing" (Helms 144). Helms misses the point. Mary and Joseph ar not angry : Jesus is. As Flynn rightly points out, Jesus goes against the forms of institution in society, including the family unit. He is angry that he must obey Earthly parents, the family imposed by society, while he is trying to go about more important things. Helms also suggests that "surely the "sound' of 'Sinai's' trumpet' is a false note...the trumpet announcing the giving of the Mosaic Law" (Helms 144). Of course the trumpet conveys a false note.

> Blake's point is essentially that Jesus was not hypocritical about his own acts and powers. He demonstrated this...in leaving his parents (Luke 2 : 43-49), thereby opposing the parental law with a force equal to the trumpet of Sinai when the laws were passed to Moses (Exodus 19 : 16-20 : 12).
>
> (Adams 195)

Blake explains how two Christs came out of the same birth, the same infancy, the same Bible. At the moment Christ was born into this world, Jesus died. Blake illustrates this in the last part of fragment b. When Jesus dies on the cross, the legacy he leaves behind is one "Worshipd by the Church of Rome." Jesus' death

allows authorities like the Church to manipulate the story of Jesus to suit their own needs : "his body on the cross became an image of the antichrist, natural man, and moral law, worshipped under his name by later generations in outward 'ceremony' or allegiance to a preaching, historical Jesus" (Adams 196). Blake may be implying that Jesus' death brought the spirit of Satan into this world. After Jesus defeats Satan's efforts to tempt him, he binds "Old Satan in his Chain/ And bursting forth his furious ire/ Became a Chariot of fire." In the end, Jesus' intellectual power dominates over Satan's physical weapons. Jesus can scourge "the Merchant Canaanite/ From out the Temple of his Mind" instead of "physically scourging him upon the Temple's steps, as did the biblical Christ" (Hall 72). Jesus has become a spiritual Jesus, unlike Satan whose warfare "aims at bodily murder" (Hall 72). Because of Jesus' intellectual victory over Satan, he can "subdue/ The Serpent Bulk of Natures dross/ Till he had naild it to the Cross." Thus the spiritual Jesus nails the physical body of Satan to the Cross. Unfortunately, although Satan's body may be nailed to the cross, spiritually he thrives : when Jesus is nailed to the cross another Christ, a Satanic Christ of this world, is born "To be worshipd by the Church of Rome."

Blake further illustrates the characteristics and power of Christ. Fragment f, for example, summarizes Christ: "In sure This Jesus will not do/ Either for Englishman or Jew." This may be a statement about how people would receive the Blakean concept of Jesus. Fragment g also seems like an explication of Christ: "Seeing this False Christ In fury & Passion/ I made my Voice heard all over the Nation." These lines certainly could be suitable as part of an introduction to The Everlasting Gospel, stating how Blake intends to reveal the truth about Christ in order to differentiate him from Jesus.

Another possible introduction to the poem could be fragment m, once entitled Poem 161:

> I will tell you what Joseph of Arimathea
> Said to my Fairy was not it very queer
> Pliny & Trajan what are You here
> Come listen to Joseph of Arimathea

Listen patient & when Joseph has done
Twill make a fool laugh & a Fairy Fun.

Joseph of Arimathea,

According to British legend...to escape persecution...fled to England, taking the Holy Grail with him. His planted staff sprouted into the Glastonbury Thorn, which blossomed every year on Christmas day. He founded the Glastonbury Abbey, the first Christian church in England, where he was finally entombed.

(Damon 224-5)

Joseph of Arimathea's connection with England gives him paramount significance in Blake's eyes. The legend of Joseph's presence in England echoes Blake's lines about Jesus::

And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon Englands mountains green;
And was the holy Lamb of God,
On Englands pleasant pastures seen;

(Blake 95)



Because of the importance of Joseph and Jesus to Blake, Joseph would be an appropriate narrator of Jesus' story. Thus, by introducing The Everlasting Gospel with fragment m, Joseph of Arimathea would immediately appear as the speaker of the story.

Although only a few fragments describe Christ, Blake portrays the spiritual Jesus in several instances. Fragment n, edited as such by Erdman, attempts to depict the Blakean Jesus: "I was standing by when Jesus died/ What I called Humility they called Pride." Here Blake sees that others view Jesus' victory on the cross as pride, perhaps out of their own blindness. But Blake himself, or the speaker [maybe Joseph who "was a secret disciple of Jesus" (Damon 224)], realizes that Pride is a Satanic characteristic (as well as one of the seven deadly sins). He sees that Christ died with humility. But because Blake expounded on the notion of humility as doubt, he may have decided to leave this part out in order to avoid confusion. He may have tried to begin again with fragment h, "Did Jesus teach Doubt or did he/ Give any lessons of

Philosophy." But since fragment d expresses things best, Blake seems to have abandoned fragment h too.

Fragment e, the longest, and the most noted section of the poem, gives the clearest example of Blake's Jesus. Here is an example of the Sinner's Friend, the Jesus who forgives sins. Blake begins by reintroducing Mary Magdalen, and the ambiguity between her and the Virgin Mary that appear earlier in Fragment i. Michael Tolley suggests that at this point,

> Blake's aim is to challenge the accepted idea that Jesus was a 'virtuous ass' who both professed and adhered to the moral law of chastity, and he adduces the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 8 : 2 - 11). He follows the Catholic tradition of identifying the woman with Mary Magdalen....
>
> (Tolley 171 - 2)

The Mary who "was found in Adulterous bed" alludes to the Virgin Mary, whom Joseph calls a harlot in *Jerusalem:* "Joseph spoke in anger & fury. Should I/ Marry a Harlot & an Adulteress?" (Blake 211). When the woman is brought before Jesus, he agrees that yes, she has sinned according to the law, and that according to this very law she must be stoned to death. However, as Blake mentions in fragment i, Jesus here practises the proverb, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7 : 1)

Jean Hall interprets this fragment as an explication of Blake's philosophy of form and covering. Form, for Blake, represents the nakedness of truth; therefore, by covering form one hides the truth. In Blake's poem, Milton, Milton himself articulates the need

> To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the Saviour
> To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspiration
> To cast off Bacon, Locke & Newton from Albions covering
> To take off his filthy garments, & clothe him with Imagination
>
> (Blake 142)

Thus "instead of judging [Mary], Christ merely exposes the sin in its nakedness; and since he can forgive it, the sinner also is encouraged to look it and forgive it himself. So the sin ceases to be" (Hall 70). Jesus tells Mary "Hide not from my Sight thy Sin" and by opening herself up to him, she realizes that her adultery is

a sin not because it goes against one of the commandments, but because "Twas dark deceit...Twas Covet or twas Custom or/ Some trifle not worth caring for." By comprehending that her adultery was not for love, Mary concludes that "the sins of her mind have defiled her body, changing it from the 'Naked Human form divine' into a filthy thing" (Hall 69).

Hall also notes that all the "Earth ground" when "Mary was found in Adulterous bed" because all the earth chooses to hide beneath its own covering : the "ancient heavens." These heavens represent "a legalistic God who writes laws that curse" (Helms 134-5). But Jesus rolls these away and when the sky clears "The Earth trembling & Naked lay." Blake describes the sky as a "Tent of Secret Sins & its Golden/ cords & Pins Tis the Bloody Shrine of War/ Pinnd around from Star to Star." The war between good and evil takes place under this very shroud, under this bloody shrine. But when Jesus puts "back the bloody shrine," "The illusion of good & evil disappears [because] only gods or Pharisees are 'good' passive reasoners" (Adams 198). The tent is the same one as in The Book of Urizen that the Eternals "With golden hooks, fastend in the pillars/ With infinite labour...and called it Science" (Blake 78). Interestingly, in the manuscript, Blake wrote God, then changed it to Good. Even if Blake had kept the phrase "God & Evil are no more" he would have stated a similar idea. This Urizenic God created the laws that Jesus put back and when Jesus eradicates Moses' Law, he abolishes God, whose finger ceases to write and thus abolishes the war.

When Jesus addresses the "Angel of the Presence Divine," he addresses the very god who "gave upto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31 : 18). This angel "Created Hells dark jaws" and whose "Covenant built Hells Jail." However, the "Presence Divine," the "breath Divine," still moves, and it is love. Love is the spirit which will forgive sins. The lack of love is also why Mary is tormented by devils. These "Fallen Fiends of Heavenly birth/ ...have forgot your Ancient love." Helms suggests that Blake is thinking of Genesis 6 : 2, 4, in which

the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose...There were giants in the earth those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old.

These devils

are hurtful to [Mary] because they have forgotten that once they loved and lived with the daughters of men; but having been chained by a punishing deity, their natures have become perverted and cruel, now tormenting rather than delighting whom they possess.

(Helms 139)

Jesus commands these devils to "bow before [Mary's] feet/ [And] lick the dust for Meat" and "be beggars at Loves Gate." Certainly, the dust mentioned by Blake originates in Genesis on the occasion of the expulsion from Eden, but it may also reflect the episode in Isaiah in which a new Jerusalem forms: "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 65 : 25). Blake's Jesus clearly abolishes the devils by removing their power so that they will never do ill again.

After the forgiveness of Mary's sin, Jesus moves from the exorcism of the devils to his own persecution, his crucifixion and his triumphal resurrection. Mary asks Jesus if he will "Die that I may live" alluding to his penultimate death on the cross. At the mention of this moment, "the shadowy Man" rolled "away/ From the Limbs of Jesus to make them his prey." Here, Blake alludes to the birth of the historical Christ at the moment of the death of the spiritual Jesus. In other words, when Jesus died on the cross, Christ was born, one that has since been recognized in the churches and whose words give others the authority to manipulate and repress the masses. So "when Jesus was Crucified/ Then was perfected" the glittering pride of the newborn Christ, who is no better than the God who wrote Moses' law. This Christ echoes the Antichrist of *Jerusalem*.

...a Human Dragon terrible
And bright, stretched over Europe & Asia gorgeous
In three nights he devourd the rejected corse of death
His Head dark, deadly, in its Brain incloses a reflexion
Of Eden all perverted.

(Blake 248)

In *The Everlasting Gospel*, Blake weaves together ideas from a lifetime of work to produce an "infernal or diabolical" (Blake 44) story of Jesus. He contrasts two different Christs to reveal his own definition of Jesus while exposing the true nature of the historical Christ. This Christ, who lends credence to the rantings of the institutional church, can only survive through the church and through a context within the biblical narrative.

Blake's Jesus exists beyond the constructs of society and institution. Jesus' gospel is everlasting because he preaches spiritual strength, hope, and faith. Blake juxtaposes the Blakean Jesus against Christ to illustrate his belief: "Do what you will this Lifes a Fiction/ And is made up of Contradiction" (N98 c). Although Blake's Jesus seems to contradict himself or exhibit hypocritical tendencies, Blake is, in fact, moving subtly from Christ to Jesus. The close proximity of the two characters within the same poem demonstrates how both originate from the same source, the Bible, and how easy it is to mistake Christ for Jesus, adopting unBlakean codes of ethics. Ultimately, Blake hopes to convey, through The Everlasting Gospel and his other works, that "It is in the life of Jesus that one must live, not in his laws" (Adams 195).



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# SHELLEY'S RADICAL HUMANISM

I

Matthew Arnold sums up his evaluation of Shelley as a man and a poet by remarking : "The Shelley of actual life is a vision of beauty and radiance, indeed, but availing nothing, effecting nothing. And in poetry, no less than in life, he is a 'beautiful *and ineffectual* angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain'."[1] Little did the famous Victorian critic realize that if by "ineffectual" he meant Shelley's inability to translate his vision of life into reality, most of the great philosophers and poets would fall in the same category. Poets, as Shelley remarked, are "the unacknowledged *legislators* of the world."[2] They show the way of life needed for the uplift of mankind and inspire them to realize it in practice for their own welfare. Like the skylark, the poet sings of love and glory of men, to which they ultimately respond:

> Like a poet hidden
> In the light of thought;
> Singing hymns unbidden
> Till the world is wrought
> To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.[3]

Shelley was a born rebel and philanthropist. It will be more appropriate to say that he was a rebel because he was a philanthropist. He was by nature a doubter and rebel, one who questioned authority and felt deeply concerned about the welfare and happiness of his fellow human beings. So ardent was his sympathy with mankind and so intense was his love for freedom, justice and equality for them that the he abhorred from the bottom of his heart all those powers and institutions. poltical or religious, which tyrannized over men and held them in thraldom.

Shelley was, however, not a visionary chasing a mirage or a Quixote tilting at windmills,. He knew the limitations of man. If in *Prometheus Unbound*, he envisions the reign of love in which

"thrones, altars, judgement seats, the prisons" (p.194) are things of the past and man remains :

> Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
> Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
> Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
> Over himself, just, gentle, wise, but man. (p.195)

he is not oblivious of the fact :

> The good want power, but to weep barren tears,
> The powerful goodness want : worse need for them.
> The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom,
> And all best things are thus confused to ill. (p.172)



Shelley was also conscious of the fact that the just social order could not be achieved in a day. In *An Address to the Irish People,* he cautioned people against any false hope of realizing the dream of future just state based on freedom and equality in the immediate future : "Although we may see many things put on train during our life-time, we cannot hope to see the work of virtue and reason finished now; we can only lay the foundation for our prosperity."[4] He also remarked : "I will not insult commonsense by insisting on the doctrine of the natural equality of man. The question is not concerning its desirableness, but its practicability: so far as it is practicable, it is desirable."[5]

Like a practical political thinker Shelley also believed that the proper public opinion had to be created before a demand for universal adult franchise could be included in a political programme. In *A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote Throughout the Kingdom,* he wrote : "With respect to universal suffrage, I confess I consider its adoption in the present unprepared state of public knowledge and feeling a measure fraught with peril."[6] Shelley also hated violence and bloodshed. Like Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi he stressed the need of non-violent non-resistance. In a letter of November 20, 1816, to Lord Byron Shelly reiterated his hope that if reform came, it would be gradual and without bloodshed. In *The Masque of Anarchy,* he exhorts

people to rise against the tyrants, but at the same he also asks them to remain non-violent :

Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms, and looks which are
Weapons of an unvanquished war.(p.345)

or,

With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay,
Till their rage has died away." (p.346)

In *The Revolt of Islam* also, he preaches the efficacy of love in winning over cruelty :

If blood be shed, 'tis but a change and choice
Of bonds -- from slavery to cowardice,
A wretched fall ! -- uplift thy charmed voice,
Pour on those evil men the love that lies
Hovering within those spirit -- soothing eyes.

(p.89)



He prefers freedom acquired through love : 'And I among them, went in joy -- a nation Made free by love.' (p.93) Shelley stressed the need for the unity of the people. He did not believe that the social changes could be brought about by a few heroes. He wanted the national will to be organized and consolidated before the right to revolutionary change could be asserted. Shelley was thus not a visionary but an optimist who in spite of all depression and disillusionment never lost the hope that the day will come when man will be free and a just social order based on freedom, equality and justice for humanity will emerge.

II

No poet has been more fiercely argued about, for and against as Shelley. He has been violently denigrated, contemptuously ignored, praised—almost canonised— quite apart from his poetry, as philosopher and saint. The terms used for him in affection or reproach were "Ariel", "the snake", "mad Shelley", "atheist", and "the devil". An old Italian boatman thought he was like Jesus Christ, and Bernard Shaw, who did not care much for poetry, found him an acute reasoner on politics and sociology.[7] Mary Shelley who knew her husband better than any one else wrote in a note to *Queen Mab* about his great love for men and devotion to the cause of their freedom :

He was animated to greater zeal by compassion for his fellow creatures. His sympathy was excited by the misery with which the world is burning. He witnessed the sufferings of the poor, and was aware of the evils of ignorance. He desired to induce every rich man to despoil himself of superfluity, and to create a brother-hood of property and service, and was ready to be the first to lay down the advantages of his birth..... He saw, in a fervent call on his fellow-creatures to share alike the blessings of the creation, to love and serve each other, the noblest work that life and time permitted him.[8]

Shelley had the first taste of the cruelty of the world when at the age of ten he went to study as a boarder at Sion House. To his astonishment and rage, the boys bullied him. At Eton he found the life still more miserable. Fagging by students and flogging by teachers were common features there. Students called him "the mad Shelley" and they organized a "Shelley-baiting society". Whenever he sat down on the riverbank to read his Shakespeare or his Voltaire his school-fellows would descend upon him like a pack of hunting dogs and corner him into a helpless fight against overwhelming odds. Their savage attack would throw him into a passion of fury, but they could not crush him. His will was unbreakable. Dr. Keate, the headmaster of Eton, was as cruel as students. He admonished his pupils to be pure in heart and said : "And if you're not, i'll flog purity into you through your hides."[9]

Shelley found human society a horde of barbarians with a veneer of culture. He gives a vision of his school days in the "Dedication" of *The Revolt of Islam* :

> ...a fresh May-dawn it was
> When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
> And wept. I knew not why; until there rose
> From the near schoolroom voices, that, alas,
> Were but one echo from a world of woes --
> The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and foes.
>
> (p.54)

Soon his boy's mind will begin to cherish the longing to combat it by all means in his power :

> I will be wise,
> And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
> Such power; for I grow weary to behold
> The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
> Without reproach or check.
>
> (p.55)

This was a boy's revolt against boys's cruelty to each other and it came from Shelley's inmost heart.

Shelley's hatred of tyranny and oppression and fervid championship of liberty in all its forms grew stronger as he went through life and saw half humanity writhing in the fetters of oppressive government or in crueller chains of false religious beliefs. His "passion for reforming the world", which had begun while he was a small boy at school, found its practical expression when as a student at University College, Oxford, he published a pamphlet, *The Necessity of Atheism*, describing the belief in God as inconsistent with logic, and holding the organized religion responsible for much suffering and persecution. The result was that he was expelled from Oxford.

Shelley felt deep sympathy for the sufferings of the fellow human beings both in their personal and public life. His wish that no living thing should suffer pain made him elope with and marry

Harriet Westbrook, a friend of his sisters at the school, to rescue her from the tyranny of her crude father. Ten years after Shelley was again drawn towards another damsel in distress, beautiful Emilia Viviani, who was confined by her mother in a convent, a circumstance quite enough by itself to arouse Shelley's indignation and sympathy as expressed in his adoration for her in *Epipsychidion*. During his Oxford stay he fought for the cause of freedom of speech and pleaded the case of Peter Finnerty, the journalist imprisoned by the government for libel and not allowed to prove the truth of the charges for which he was prosecuted. He praised Leigh Hunt and his brother for their bold criticism of the Government tyranny and suggested to them the project of forming a well-organised society to uphold the cause of sufferers and resist the coalition of the enemies of liberty. It was the same love for man and justice to them that impelled Shelley to write *Adonais*, the elegy on the death of Keats who he believed died early because of the unjust attack on his poems by the Reviewers belonging to the politically conservative camp. The suffering of any living creature was unendurable to Shelley's acutely emotional and humanitarian soul.

As a mere boy of nineteen Shelley threw himself into the cause of Irish freedom and called upon the Irish to unite in the cause of national independence and offer passive resistance against their rulers. In *An Address to the Irish People*, he wrote : "Are you slaves or are you men ? If slaves, then crouch to the rod and lick the feet of your oppressors; glory in your shame; it will become you, if brutes, to act according to you nature. But you are men; a real man is free, so far as circumstances will permit him. Then firmly and quietly resist."[10] Shelley taught the poor people of Ireland and England that their interests were the same. The British people gained nothing from Colonial wars. Opposing the British Colonial conquest of India, he wrote :

> Is war necessary to your happiness and safety ? The interests of the poor gain nothing from the wealth or extension of boundaries; they gain nothing from glory, a word that has often served as a cloak to the ambition or avarice of statesmen. The barren victories of Spain, gained in behalf of a bigoted and tyrannical government, are nothing to them. The conquest in India, by which England has gained glory, but a glory which is not more honourable than that of Bonaparte, are nothing to them.

The poor purchase this glory and this wealth at the expense of their blood and labour and happiness and virtue. They die in battle for this infernal cause. (p.55)

Very few people saw so clearly through the wickedness of the colonial subjugation of other countries by imperialists.

Shelly did not only condemn the English support to "the barren victories of Spain", gained in behalf of a bigoted and tyrannical government, but also supported the Greek people's struggle for independence from the Turks and hoped for the revolution in Germany against the oppressors. He advocated the unity of all the oppressed people against their oppressors. In the "Preface" to *Hellas*, the drama portraying the struggle of the Greeks for their liberation from the Turks, he criticized in eloquent words the English rulers for sympathising with the Turkish tyrant :

Should the English people ever become free, they will reflect upon the part which those who presume to represent their will have played in the great drama of the revival of liberty, with feelings which it would become them to anticipate. This is the age of the war of the oppressed against the oppressors, and every one of these ringleaders of the privileged gangs of murderers and swindlers; called Sovereigns, look to each other for aid against the common enemy and suspend their mutual jealousies in the presence of a mightier fear. Of this holy alliance all the despots of the earth are virtual members. But a new race has arisen throughout Europe, nursed in the abhorrence of the opinions which are its chains, and she will continue to produce fresh generations to accomplish that destiny which tyrants foresee and dread. (pp 332-33).



Describing the fear of the despots because of the insurrection in Greece, he writes : "Well do these destroyers of mankind know their enemy when they impute the insurrection in Greece to the same spirit before which they tremble throughout the rest of Europe...."(p.333). Expecting the similar revolution in Germany, Shelley remarks : "The world waits only the news of a revolution of Germany to see the tyrants who have pinnacled themselves on its supineness precipitated into the ruin from which they shall never arise." (p.333).

Shelly's humanism was not confined only to European countries. He looked forward to the regeneration of the peoples of Asia also : "The great monarchies of Asia cannot, let us confidently hope, remain unshaken by the earthquake which shatters to dust

the 'monotonous strongholds' of the tyrants of the western world". (p.238). Expressing his approval of the Wahabi movement of the Muslims, he wrote : "In Syria and Arabia the spirit of human intellect has roused a sect of people called Wahabees, who maintain the unity of God, and the equality of man, and their enthusiasm must go on 'conquering and to conquer' even if it must be repressed in its present shape"(p.239).

Shelley was opposed to British colonialism in India. He considered complete political and social freedom of India necessary for the full development of its culture. He wanted Indian society to undergo healthy influence under the doctrines of equality and human brotherhood of Christ through British missionaries; but otherwise he wished India be free to develop its own art and literature :

> Many native Indians have acquired, it is said, a competent knowledge in the arts and philosophy of Europe, and Locke and Hume and Rousseau are familiarly talked of in Brahmanical society. But the thing to be sought is that they, as they would if they were free, attain to a system of arts and literature of their own.(p.238).

No other English poet had such a historical and international outlook on the world situation of his times as Shelley.

III

Shelley's radical humanism was based on his clear, sound, rational, and well-reasond philosophical and political thinking. He derived his ideas from the extraordinary range of his reading. Intellectually he was a great prodigy and had read and assimilated much in the fields of poetry, history, science and philosophy. His precocity had given him the kind of mind which absorbed unconsciously, with great aptitude for words, learned languages—later they numbered Latin, Greek, German, French, Spanish and Italian—without much effort.

Shelley aspired to the knowledge of the best that has been thought and known in the world. It goes to his credit that he succeeded in his objective to an astonishing degree. He devoted himself to the incessant study of the torchbearers of hope for mankind, the poets scientists and philosophers from Plato to Humphrey Davy and Sir William Drummond. He cites the exertions

made by philosophers like Plato, Locke, Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, Rousseau, Godwin, Spinoza, Bentham, Adam Smith, Shaftsbury, Butler, Paine and their other disciples in favour of oppressed and deluded humanity. He also refers to the great contribution made by world poets and artists for the moral and spiritual upliftment of human life :

> But it exceeds all imagination to conceive what would have been the moral condition of the world if neither Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Colderon, Bacon, nor Milton had ever existed; if Raphael and Michael Angelo had never been born, if the Herbrew poetry had never been translated; if a revival of the study of Greek literature had never taken place; if no monument of ancient sculpture had been handed down to us; and if the poetry of the religion of the ancient world had been extinguished together with its belief. (pp.292.—93).

It was these men who lighted the darkness of man's past and were an augury of a brighter future. Shelley was well-read In them. Carl Grabo rightly observes : "Few great poets can have been so intellectual, so scholarly as Shelley."[19]

Shelley was most of all concerned with the evils from which man suffers, political and social evils and the evils of individual selfishness. His views on all forms and systems of human activity —religious, ethical, social, political, economic and literary -- were oriented by his deep concern for the welfare of mankind. He had little interest in abstract learning of any kind; what he cared for was how far new ideals or discovery contributed to the happiness of man. With this objective in view he tried to reach a stable and consistent belief from diverse and contradictory ingredients of his complex philosophical interests—science, materialism, humanitarianism, idealism and mysticism.

In his religious views Shelley never was a Christian but he had a profound admiration for the character and social teachings of Jesus. In "*An Address to the Irish People,* he said : "all religions are good which make man good"(p.41). He was opposed to Christianity because instead of making men good, it subjected them to cruelty. He referred in this connection to bloody wars fostered by Christianity and to the priestcraft's unholy alliance with kings and dictators to keep the people in ignorance and subjection. In *An Address to the Irish People*, he said : "anything short of

unlimited toleration and complete charity with all men, on which you will recollect Jesus Christ principally insisted, is wrong" (p.44). In his *Proposals for an Association of Philanthropists*, Shelley maintained that a union of church and state is "contrary to the principle and practice of Jesus, contrary to the equality which he fruitlessly endeavoured to teach mankind"(p.63). He considered Jesus along with Plato and Socrates, a great, perhaps the greatest moral teacher and reformer the world has known. In an important Note to the line "I will beget a son" in *Queen Mab*, he wrote that Jesus "stands in the foremost list of those true heroes who have died in the glorious martyrdom of liberty and have braved torture, contempt, and poverty in the cause of suffering humanity."[23] He, however, did not think that Jesus was divine, superhuman or supernatural and hence did not believe in the miraculous birth or death or mission of Jesus. In his view Christianity in its infancy was based upon the teachings of Jesus, which were primarily socialistic and humanitarian. These doctrines were later distorted by his disciples for their own selfish and evil purposes.

Shelley was not an atheist but a pantheist. It is the God of theism, a God outside the universe, a Creator that Shelley repudiates. His God was the soul or mind or spirit of the universe, the animating principle of all life, in no wise personal, and incapable of meddling in the affairs of man. Referring to his conversation with Southey, he writes to Elizabeth Hitchener on January 2, 1812 : "He (Southey) says I ought not to call myself an atheist since in reality I believe that the universe is God.... Southey agrees in my idea of deity, the mass of infinite intelligence."[24]

Shelley attributed a great importance to moral values in human life and paid special attention to the ethical basis of the state, the church and social customs such as matrimony. He believed the inculcation of sound moral principles to be the highest good to which any man could aspire. Poetry, in his view, should be subordinate to the inculcated moral and "a pleasing vehicle for useful and momentous instruction."[25] Shelly considered 'Love' to be the great secret of morals and 'imagination' to be their great instrument for the 'sympathy' aroused by it is the mainspring to action. In *A Defence of Poetry*, he wrote ; "A man to greatly good must imagine intensely and comprehensively : he must put himself

in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasure of his species must become his own" (p.283). For Shelley the key-stones of all righteous living are love, sympathy, justice, behevolence, virtue, and disinterested motives. Taken together they constitute the solid rock upon which the moral reformer must build.

Shelley considered marriage to be despotic and hateful. Later, however, he felt that until considerable improvement in morals has been brought about it would be advisable to maintain the institution of matrimony. He, however, advocated liberal divorce laws for where love has flown, it would be the vilest tyranny to compel two people to remain united. .

Shelley was very enthusiastic about politics. He maintained that politics and morals should be integrated, for a government can rise no higher than the morals of a nation. His greatest concern was how the state could best contribute to the happiness of the people as whole. He was a determined republican and felt deeply concerned about the corruption everywhere evident in the existing English government. He hated the government which could not look after the welfare of its people. In *An Address to the Irish People*, he remarked :

> The benefit of the governed is the origin and meaning of government..... The goodness of government consists in the happiness of the governed..... Government is an evil; it is only the thoughtlessness and vices of men that make it a necessary evil. When all men are good and wise, government will of itself decay (p.48).

Emphasizing the happiness of people as the necessary and fundamental principle of government, he again wrote in *Proposals for an Association of Philanthropists* :

> Man becomes a subject of government, not that he may be in a better state than that of unorganized society. The strength of government is the happiness of the governed. All government existing for the happiness of others is just only so far as it exists by their consent and useful only so far as it operates to their well being. Constitution is to government what government is to law (p.64).

Keeping in view the welfare of people Shelley insisted that the laws of a nation should be mild and humane. They should aim not at punishment for its own sake but at the education of the offender.

Prevention of crime was more important than punishment of the criminal. In the *Essay on the Punishment of Death*, he advocated the abolition of capital punishment for he considered it cruel and ineffectual.

Shelley believed in a sane and peaceful way to reform the government before a revolution overthrew the whole structure. In *An Address to the Irish People*, he remarked : "In no case employ violence; the way to liberty and happiness is never to trangress the rules of virtue and justice. Liberty and happiness are founded upon virtue and justice" (p.46). In *A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote Throughout the Kingdom*, he outlined a plan by which the legislators could genuinely be representative of the wishes of people. In his essay *A Philosophical View of Reform* also Shelley expressed his distrust of the use of force in effecting reform. He advised the method of peaceful resistance and of slow, gradual reform. The people were, however, to be educated in the ways of proper political action through the societies similar to those that existed in America and France before revolutions there. Shelley wanted to limit suffrage also until the electorate were better educated politically. He, however, warned the government not to compel people to revolt to establish a truly representative assembly in defiance of the existing government for it might lead to a bloody revolution. The most significant fact about the politics of this radical reformer is its utter practicality.

Shelley considered inequality to be the main cause of evils in society. Like Rousseau he believed that all men are born equal but the selfish and designing men had destroyed that equality. In a letter or July 25, 1811, Shelley wrote to Miss Hitchener : "No one has yet been found resolute enough in dogmatizing to deny that Nature made man equal, that society has destroyed this equality is truth not more incontrovertible.[30] He further added :

> The noble has too much, therefore, he is wretched and wicked, the peasant has too little... Are not then the consequences the same from causes which nothing but *equality* can annihilate.[31]

Shelley's views on political economy were very sound. In the 'Notes' to *Queen Mab*, he wrote : "There is no real wealth but the labour of man." Shelley was then only eighteen, younger than the

Marx of the *Communist Manifesto*. In class society, he pointed out, labour falls to the lot of the people and all the advantages of leisure are enjoyed by men of property. He therefore placed before the people the prospect of a society where labour and leisure would be shared by all the members of the society :

> Labour is required for physical, and leisure for moral improvement : from the former of these advantages the poor, by the inevitable conditions of their respective situations, are precluded. A state which should combine the advantages of both would be subjected to the evils of neither.[32]

Shelley was opposed to property as possessed by feudal aristocracy for it does not acquire it by its labour or skill. He refers to how vast masses of property were accumulated by the ruling class in England :

> They were either grants from the feudal sovereigns whose right to what they granted was founded upon conquest or oppression, both a denial of all right or they were the lands of the ancient Catholic clergy which according to the most acknowledged principles of public justice, reverted to the nation at their suppression, or they were the products of patents and monopolies, an exercise of sovereighty most pernicious that did direct violence to the interests of a commercial nation; or in later times such property has been accumulated by dishonourable cunning and the taking advantage of a fictitious paper currency to obtain an unfair power over labour and fruits of labour (p.251).



Shelley was also not ignorant about the exploitation of the labour class by the newly emerging commercial-cum-industrial aristocracy as different from the landowning aristocracy : "The consequences of this transaction have been the establishment of a new aristocracy, which has its basis in fraud as the old one has its basis in force"(p.244). The domestic affections of this class are weak and relations with others based on selfish motives. Owing to the prominence of this double aristocracy, the labour class is exploited very inhumanely : "They eat less bread, wear worse clothes, are more ignorant, immoral, miserable, and desperate"(p.246). Very few scholars of political economy have given such a brilliant analysis of property owned by different classes. In his *Essay on Christianity*, Shelley advocated Jesus's socialistic scheme for the distribution of wealth :

In proportion to the love existing among men, sc will be the community of property and power. Among true and real friends, all is common; and were ignorance and envy and superstition banished from the world, all mankind would be friends. The only perfect and genuine republic is that which comprehends every living being (p.208)

Shelley's views on poetry were also characterized by his humanism. Though he described didactic poetry as his "abhorrence", yet he believed that poetry should have a moral foundation. In the Preface to *Laon and Cythna*, he pointed out that a poet "would only awaken the feelings,(p.315). so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue."[37] Since poetry awakens our sense of love and beauty, and since "the great secret of morals is Love..... and since the great instrument of moral good is the imagination" (pp.282-83) of which poetry is the expression, the poets become great moral leaders, "the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Love or sympathy for one's fellows, was for Shelley the basis of moral life, and imagination the civilizing force in society.

IV

Shelley's radical humanism as reflected in his prose writings, is also the dominant theme of his poetry. *Queen Mab* (1813), which Shelley wrote at the age of eighteen, expresses his social and political ideals with gusto and enthusiasm natural to a young man. The poem is dedicated to Harriet :

Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,
And loved mankind the more. (p.1)

The fairy Queen Mab shows the spirit of the maiden Ianthe the past history of the world and tells her how people become miserable :

Once peace and freedom blest
The cultivated plain :
But wealth, the curse of man,
Blighted the bud of its prosperity:
Virtue and wisdom, truth and liberty

Fled, to return not until men shall know
That they alone can give the bliss
worthy a soul that chains
Its kindred with eternity. (p.7)

Describing how kings acquired power and wealth, she remarks :

Whence thinkest thou, kings and parasites arose ?
Whence that unnatural line of drones, who heap
Toil and unvanquishable penury
On those who build their palaces, and bring
Their daily bread ? -- From vice, black loathsome vice,
From rapine, madness, treachery, and makes
Of earth this thorny wilderness; from lust
Revenge and murder. (p.10)

The Queen Mab inveighs kings, statesmen and priests for bringing misery to people and perpetuating war :

Kings, priest and statesmen blast the human flower
Even in its tender bud; their influence darts
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins
Of desolate society . . .
War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight. (pp.13-14)

Describing the sufferings of the poor, the Fairy says

But the poor man
Whose life is misery, and fear, and care,
Whom the morn wakens but to fruitless toil,
Who ever hears his famished offspring's scream,
Whom their pale mother's uncomplaining gaze
For ever meets, and the proud rich man's eye
Flashing command, and the heart-breaking scene
Of thousands like himself. (p.18)

The Fairy Queen, however, visualizes the state of regenerate world, when reason's voice will grow powerful and kingly glare will lose its power to dazzle :

> -- And when reason's volce
> Loud as the voice of nature, shall have waked
> The nations, and mankind perceive that vice
> Is discord, war, and misery; that virtue
> Is peace, and happiness, and harmony;
> When man's maturer nature shall disdam,
> The playthings of its childhood; -- kingly glare
> Will lose its power to dazzle; its authority
> Will silently pass by; the gorgeous throne
> Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
> Fast falling to decay. (p.10)

The earth will then become "paradise of peace" :

> O happy Earth : reality of Heaven

In *Alastor : Or, The Spirit of Solitude* (1810), Shelley described as "visionary" by the misguided critics, condemns self-centred idealism. This allegory is, however, also a lament for a world in which "many worms and beasts and men live on", while "surpassing spirit is borne away leaving "pale despair and cold tranquility behind." In its Preface, Shelley Writes :

> Those who love not their fellow-beings, live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave. (p.37)

The *Revolt of Islam* (1818) was written at a time when the reaction that followed the fall of Napoleon had brought much misery among the poorer classes, and had stirred Shelley's revolutionary instincts. In the "Preface" of the poem Shelley wrote that it was written with a view to "kindling within the bosoms of my readers, a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence, nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice can ever totally extinguish among

mankind."[39] It is a symbolic tale, "illustrating", in Shelley's own words, "the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence and devoted to the love of mankind", and "its impatience at all the oppressions that are done under the sun."[40]

In the poem Shelley pleading for the freedom of women writes :

"Can man be free if woman be a slave ?" (p.76)

For him "justice" is guided by love and not by revenge or terror :

-- the chastened will
Or virtue sees that justice is the light
Of love, and not revenge, and terror and despite (p.97)

When people are free :

Our toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull,
To make this earth, our home, more beautiful,
And Science, and her sister Poesy,
Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free ! (p.102)

"The startling cry" of "liberty" "like earth's own voice lifted unconquerably" (p.129), makes the tyrants and oppressors tremble :

The Princes and the Priests were pale with terror;
The monstrous faith wherewith they ruled mankind
Fell, like a shaft loosed by the bowman's error.

(p.140)

And :

Dungeons and palaces are transitory --
High temples fade like vapour -- Man alone
Remains, whose will has power when all beside is gone. (p.125)

In the lyrical drama, *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), Shelley describes how Prometheus, the champion of mankind, is chained

to a rock and subjected to perpetual torture. He is "the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends."[41] Characterized by "courage, majesty, and a firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, and exempt from the taints of ambition, envy and revenge",[42] instinct also with the spirit of love, he remains unyielding to the threats of Jupiter, the spirit of evil and hate. He is supported by earth his mother, and thought of Asia, his bride, the spirit of Nature. Demogorgon, the Primal Power of the world, drives Jupiter from his throne and Prometheus is released by Hercules, typifying strength. The reign of love follows thereafter. At the end of the drama Shelley makes through Demogorgon the prophetic assurance that mankind can achieve the good life only by the wedding of knowledge and love or human sympathy :

> To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
> To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
> To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
> To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates
> Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
> This, like the glory, Titan ! is to be
> Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
> This is alone life, joy, Empire, and Victory : (p.205)



*The Cenci* (1819) is the drama depicting a daughter's revolt against a wicked and cruel father. It shows how after a life of wickedness and debauchery Count Francesco Cenci, the head of one of the noblest and richest families in Rome, conceives an implacable hatred against his children, which towards one daughter Beatrice takes the form of an incestuous passion. Beatrice after vain attempts to escape from her miserable situation, plots with her step-mother Lucretia and her brother Bernardo, the murder of their common tyrant. It is done by two hired assassins. On the plot being dislosed Beatrice, her step-mother, and the brother are executed by the order of the Pope in spite of the confession made by them of their lamentable tale. Shelley exposes the hollowness of the religion which considers the most atrocious villain Count

Cenci the rigidly devout without any shock to established faith Describing power as a cruel beast Beatrice remarks :

She fears that power is as a beast which grasps
And loosens not; a snake whose look transmutes
All things to guilt, which is its nutriment. (p.239)

She knows that man is wicked :

Cruel, cold, formal man; righteous in words
In deeds a Cain. (p.249)

She is not afraid of the consequences of the murder of a wicked father. With calm composure she says :

The deed is done.
And what may follow now regards not me.
I am as unversal as the light;
Free as the earth surrounding air; as firm
As the world's centre. Consequence, to me
Is the wind which strikes the solid rock,
But shakes it not. (p.237)

She faces her death calmly :

My lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well. (p.250)

Another drama of Shelley, *Hellas* (1812), is inspired by the Greek proclamation of independence, followed by the war of liberation from the rule of the Turkish tyrants. It is full of his admiration for Greece which to him was the home of freedom and the fountain-head of European civilization :

"Let there be light :" said liberty;
And like sunrise from the sea,
Athens arose : -- Around her born,
Shone like mountains in the morn,

Glorious states; -- and are they now
Ashes, wrecks, oblivion ? (p.264)

Condemning the tyrants Shelley says :

Let the tyrants rule the desert they have made;
Let the free possess the paradise they claim;
Be the fortune of our fierce oppressors weighed
With our ruin, our resistance, and our name ! (p.269)

With the freedom of Greece :

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn :
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream. (p.270)

In the conluding lines of the drama, the poet expresses his sincere desire that hatred and violence may cease forever :

O cease ! must hate and death return ?
Cease ! must men kill and die ?
Cease ! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
O might it die or rest at last ! (p.270)

Shelley wrote *The Mask of Anarchy* to express his indignation at the brutal attack on the workers at Manchester. The cruel incident came to be known as Manchester Massacre. Shelley in this poem exhorts people to revolt against the tyrants :

"Rise, like lions after slumber,
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew,
Which in sleep had fallen on you :
Ye are many, they are few." (p.343)

He, however, asks the insurgents to remain non-violent and non-resistant for their calm and peaceful attitude will make the cruel marauders feel ashamed of themselves :

"Then they will return with shame,
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek." (p.346)

Describing the miserable condition of the people of England, he writes :

"Asses, swine, have litter spread,
And with fitting food are fed;
All things have food but one;
Thou O Englishman hast none ! " (p.344)

He wants some place in England for the fearless and the free :

"Let a great assembly be
Of the fearless and the free,
On some spot of English proud
Where the plains stretch wide around." (p.345)

In the song "To The Men of England". Shelley rouses the workmen of England not to allow the rich to appropriate the fruits of their labour :

Sow seed, -- but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth -- let no imposter heap;
Weave robes, -- let not the idle wear;
Forge arms, -- in your defence to bear. (p.359)

In "Ode to Liberty". Shelley traces the history of social evolution from the time when there was war among birds and beasts and tyranny among men. Then Athens arose. In Time's fleeting river its image trembles "but it cannot pass away :" The poetry of Greece sings of the message of freedom to Shelley :

"The voices of thy bards and sages thunder
With an earth awakening blast
Through the caverns of the past;
Religion veils her eyes; Oppression shrinks aghast." (p.377)

Shelley's anger against the British rulers who had deprived him of his children, found a passionate and eloquent expression in the poem addressed to William Shelley :

Fear not the tyrants will rule forever,
Or the priests of the evil faith;
They stand on the brink of that raging river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death
It is fed from the depth of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams and rages and swells;
And their swords and their scepters I floating see,
Like wrecks on the surge of eternity.

In "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" Shelley remarks how he "vowed" to dedicate his powers to Intellectual Beauty or literary pursuits born of it and how kept the vow hoping that it would help to free the world from slavery :

They know that never joy illumined my brow,
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldest free
The world from its dark slavery. (p.291)

He worshipped Intellectual Beauty :

And every form containing thee,
Whom spirit fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all mankind. (pp.290-291)

The hatred of "slavery" and the "love of all mankind" were the key-notes of Shelley's thoughts and deeds.

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*Zahida Zaidi*

# CONTEMPORANEITY OF *PROMETHEUS UNBOUND*

"*Prometheus Unbound*" and "*The Cenci*" are Shelley's two impressive ventures in the realm of poetic drama. Of these two, "The Cenci" is more chiselled, coherent and stageable, as also more down to earth and humane. But "*Prometheus Unbound*" is more original, daring and forward looking. It also has a larger canvas and wider intellectual sweep and embodies Shelley's philosophical vision in a more comprehensive and lively manner.

But another study of "*Prometheus Unbound*" appears to have little justification, as it has been a favorite hunting ground for critics and scholars and has been adroitly analysed and elaborately commented upon repeatedly. But more often than not, critics have tried to recast it into a series of neat abstractions, and have found fault with Shelley when the text declined to oblige them. Shelley, on the other hand, claimed no such systematic pattern of thought for his monumental work. While acknowledging his passion for reforming the world in his 'Preface to "*Prometheus Unbound*" Shelley was careful to point out



"But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence."[1]

And he goes on to explain :

"My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealism of moral excellence, aware that until the mind can love and admire and trust and hope and endure; reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life, which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness."[2]

It is quite clear from these statements that Shelley considered *Prometheus Unbound* as an imaginative creation, which incorporated fine sentiments and "beautiful idealism of moral

excellence", and not a reasoned system of thought concerning human life. But this fact, has often been overlooked by critics, who, in their enthusiasm to translate *Prometheus Unbound* into a systematic pattern of thought; or else, to debunk Shelley as a confused thinker, have failed to consider it as a work of art in its own right. In my opinion *Prometheus Unbound* is primarily a poetic drama of extraordinary imaginative power and intellectual sweep, exhibiting considerable psychological complexity. It is also a daring experimental drama, which breaks new ground and foreshadows certain significant developments in modern drama.

*Prometheus Unbound* is, in the first place, one of the earliest examples of a conscious effort to recast an old myth to project a different philosophical vision. It is quite clear from the very first act that Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* is, for Shelley, not a literary or ideological model, but only a point of departure. Shelley, of course, invokes the authority of the Greek dramatists, who, in their treatment of myth or national history, employed, "a certain arbitrary discretion" and admits that he has "presumed to employ a similar license." But a closer look at "*Prometheus Unbound*" reveals that Shelley has not just assumed "a certain license", but has practically inverted the myth. "For egalitarian Shelley", Wasserman points out, "was engaged in reforming and reinterpreting the myth of god-fearing Aeschylus".[3] Taking the original myth for granted was impossible for Shelley, as he explains in the Preface :

> But in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the Fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the suffering and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary."[4]

Consequently in Shelley's version, Prometheus is not– as he is in the earlier play– a proud rebel, who, finally subdued by suffering, purchases his freedom in exchange for revealing a secret that would save Jupiter from calamity. In Shelley's version of the myth he is :

> The type of highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.[5]

He is also "the saviour and strength of the suffering humanity." And Mary Shelley characterized him as "the prophetic soul of mankind" which underlines yet another dimension of his personality.

Similarly in Shelley's version of the myth, Jupiter, too, is not the supreme God to whom all other gods, including Prometheus owe obeisance. He is far from being the "President of the Immortals" manipulating the universe, from his heavenly abode, in accordance with the unchangable laws of the universe. He is the personification of evil, hatred and tyranny that amounts to a perversion of the natural laws. And for Shelley, these deadly sins were the chief attributes of moribund religious institutions, despotic political power and monarchy that often joined hands to crush people and suppress freedom of thought and action. Consequently the overthrow of Jupiter by Demogorgon marks the triumph of Life, Love, Beauty and Truth. It is a prelude to the emancipation of humanity symbolized in an all pervasive spring. Demogorgon, himself, represents primordial force and absolute potentiality. There is also a suggestion, in his obscure, amorphous personality of the dark mysterious forces of the unconscious dimension of human mind which, incorporate immense creative as well as destructive potential. He can also be seen as symbolizing the revolutionary force, which Shelley believed, would finally overthrow despotic power and tyranny. But at this stage, Shelley had come to believe that a revolution without the agency of love, was a mere rebellion, which was essentially self-destructive and was likely to generate another kind of evil. Hence the crucial role of Asia in awakening the dormant potentiality embodied in Demogorgon and initiating the process which leads to Jupiter's overthrow. For Asia symbolizes love and is the chief creative force in the play. Consequently it is in the fitness of things that she makes her first appearance with the advent of physical spiritual spring. Similarly the ultimate union of Prometheus and Asia symbolizes the union of moral strength, intellectual power and nobel idealism with love and creativity. And the perpetual springs ensuing from this event is the dramatic symbol of the liberation and full flowering of the highest human potential. And as mentioned above it also

symbolizes the victory of wisdom, Justice, Love and Peace. But this magnificent triumph is vulnerable and has to be carefully guarded, for evil has not been completely annihilated but is converted into a dormant potentiality in the dark bosom of the Earth.

A word, here, may be said about Shelley's concept of Heaven and Earth or "above" and "below", in "Prometheus Unbound". In Shelley's imaginative cosmology, Heaven is not an embodiment of perfection and a seat of divinity, but a symbol of arbitrary power, high-handedness and tyranny, while the Earth is the chief source of strength, comfort and creativity. It is also the cradle of the immense hidden potential of the human mind, which according to Shelley was, in its ideal perfection, the seat of divinity. It is noteworthy that Prometheus and Asia, who are immortal, do not ascend to Heaven after their reunion, but retire into a lovely cave. "All overgrown with trailing odorous plants/... And paved with veined emerald, and a fountain/ Leaps up in the midst with awakening sound"[6] (*P.U.* Act III, Sc. 3, lines 11-13) from where they can "observe the ebb and flow of the world and "make strange combinations out of common things" (*P.U.* Act III, Sc.3, line 32) realising this the immense potential of love and creativity. Thus we may say that Shelley has not only altered the Greek concept of Olympus, but has also practically reversed the Christian concept of Heaven and Hell.

Shelley's reinterpretation of Greek myth in *Prometheus Unbound* has several other significant dimensions and many finer shades and nuances of meaning, for, as Wasserman points out, Shelley was interested in syncretic mythology which believed in the essential unity of all myths.[7] But it is not my purpose to give a comprehensive account of that as this aspect has been discussed, very ably, by several critics. The point which is to be noted, particularly, is that Shelley has very consciously departed from the original myth in order to project his own philosophical vision, which he felt had greater contemporary relevance and also greater universality. And it is in this respect that Shelley is a path-breaker and "Prometheus Unbound" foreshadows a significant trend in mid-twentieth century western Drama. At this juncture several outstanding dramatists including O'Neill, Eliot, Sartre, Camus, Cocteau, Giraudoux, Anouilh and others turned to Greek myths in

search of significant themes, but also consciously depearted from these myths in order to project a different philosophical vision, religious outlook, or contemporary moral, social and political problems or to discover new dimensions of meaning in the old myths. In these plays the myth is often reduced to a bare outline of the story or a structure of feeling, while the main purpose of the dramatist is to make a personal statement about human nature or contemporary society, which is often enriched, illuminated or universalized by the framework of an ancient myth. O'Neill's "Mourning Becomes Electra" Sartre's "The Flies" Eliot's "The Family Reunion" and "The Cocktail Party" Anouilh's "Antigone" and "Eurydice," Cocteau's "The Infernal Machine" and Giraudoux's "Electra" are some of the plays based on Greek myths that come to mind at once. This movement has also revealed the depth and dimensionality of these myths as each artist has tried to discover new potentialities of meaning in them. The Orestes myth alone -- which I have made the subject of a separate study -- has been interpreted in five different ways by five eminent dramatists.

II

But the thematic and ideological transformation of a Greek myth is not the only way in which *Prometheus Unbound* foreshadows a significant development in Modern Drama. Shelley's artistic approach and innovations, we may say, have extended the boundaries of poetic drama and have opened new vistae of imaginative projection of profound thought, complex ideas and elusive states of mind in concrete dramatic images and symbols. In his preface to *Prometheus Unbound* Shelley claims that the imagery employed by him has been drawn "from the operations of human mind or from the external actions in which they are expressed."[8] He also invokes the authority of Shakespeare and the Greek dramatists "who were in the habitual use of this power"[9] This is, of course, quite true. In fact all great drama, through the ages has been interested in the exploration of the human psyche and the inner world. What is particularly remarkable in *Prometheus Unbound* is the manner in which this objective has been achieved for Shelley's experimental approach suggests

several significant trends and techniques in post-realistic modern drama. I shall confine myself to a few examples only.

It has been generally felt that Shelley's characters and dramatic imagery in *Prometheus Unbound* is symbolic in nature. But we may also note that some of Shelley's devices like the "echoes", "voices" and the "spirits" that make their fleeting appearances from time to time bring to mind the artistic approach of the French Symbolist School, particularly of Maurice Maeterlink in his plays like "Joyzelle"(1903) and "The Blue Bird" (1908). It may, however, be pointed out that Shelley is closer to these writers in artistic approach but not in his ideological thrust. He also employs what came to be known as impressionistic, expressionistic and surrealistic techniques associated with artistic movements in the early decades of the 20th century. These artistic approaches represented various attempts to rescue contemporary drama from the narrow confines of realism and naturalism, capture subtle movements of human psyche and portray complex realities of a fast changing world in more imaginative, concrete and expressive ways.

Some of Shelley's innovations also suggest the "dream technique" which was more consciously and significantly developed by Strindberg several decades later. He also uses the device of the mask and face though in a rudimentary form. This technique was perfected by Luiqi Pirandello and used in a more penetrating and philosophical manner in his famous plays like *Henry IV* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author.*

Closely connected with these artistic approaches is Shelley's bold and imaginative use of multifaceted expressive and communicative resources of the theatre, viz. light, colour, darkness, movement, music and atmospheric effects. This "multi-dimensional language" of the "Total Theatre" was acutely analysed and profoundly explored later by theatre stalwarts and theoreticians like Richard Wagner, Adophe Appia, Gordon Craig, Antonin Artand, Mayerhold, Vakhtangov and others. Their theories by and large reject the theatre of illusion and conventional realism and explore immense emotive, evocative and expressive potential of visual imagery, light, colour, line, rhythm, tempo, mass, movement and vacant spaces which along with verbal expression,

constitute the multi-dimensional language of drama. These explorations — like the dramatic movements and approaches mentioned above — were also instrumental in bringing back the element of fantasy and mystery into the theatre which was all but abandoned by the realistic social drama of the recent past.

Shelley, of course, was not armed with these theories. But his vigorous and imaginative manipulation of the visual and auditary elements suggests that he was trying to evolve a new kind of poetic drama which was enriched and illuminated by employing imaginatively the multiple resources of the theatre. One of Shelley's critics, Edmund Blunden reluctantly acknowledges this aspect of "*Prometheus Unbound*". He writes :

"Right through *Prometheus Unbound,* of course, the illusion of something like a theatre, with hardly any limits to its possibilities of movement, costume, lighting and colouring, melody and music had been created."[10]

But even for this critic *Prometheus Unbound* is only a dramatic kind of poem and not a poetic drama as his words "the illusion of something like a theatre" betray.

It is quite understandable why *Prometheus Unbound* was either ignored or unfavorably received by Shelley's contemporaries and their Victorian successors. In the first place Shelley's views were not acceptable to them. And secondly 19th century theatre did not have enough resources or imagination to translate Shelley's vision and bold conceptions into theatrical terms. But there seems to be no reason why it should still be ignored and not acclaimed as a unique poetic drama of extraordinary power. Shelley's vision of a successful overthrow of evil and despotic power through a combination of elemental forces with profound humanism and emancipation of humanity through the union of intellectual power, moral strength and noble idealism with love and creativity is bound to appeal to large sections of modern audiences. And last but not the least modern stage is fully equipped to transform Shelley's flights of imagination into a memorable theatrical experience. But let us now turn to the text to have a closer look at some of the attributes mentioned above.

III

Act I or *Prometheus Unbound* focussed on Prometheus -- his suffering, agony and idealism and the profound change the undergoes, is perhaps the richest in dramatic interest. It takes place on an icy rock in Indian Caucasus where Prometheus is nailed to the precipice of "an eagle baffling mountain" and he has been chained thus for thousands of years. "Torture and solitude, sorn and despair have been his "empire" and "Heaven's winged hound with poisoned beak" has been tearing his heart perpetually. The surroundings are desolate without a single trace of life. But ghastly creatures from the world of dreams mock him constantly. Thus by evoking naturalistic and surrealistic images Shelley portrays the agony and suffering of Prometheus in vivid and concrete terms, and proceeds to show that inspite of all that Prometheus is brave, patient and morally intact. He is determined not to surrender to Jupiter for his submission would be "the death seal of mankinds captivity." He, however, recalls the curse he once uttered for Jupiter and we are given to understand that it was accompanied by great turbulence and upheavals in the world of nature Guided by Earth, Prometheus calls upon the "Phantasm of Jupiter" to repeat the curse. The arrival of Jupiter's Phantasm is also accompanied by "terrifying sounds, underground earthquake and fire." The curse as repeated by the Phantasin is, in the first place an efficient dramatic device to project the distant past which the play's action cannot incorporate. But more importantly Shelley is here using the device of multiple masks to project the complex personality of Prometheus and to externalize the profound internal conflict that he has undergone. In Jupiter's Phantasm, Prometheus is actually confronting his former self, particularly as he was when he uttered this curse. Jupiter is not an independend entity here, but only the anti-mask of Prometheus, which also exemplifies Shelley's belief that evil had no independent existence but was only an aberration of goodness or the world-soul which was infinite. This dramatic device also anables Prometheus to dissociate himself from the words uttered by him in hatred and bitterness. He admits that he was "blinded by grief" but how he "wishes no living being to suffer pain". Thus this significant change in his outlook is presented in concrete dramatic terms.

But Prometheus's impassioned words do not mark the final victory of goodness over evil. Evil continues to throng him, torture him, and tempt him in diverse forms. And this time it is Jupiter's emissary Mercury followed by ugly, repulsive and terrifying Furies. Mercury persuades Prometheus to relent, give up his pointless strife against the Omnipotent and reveal his secret to Jupiter which might cool his anger and bring about the desired benefits. Prometheus's unequivocal answer is that he would never reveal his secret and would never surrender to Jupiter whose Omnipotence is but brief. He further tells Mercury that he does not need his pity. He should rather :

"Pity the self despising slaves of Heaven
Not me within whose mind sits peace
As light in the sun...."

The scene between Prometheus and Mercury is brief but full of dramatic interest as it reveals the moral strength of Prometheus and equivocal nature of evil. Mercury, himself, who combines a shallow and insipid emotion of pity with hypocrisy and slavish mentality is a fairly convincing character conceived in realistic terms. According to some critics he is closer to Satan "who tempted Christ by promising him all the Kingdoms of the world"[11] than to Hermes who performs a similar function in Aeschylus's play. But I find this comparison rather inappropriate, as Mercury is only Jupiter's emissary and has no independent existence. His smooth talk and craftiness is nothing but an aspect of his slavish mentality.

As Murcury's doubtful mission fails and he withdraws, the centre stage is occupied by the Furies who are more sinister but also more spectacular and complex. The Furies who "stream up from Hell's wide gate" (*P.U.* Act I) "blackening the birth of day with countless wings" (*P.U.* Act I) are described by Prometheus as "Creatures of Jupiter's miscreative brain." They are shapeless, but do acquire a shape, "by contemplating on their victim's destined agony". In short the Furies who are ministers of "pain and fear, mistrust and hate", are surrealistic creatures evolved by Shelley not only to present a spectacle of horror, pain and torture in its extremity, but also to probe into the dark recesses of human

psyche. The Furies are ugly and repulsive but have a certain loathsome attraction for their victims, as Prometheus exclaims in utter horror :

"While I behold such excreble shapes
Methick I grow like what I contemplate
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy"

And here Shelley exhibits a profound psychological insight, hinting that evil may be lurking just beheath the conscious layer of our mind and a deep contemplation of externalized evil may stir these dormant elements into action. There is no doubt about the fact that Shelley's dramatic imagery here as elsewhere captures the obscure and mysterious movements of the subconscious and unconscious mind, thus justifying his claim made in the Preface. The Furies also bring to mind the last tempter in "Murder in the Cathedral" who is the externalization of the hero's impure motivation. These Furies can also be seen as a distorted mask undermining the hero's personality.

The Furies admit that although they cannot obscure the soul that burns within yet would torment and torture Prometheus in every possible way. And they live up to their promise. They also paint a vivid picture of the Christian Hell and then of the hell which is their domain and where the tortures are more than the scorching fires and blood streams for they are the tortures of the mind. And these inner tortures are the natural corollary of hatred, bitterness, self-distrust, fear, cowardice and other deadly sins. It is interesting to note that Shelley's hell as recreated here by the Furies, has more than a casual resemblance with Sartre's Hell in "No Exit" which is again not a hell of physical discomfiture and pain, but of gnawing mental tortures springing from the self rejection of the inmates and their moral depravity, emotional perversions and cowardly refusal to accept the implications of their unlimited freedom.

Another significant scene in Act I is Prometheus's encounter with the image of Christ described by Panthea as "A youth with patient looks nailed to the crucifix" and later characterized by Prometheus as "The wise, the mild, the lofty and the just" Shelley elaborately identifies Prometheus with Christ throughout the first

act and we hear faint enchoes of it later also. As Wasserman points out :

"Prometheus absorbs Christ by a kind of inner requirement, because both are manifestations of the same pattern of truth..... Nailed to the rock and pierced by "Spears" of the glaciers, Prometheus is obviously in the posture of crucified Christ."[13]

And we may say that as Prometheus looks upon the image of Christ, he is in fact looking at himself. But this time it is the image of the "Superman Saviour" purged of bitterness and hatred and saturated with love. Or we say that it is yet another mask that reveals the inner beauty of his personality. And in this manner the profound transformation of Prometheus is conveyed with the help of an impressive dramatic symbol.

Apart from this device of multiple masks, Shelley employs other visual devices to underline this profound change and one of them is the manipulation of time factor with the help of light effects. Act I commences in darkness of the night which slowly changes into the soft light of dawn, as we witness the crusial events and share in the spiritual experiences of our Hero. And here, we may say, Shelley is using a dramatic device, which, in course of time, came to be known, as the expressionistic technique of projecting the inner reality with the help of light-effects and other concrete visual images.

A more striking example of expressionistic approach, however, is Panthea's dream of Prometheus's transfiguration, that she relates in Act II. And this is how she describes the experience of her dream :

.... His pale, wound worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dull brain.

and again :

.... the overpowering light
Of that immortal shape was shadowed over
By love, which from his soft and glowing limbs
And passion parted lips, and keep faint eyes
Streamed forth like vaporous fire

This transfiguration of Prometheus, we may note, is conveived like the shedding of a mask which reveals his inner beauty and spiritual glow. It may bring to mind the transfiguration of Christ which manifested his divinity to the Apostles or even the experience of Prophet Mohammad in the night of "Mairaj" when he was lifted up to Heaven, weightless, in the form of pure light.

This dream with its vivid and expressive images, packed with meaning, may be projected on the screen which is quite a common device in modern theatre employed by dramatists as widely different from each other as Tennessee Williams and Bertolt Brecht. But a iittle later in Act II Sc 5 we come across another significant expressionistic event which is an integral part of stage action. As Asia and Panthea, after an encounter with Demogorgon proceed to meet Prometheus in "the car of Hours" we witness a similar transfiguration of Asia, which, too, is seen and described by Panthea. Her excited words are :

How theu art changed, I dare not look on thee
I feel but see thee not, I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty, some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffers
Thy presence thus unveiled."

Here too this transfiguration of Asia is conceived as the lifting up of a veil which reveals the beauty and inner glow or her Being. This spiritual rebirth of Asia is, in many ways, similar to her first birth from the sea which filled the "living world with the atmosphere of love and "illumined earth and heaven And the deep ocean and the sunless caves" (P.U. Act, Sc.5 lines 27-28). Similarly at this moment too, whole world seeks her sympathy and rejoices at this profound transformation with its far reaching implications. For this change in Asia is a prelude to the dawn of a new era-- the golden age which is accompanied by an outburst of creativity the word of

nature is culminated in the famous lyric,"Life of thy lips enkindle" which is sung by "The Voices in the Air" and which describes the transfiguration of Asia into translucent light which spreads around illuminating and revealing in its true beauty every nook and corner -- the birds and the beasts, the earth, ocean and the skies. This lyric is followed by an even more beautiful lyric of profound significance spoken by Asia herself." Its opening lines are :

My soul is an enchanted boat
Which like a sleeping swan doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing

And in this, one of the loveliest of poetic utterances, Asia describes her spiritual experience in terms of music, which starting as "silver waves" turns into the "many winding river" and then mingles with the "sea profound" and proceeds to the realms where "the air we breathe is love." This, no doubt, is the account of a mystic experience, which is made available to us in terms of music and with the help of vivid images and symbols pregmant with meaning. And here, we may say Shelley is testing the power of poetry to explore realms beyond the reach of verbal expression. Similarly Asia's description of the reverse journey of soul from old age through youth and infancy to Death and Birth is an oblique metaphor for the passing away of an old era and the glorious birth of a new age exemplified in the supremacy of wisdom, love, Justice and Peace.

This rather extended account of Asia's transformation and the events ensuing from it has been incorporated to illustrate that Shelley has embodied his philosophical vision in vivid images, symbols and stage metaphors. For this he has also made ample use of the rich resources of the theatre like light, sound, music, movement, poetry and diverse stage effects., And this has been done, we may presume in order to, "inspire the more sensitive and discerning sections of poetic readers" (and theatre audiences) with beautiful idealism of moral excellence". Translating this vision into a neat system of thought to impress the subsequent generations of scholarly critics, obviously, did not constitute a part of his intentions. Consequently, only a frank and sympathetic

consideration of "Prometheus Unbound" as a poetic drama can reveal its depth and dimensions. This approach is also bound to provide ample evidence of Shelley's artistic resourcefulness in evolving a form and devising techniques to embody his vision skilfully and delicately. These devices, as we have already seen, also revealed the immense possibilities of poetic drama, that could employ, not only the poetry of verbal expression but also "the poetry of space" in order to explore complex experiences and shades of meaning beyond the reach of words.

Similarly in the presentation of Demogorgon, Shelley combines, what came to be known as surrealistic and expressionistic approaches, which enable him to capture the amorphous and elusive quality of this creation more effectively than an argument could possibly do. Demogorgan's realm is described as "a mighty portal like a volcano's meteor breathing chasm" (P.U. Act II Sc. 3, lines 34-35). And he himself is seen by Panthea as "a mighty darkness filling the seat of power, without limb or form and yet a living spirit" (P.U. Act II, Sc. 4). He is dark, fathomless and inscrutable, residing in the deep caverns of the earth -- a bottomless abyss. These images suggest an elemental power or a potentiality that is both creative and destructive and is the prime agent of renewal both in the world of nature and the spirit of man. And this unmistakably is the dramatization of the subconscious energies and obscure but powerful forces of subterranian regions of human personality.



Before winding up this discussion a word may be said about various spirits, voices and echoes that make their delightful, but fleeting appearance from time to time in "Prometheus Unbound". The "voices in the early part of Act I from "The mountains" "The Springs" "The Air" and "The whirlwinds" record nature's sympathy with Prometheus and provide glimpses into long years of his suffering and agony. Basically they perform the function of chorus, which has been considerably modified by Shelley to suit the requirements and general conception of his drama. But the spirits that are called by Earth later in the act, to console Prometheus are not only more colourful and fascinating but also more complex and subtle. These fair and elusive creatures "whose homes are the dim caves of human "thought" and "who behold the future beyond

that twilight realm" gather "like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather" creating "lovely sounds like music of pines, of lakes and waterfalls. They breathe the atmosphere of human thought and "float on its dying gleams as birds on the wind or fish within the waves" (P.U. Act I, lines 670) and the air around them looks radiant as they make their appearance. And even when they depart, a sense of them remains like the sensation of music which lingers after the voices and the musical instruments are silent.

These spirits have been identified as the spirits of "Reform", "self sacrifice", "wisdom" and "poetry" by some critics. But a closer look at them reveals that through them Shelley is exploring another dimension of human mind which is the mainspring of love and creativity and of other finer shades of human feelings. These insights culminate in the famous lyric of the fourth spirit beginning with the lines "on a poet's lips I slept." The lyric embodies Shelley's concept of the creative process and the sources of creativity, and is, perhaps, the most comprehensive short definition of poetry in a poetic form.

In portraying these spirits, Shelley has tried to capture the delicate sensations and elusive movements of human mind in an impressionistic manner, which is the art of recreating the delicate sensations in their fullness and immediacy through a subtle interplay of colour and light. In "Prometheus Unbound" this artistic approach facilitates spontaneous communication, while retaining the mystery and undefinable quality of these creatures of imagination.



## IV

"Prometheus Unbound" is a massive work of impressive, even baffling dimensions. Its intellectual sweep and moral idealism matches Shelley's flights of imagination. And within the narrow framework of this paper, it is not possible to interpret all its symbolic events and characters and illuminate all significant aspects. The present study is only an attempt to consider "Prometheus Unbound" as a poetic drama and to underline its originality and contemporaneity. We have seen that many of Shelley's experimentations and original concepts foreshadow certain significant trends and movements in modern drama. We have also

seen that his conscious reinterpretation of Greek myth to project a contemporary vision of life also foreshadows a significant trend in modern drama. We may also note in passing that "Prometheus Unbound" fulfills almost all the conditions as laid down by prominent verse dramatists like W.B. Years, T.S. Eliot and C. Fry for the revival of poetic drama in twentieth century. Fry asserted that "In prose we convey the eccentricity of things, in poetry their concentricity -- the sense of relationship between them"[14] and claimed that his verse plays were concerned with experiences and perceptions that are deep rooted in human psyche. Eliot conceived of verse drama as "a kind of mirage of perfection which would be a design of human actions and words, such as to present the two aspects of dramatic and musical order."[15] And Yeats abandoned realism in favour of myth, legend and fantasy and aimed at a theatre which was "a temple of mystic beauty" and finally in his four plays for the dancers, he employed masks, ceremonial dances, musical commentaries and colourful images to achieve this ideal.

In the end, I would venture to say that in our strife-torn world, dominated by materialistic values and narrow self–interests and characterized by hatred, violence, vindictiveness and arrogance, Shelley's vision of the dawn of a new era characterized by peace and harmony and emancipation of humanity through a fusion of scientific advancement, intellectual freedom, love, creativity and noble idealism and his passionate plea for justice and peace has also a profound contemporary significance.

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*Aligarh*

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*Usha Bande*

# REBELLION, REFORM AND REGENERATION IN SHELLEY'S POETRY

Shelley's social and political ideals and his revolutionary hopes were an integral part of his visionary attitude and theme in his major poetry. His poetical concept of a world free from all tyranny, oppressions, pains and stifling enslavement of religious customs and social traditions are adequately reflected in the free and unfettered movements of his west wind — the harbinger of spring, a time of warmth, love and joy; the unrelenting fight for freedom of Prometheus; or the carefree soaring flight of his skylark. Rebellious by nature, Shelley persistently tried to incorporate his revolutionary fervour in his poetry and dreamt of a world free from tyranny and oppression. The aim of this paper is to discuss Shelley's ideas of rebellion, reform and regeneration displayed in his poems *Prometheus Unbound*, 'Ode to the West Wind' and *Queen Mab*.

Considering the tone of the age, Shelley belonged to a period when the revolutionary ideas of the French Revolution were rife but not predominant. Its failure had introduced a strong conservative reaction. The principle of progress and popular government suffered eclipse. There was cynicism, disappointment and unrest to which the younger Romantics reacted. Shelley, militant by nature, reacted sharply to such an atmosphere of apathy. As a youth, he challenged the force of religion and society when he wrote *The Necessity of Atheism* (1811), which created a fierce storm at Oxford, causing his expulsion. He defied his family when he married Harriet Westbrook and suffered estrangement from his home. He challenged the forces of morality by eloping with Mary Godwin. This radicality in actual life is also reflected in his poetry. In *Queen Mab* he attacks tyranny, war and religion; his Prometheus is a saviour-figure, the "revolutionary 'Friend of Humanity."[1] Indeed, he belonged to that type of mankind whom reason and feeling convert into revolutionaries in the "flush of youth, and who remain so for the rest of their lives."[2]

The spirit of rebellion is obvious in the work of Shelley. Prometheus, the hero of his poetic drama *Prometheus Unbound* (1818-19) is a symbol of revolt. He is a saviour drawn from Greek mythology, who stole fire from heaven and gave it to man for which he was punished. However, he bore the punishment with undaunted fortitude. Prometheus, the legendry figure becomes a revolutionary hero in. Shelley's poem. The Titan has a deep-rooted hatred for omnipotence. He rebels against the tyrant, Jupiter, and stoutly refuses to yield. In his reply to Mercury who requests him to submit to Jupiter and to share heavenly joys, Prometheus says:

> Evil minds
> Change good to their own nature. I gave all
> He has; and in return he chains me here
> Submission, thou dost know I cannot try.
> (I, ll. 380-396 ).

When Mercury visits him with legions of Furies to torment him, Prometheus does not leave self-control. The Furies, "blackening the birth of day with countless wings" try to torture him. Prometheus falters for a moment, but suffering has been his lot for so many years that he can endure their torture nonchalantly. One of the Furies shows him a crucifix, trying to point out the type of miserable failure of self-sacrificing benefactors like Christ and Prometheus who try to improve the lot of humanity:

> Fury : Behold an emblem : those who do endure
> Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
> Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.
> (I, ll. 594-96 ).

However, the Titan is not moved by these frightening threats: instead, with Christ-like sublimity utters:

> Thy words are like a cloud of winged snakes
> And yet. I pity those they torment not.
> (I, 11. 631-32 ).

Shelley "discloses his Prometheus as one terribly aware of the miseries heaped on those in the modern state of society who wished to live in freedom from its conventions."[3] Just as Prometheus suffers stifling oppressions, man too suffers under oppressive rule. It is for him to stand up against such tyranny and break free form cruelty, oppressions and restrictions. Then only can he usher in a golden age. Shelley's hero is not the one to reconcile with the oppressor but is a majestic figure, the "type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature"[4] who endures agonies when:

> The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
> Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains
> Eat with their burning cold into my bones....
>
> (I, 11. 31-33).



Shelley's hero, Prometheus, seems to echo his words written in a letter to Elizabeth Hitchner, as far back as 1812, "Let us shew that truth can conquer falsehood..... It is a glorious cause, martyrdom in such a cause were superior than victory."[5]

*Queen Mab*, although a juvenile work, throbs with Shelley's revolutionary theories about religion and politics. Here, the poet seems to be completely under the influence of William Godwin, who had condemned religious tyranny, social dogmas and political injustice in his work *Political Justice* (1793). Shelley, too, attacks the prevailing ills, the tyrants, war, commerce, wealth and religion in this poem. In the third canto he attacks the king. He shows the king, sitting with his fowning courtiers, and enjoying life. He is rolling in luxury while his subjects are starving. They have to bow before him in abject poverty. Such an authority is evil:

> Power, like a desolating pestilence,
> Pollutes whate'er it touches.
>
> (773. 176-77).

But the poet feels that "once Reason has 'waked nations' absolute monarchy is domed."[6] For him war is the result of intrigues of kings:

War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight,
The lawyer's jest, the hired assasin's trade.

(777. 168-69).

Shelley's attack on religion is particularly bitter. God is a revengeful tyrant and he tortures men. The Church has failed to keep up the word of peace. Religious wars are precipitated by the Church in the name of religion.

The spirit of uncontrollable rebelliousness runs through the "Ode to the West Wind". The stormy wind is a symbol of destructive force. It is fierce, strong and tempestuous. The earth feels its impact and the trees shed their leaves. Under its power, the sky undergoes immediate changes and black rain and fire and hail burst out. The seablooms under water suddenly grow gray and despoil themselves. It is a force that whirls about leaves, and lashes the forest. But, the rebellious impact does not stop here. The poet wishes to be one with the wind, he wants to share its impetuous impact and tempestuous force. That is why he invokes it :

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is :
What if my leaves are falling like its own :
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness.

The sweeping force of the wind reminds the broken-spirited poet of his own tempestuous character. In his youth he was as free and uncontrollable as the wind. This is typical Shelleyan force and energy found in his own nature. In the fourth stanza his own "sense of oppression and constraint is related to the wind's freedom and strength."[7]

Shelley's crusading revolutionary fervour and his defiance of authority lead us to an important aspect of his poetic dream : his ideas of reform and regeneration. He wants to eradicate evil and bring perfect happiness on this earth, where love and justice will reign. There would be liberation of nations and a golden age would come. As a visionary he looks into the future and weaves brilliant pictures of a perfect society. He dreams of equality and

freedom for all. Such is the world he foresees in his *Prometheus Unbound* :

> Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
> This is alone Life, Joy, Empire and Victory.
>
> (IV, ll. 577-78).

In fact, Godwin's philosophy and Plato's ideals intermixed in his basically rebellious nature and coloured his imagination. In his *Political Justice* (1793) Godwin advocated philosophical anarchism and also portrayed his "genuine society" where there would be no evil. In *Queen Mab*, at several places Shelley follows Godwin closely in his attack on religion and wealth and in describing a Utopian future. To add to this, the doctrine of "Necessity" manifests itself in the same poem :

> Spirit of Nature : all-sufficing Power,
> Necessity; thou mother of the world !

Cherishing great dreams and high hopes to free man from the slavery of oppression and to reform the world, he "lived by insurrection; and the man 'falling on the thorns of life' is anon the fiery will which can rest in nothing but perfect freedom and infinite joy."[8]

This joy Shelley wanted to bring through his poetry which would be a trumpet of prophecy to the sleeping mankind. Perfect freedom and happiness would be open to man if he rises like Prometheus against injustice. Man will have to suffer like the Titan, Prometheus. But intense suffering will follow its rewards. Reform and regeneration is possible because evil is not permanent in human system. In the cyclic process of nature evil is followed by good. This idea is evident in his oft-repeated motifs of regeneration. Just as the hidden seeds germinate in spring, bringing "New Birth" of plants and flowers, similarly the virtues of mankind concealed under the cover of false sophistication, ignorance and selfishness, regenerate when love, justice and knowledge spread, because :

All things are recreated and the flame.
Of consentaneous loves inspires all life.

His concept of human perfectibility echoes Godwinian philosophy that men are not bad by nature but are made such by the pressure of circumstances. "Men, he believed with Rousseau, are naturally virtuous and happy but have been corrupted by the evils resullting from false sophistication and false civilization."[9]

Shelley's concept of the Golden Age is closely linked with his belief in liberation and regeneration. In his *Prometheus Unbound*, the protagonist, after his rebellion against the tyrant Jupiter and after suffering agonising tortures, witnesses the liberation of the universe from Jupiter who sinks into the abyss. Then comes the regeneration of the Universe filling the Earth and man with joy and glory. In the new order of things men are equal. There is a rule of love. Self-love, malice, hatred, tyranny have been banished. Man is exempt from the sense of guilt, pain and fear. He describes this ideal state as :

All men believed or hoped, is torn aside ;
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man,
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and motionless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise. (III. IV. 500-505).

Thus the poet has faith that man can become securely happy and free from tyranny and oppression in a truly just and classless society. This is a prophecy that man can improve his status, and can become wise and happy if he develops Christian virtues of true love and forgiveness. Sir Herbert Read calls the book "the greatest expression ever given to humanity's desire for intellectual light and spiritual liberty."[10]

In *Queen Mab*, Shelley describes the golden dreams of a rosy future. With the spread of liberal education a society would evolve in which there would be love, truth, equality and happiness. There would be no disfiguring passions. Ianthe is warned that reforms would come, slowly but surely. Shelley's vision of reform is full of

hope. He is confident that evil cannot continue for ever. Just as out of decay comes regeneration, similarly evil will be annihilated and it will be replaced by good. Tyranny is weak and cannot withstand the onslaught of knowledge and love. Love is all-pervading. When virtue will be restored, all symbols of authority, thrones, institutions and prisons, will lie vacant. It was, indeed, the mission of Shelley's life, as a man and as a poet, "to seek truth and to lead others towards it : with truth went liberty and the banishment of evil since tyranny and evil of every kind were existent only when bound up with false belief."[11]

The crusading fervour with which Shelley wanted to bring in total reformation of the world is evident in his "Ode to the West Wind'. The mighty spirit of the wind is the direct force which sweeps the world with new energy. It is the harbinger of a new life in nature. The spirit of insurrection, destroying old leaves, scattering seeds and working havoc with the clouds, becomes a trumpet of resurrection, when the zypher comes and drives forth new life in nature. The wind is not only a part of the landscape but is a vehicle of radical changes. It is one manifestation of the creative principle that runs through the whole universe. He wants the help of the wind to spread his message of love among mankind and to bring in genuine social reforms. He says :

> Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
> Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind.
> Be through my lips to unawakened earth.
> The trumpet of a prophecy :...(V.II. 66-69)

The poet is hopeful of the world's redemption through creative thoughts. Out of decay comes regeneration. New Birth symbolises the cyclic succession of evil by good.

With a high and pure purpose of reforming the world, the society, and of eradicating its evils, Shelley looks forward in his imagination to the victory of spirit. That makes him a visionary. He has a vision of bright future for mankind. However, the foundation of building up that society should not be rotton. "The new order must be won, not through calculation but through conversion, through a passionate intuition of the worth and beauty inherent in

the nature of things."[12] The spirit of this beauty is liberty. Liberty, through love leads to perfect freedom. And herein lies the keynote of his ideal. For him love has close association with poetry. His "perception of intellectual awakening, and the accompanying imagery of regeneration recalls his experience of what he called 'Intellectual Beauty' and depends on his social and psychological theory of love."[13]

In fact, Shelley had an aversion for tyranny, injustice and institutional religion. The Godwinian Utopia of a universal benevolence impressed him. His ideas of reform and regeneration are based on the belief that "a regeneration of the hearts of men alone can bring in genuine social reformation."[14] In Prometheus, tyranny is overthrown and there emerges a world full of joy and beauty. Love arises with the energy of a storm out of the abyss of nothingness. In the 'Ode to the West Wind', he wants to spread his words among mankind — these are the words of poetic truth. In fact, the wind is not only a "property of the landscape, but also a vehicle for radical changes in the poet's mind."[15]

The noble dream of his life was to eradicate evil. He wanted to establish a world where there would be perfect goodness. He visualises a bright future for man where love, justice, joy and perfect happiness would reign. And to establish such an order, he takes the help of his poetry which will become the "trumpet of Prophecy" to spread his ideals.

*"Wexlow"*
*Lower Kaithu*
*Shimla*



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*Ajoy Ranjan Biswas*

# HUMOUR AND SATIRE IN SHELLEY

'Tis not worthwhile to prove, as I could, how
From the sweet fountains of our Nature flow
These bitter waters.

(Shelley. Fragment of a Satire on Satire)

## I

Satire, it has been shown, is essentially the product of moral and social indignation - *saeva indignatio.* But its expression, the verbal form in which it is couched, is a kind of laughter that has a caustic and corrosive effect rather than a soothing one. And yet the satiric laughter also springs from a sense of humour. Shelley, it has been widely believed, is temperamentally insensitive to humour, and to look for satire in Shelley's poetry is as futile as to search for a needle in a haystack. While it is true that the main body of his poetry is non-satiric, lyrical and philosophical, Shelley strove to weave sparkling threads of satire into a large part of his 'poetic fabric' from his early days till death, and a sense of humour shines through the words and lines of many of his letters. A close search for the humorous and satiric patterns in his letters and poetry would reveal a versatile temperament, much unlike the popular idea of it built up through biographical and critical appraisals by authors ranging from Trelawny and Dowden to Andre Maurois on the one hand, and from Matthew Arnold to F. R. Leavis and T. S. Eliot on the other. As the lines from *Fragment of a Satire on Satire* (1820) propose, attempts could be made to establish that the 'bitter waters' of his satiric writings flow from 'the sweet fountains' of his Romantic nature.

It is customary not to take any serious notice of *Peter Bell the Third* and *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, the two exclusive works of satire by Shelley. They have been either considered as aberrations of an essentially Romantic mind or kept out of the recognized design of the Shelley canon. Though it may look critically *de mode* to spotlight the satiric aspect of his poetry, blacking it out is an implied

reflection on the potential of Romantic sensibility itself. Shelley's sensibility does not suffer any unnatural strain in bursting into satiric laughter or lashing out at socio-political oppressions and moral hypocrisies. His Romantic and satiric sensibilities, though differently intoned, spring from a common focus - namely, the tension between the ideal and the real. When this tension causes 'a spontaneous or self-induced overflow of powerful indignation'[1], the result is satire. This is not remote from an overflow of the feelings of wonder or ecstasy and melancholy or agony.

Shelley's satiric humour induces him to confront the masquerades of socio-political and moral anarchy with a determination to expose and condemn them. Shelley's satire, in its limited range, can be characterized as 'conscious ethical satire'[2] which, according to Hendrickson, originates from Aristophanes. Shelley defines satire in a half-humorous tone in *Fragment of a Satire on Satire* :

> If Satire's scourge could wake the slumbering hounds
> Of Conscience, or erase the deeper wounds,
> The leprous scars of callous infamy;
> If it could make the present not to be,
> Or charm the dark past never to have been,
> Or turn regret to hope; who that has seen
> What Southey is and was, would not exclaim,
> 'Lash on !' .... be the keen verse dipped in flame ;
> Follow his flight with winged words, and urge
> The strokes of the inexorable scourge
> Until the heart be naked, till his soul
> See the contagion's spots .... foul ;
> And from the mirror of Truth's sunlike shield,
> From which his Parthian arrow . . .
> Flash on his sight the spectres of the past,
> Until his mind's eye paint thereon -
> Let scorn like ..... yawn below,
> And rain on him like flake of fiery snow.
>
> (ii. 17-34)[3]

Thus in Shelley, a destructive hatred operates concurrently with a re-constructive sympathy for moral and aesthetic values. Attempts

should be made to see the creative *raison d'etre* for his satiric self-expression not only in the two exclusive works of satire but also in some juvenile lyrics, in some political poems like *To the Lord Chancellor*, in casual verses like *Lines to a Reviewer*. His satiric anger even bursts forth in serious poems like *Queen Mab, Adonais* and *The Triumph of Life*, where that emotion does not sound out of tune with the central philosophy of the poem concerned or its complex design. Satire can therefore be assumed to be an important (though not a major) constituent of Shelley's Romantic sensibility.

## II

During Shelley's life-time, critics and reviewers could not afford to ignore his works as the products of unearthly flights of fancy. Rather they reacted violently against his political, social and religious theories. A typical example is W.S. Walker's outburst in the *Quarterly Review* of 1821 at Shelley's attacks on Christianity :

> ... let him not presume to insult the world, and to profane the language in which he writes, *by rhyming invectives against a faith* of which he knows nothing but the name. ... Christianity is the great prop of the social order of the civilized world ; *this social order is the object of Mr. Shelley's hatred*, and therefore, the pillar must be demolished, that the building may tumble down.[4]

Ironically, it is the posthumous portrayals of Shelley in the sentimental reminiscences by his close friends like Hogg and Trelawny which have tended to obliterate the reality of Shelley's 'rhyming invectives' against orthodox faith, morality and politics, and 'created the legend of a frenetic, excitable youth given to ecstatic enthusiasms and subject to hallucination's.[5] Matthew Arnold and Leslie Stephen further minimize Shelley's robust concern with earthly matters of controversial issues. Eliot invokes the Arnoldian formula to denounce Shelley's failure to use his poetic gifts, and yet feels ill at ease about his own intoxication 'with Shelley's poetry at the age of fifteen'. one of his arguments against Shelley's 'almost unreadable' poetry is that 'the man was humorless, pedantic, self-centred and sometimes almost a blackguard. Except for an occasional shrewd sense, .... his letters are insufferably dull'.[6]

But some modern critics like Spender have started taking due cognizance of the intrinsic values of Shelley's satirical works and his humour souring into angry outbursts and hatred against what he considers to be forces of evil. In *Swellfoot the Tyrant* Spender finds 'effective satire' that 'shows a boisterous side of Shelley which does not fit with the usual idea of his genius', and in *Peter Bell the Third* he finds 'a parody' that changes 'from mocking imitation of Wordsworth to savage satire on London'[7]. Edmund Blunden in *Shelley : a Life Story* (1946), while tracing in Shelley's tragic personality a keen sense of humour persisting till the end of his life, points out that the humorous and satiric aspects of his creative endeavours have remained comparatively unexplored[8]. Tapping these sources of Shelley's humour and satire or what Blunden calls his 'combinations of the lovely and the unromantic' may make us aware of certain newer resonances of his poetry and thus contribute toward a much fuller understanding of his art.

This paper proposes to highlight the satirical elements in just a few early and later poems of Shelley, leaving out numerous other satirical poems as well as the two major satires from the purview of the present analysis.



III

In a purely nonsensical poem, *Verses on a Cat* (1800), one of his earliest poetic exercises, the little poet humorously contrasts the various 'modes of distress' suffered by different people, the various desires and aspirations of 'the tenants of earth', with the one single desire of the cat :

One wants society,
Another variety,
Others a tranquil life,
Some wants food,
Others, as good,
Only want a wife.
But this poor little cat
Only wanted a rat,
To stuff out its own little maw;

And it were as good
Some people had such food,
To make them hold their jaw.

(ii. 19-30)9

*Original Poetry of Victor and Cazire* (1810), supposed to be written by young Shelley and his sister Elizabeth, contains in its introductory part some 'nonsensical ryme' surprisingly mature in the handling of hexameter couplet. The comical situation is that of an aspiring writer who finds it difficult to 'arrange his ideas in grammatical order' -

Then my thoughts come so pell-mell all into my mind
That the sense or the subject I never can find :
This word is wrong placed, -- no regard to the sense,
The present and future, instead of past tense,
Then my grammar I want ; O dear I what a bore,
I think I shall never attempt to write more.

(ii. 3-8)

But with some competent assistance the writer hopes to be so famous as to vie with Socrates, Demosthenes, Junius and Plato by setting in his writings -

The pattern or satire to all of the age.

'Futurity' calls upon him to 'hold the reins' of the literature of the age which presents a bleak picture of millions of writers engaged variously. The satire, however, with recognizable echoes of Pope, has a bite too severe for nonsense verses :

A thousand are prudes who for Charity write,
And fill up their sheets with spleen, envy and spite,
One million are bards, who to heaven aspire,
And stuff works full of bombast, rant and fire,
T' other million are wags who in Grub-street attend,
And just like a cobbler the old writings mend.

(ii. 51-56)12

Gradually, with an expanding intelligence enriched by his philosophical and political readings, particularly Godwin's *Political Justice*, Shelley began to employ his humorous and satirical verses to denunciation of socio-economic exploitation, political oppression and religious hypocrisies. In *Bigotry's Victim* (1809-10) he compares bigots to ferocious animals and birds of prey. In the poem *On an Icicle that Clung to the Grass of a Grave* (1809-1810) the poet decides to abandon the pursuit of fame when he discovers that its altar has been polluted by 'millions of blood-reeking victims', 'the tears of the widow' and the pining of orphans. The political tone is more pronounced in *The Devil's Walk : a Ballad* (1812)[13] which is a vituperative broadside on the socio-political condition of England in particular. The Devil walks abroad in disguise, sits 'familiarly' beside a priest at prayer, sees 'a brainless King' (obviously referring to George III) and discovers the fat Prince :

> For he is fat, - his waistcoat gay,
> When strained upon a levee day,
> Scarce meets across his princely paunch;
> And pantaloons are like half-moons
> Upon each brawny haunch.

The cartoon of the Prince Regent here anticipates not only Shelley's own caricature of the Prince in *Swellfoot the Tyrant* (1820) but also the numerous cartoons of the Prince published in popular journals during the scandalous Green Bag trial of his Queen. The exploiters, those who snatch 'the bread of penury', and the bishops and lawyers, all form the Devil's thriving clientele. The satire on the lawyers and bishops is sharp and ruthless :

> For every gown, and every wig,
> Hides the safe thrift of Hell within.

The Devil is compared to 'the wealthy yeoman', surveying contentedly his fertile fields and thriving cattle - a satiric image of the feudal lord. But the most scathing attack is directed against politicians who, unlike all other classes of people, can love the Devil in his undisguised shape :

A statesman passed - alone to him,
The Devil dare his whole shape uncover,
To show each feature, every limb,
Secure of an unchanging lover.

The poem seems to be Shelley's first attempt at a full-scale satire, 'later so successfully developed in *Peter Bell* and *Swellfoot the Tyrant*.[11]

IV

The playful mood was replaced by a 'haughty indignation'[12] at the decree of Eldon, Lord High Chancellor, in the Chancery suit depriving Shelley of his children Eliza and Charles (born of Harriet). Harriet's suicide and the suit shattered him emotionally, and Shelley 'never forgave Eldon, though he could only reply with the bitterest and most vitriolic of all his poems, *To the Lord Chancellor*'.[13] While cursing Eldon 'by a parent's outraged love', Shelley builds a satiric image of the judge (to be perfected further in *The Masque of Anarchy*) : Eldon has the 'killing sneer' and 'smile' which are but the 'snares' of the legendary crocodile :

for thou canst outweep the crocodile
By thy false tears - those millstones braining men.



This is a personal caricature of the Lord Chancellor who, so went the report, used to weep during court proceedings. Though Shelley tries to sublimate his private wrath into a general feeling of animosity to the whole system, the 'curse' motif predominates in this poem. And in many other poems, the 'curse' motif operates in the poem of angry denunciation of various forces of evil. This establishes Shelley's affinity with the terrible Archilocus (7th century B.C.) whose venomous iambics at the festival of Demeter forced his enemies to hang themselves. Shelley invokes the whole 'country's curse' on the 'darkest crest of that foul, knotted, many-headed worm' of a judge who has sold justice for 'heaps of fraud-accumulated gold'.

Shelley's indignation at the massacre at St. Peter's field, Manchester, on 16 August 1819 found its greatest expression in *The Masque of Anarchy* [14], written between 5 and 23 September, immediately after Shelley learnt about it in Italy through letters and the *Examiner* reports. Over 60,000 people, men, women both young and old, dressed in their Sunday best, assembled to listen to the famous Radical orator Henry Hunt demanding certain parliamentary reforms. Suddenly a cavalry charged into the unarmed masses, killing eleven on the spot, and wounding and mutilating four hundred people, one hundred of them women. The 22 August editorial of the *Examiner*, its central emotion and the image in some of its phrases (like 'these Men in Brazen Masks of power'[15]) may have suggested the design of theme and Shelley's poem.

The atrocities on the people, suffering for quite a few years under the economic depression consequent upon the war of attrition with France and politically hamstrung under various repressive Acts, immediately resulted in the eclipse of the glories of Waterloo in the people's mind. In fact, the Manchester massacre came to be popularly called the 'Peterloo' in sardonic mimicry of 'Waterloo' and St. Pater's Field. Far away in Italy, Shelley reacted with wrathful denunciation : 'the torrent of my indignation has not yet done boiling in my veins.[16] To Peacock he writes (9 September 1819) that the papers bringing the shocking news 'are, as it were, the distant thunders of the terrible storm which is approaching. The tyrants here, as in the French Revolution, have first shed blood. May their execrable lessons not be learnt with equal docility'[17] On 21 September 1819 (about the time he finished the poem) in another letter to Peacock, he refers to the 'infernal business this of Manchester'.[18] Thus the poem was written in the white heat of anger, giving vent to uncontrollable hatred bordering on personal rancour :

> I met Murder on the way -
> He had a mask like Castlereagh.
> ....
> Next Came Fraud, and he had on,
> Like Eldon, an ermined gown;

Clothed with the Bible, as with light,
And the shadows of the night,
Like Sidmouth, next, Hypocrisy
On a crocodile rode by.

The whole poem is built on the design of a traditional masque with the actions and speeches of various characters fitted in. The inherent caricature elements help Shelley in his satirical distortion or exaggeration of the features of a character even to the extent of the grotesque. For example, the image of children's brains being knocked out by the stony, big tears of Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, - carrying as it does a direct reference to his cruel, hypocritical verdict shattering the life of Shelley's children - becomes an inimitable cartoon. However, with his venom poured over the three personalities, Shelley directs his satire toward generalized targets - Bishops, lawyers, peers, priests, spies and a motley crowd participating in 'this ghastly masquerade'. There is scathing satire on the divine theory of kingship in the lurid representation of Anarchy, riding a white horse splashed with blood and wearing 'a kingly crown' on a brow marked 'I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW!' The connotation is that of the apocalyptic dragon (The Revelation, 13:1) bearing 'a blasphemous name' on its crowned heads. The 'Apocalypse' image represents monarchy as a part of cosmic evil. The divinity of kingship is obsequiously acknowledged by priests, lawyers, and the 'pensioned Parliament'. At the crucial moment when even Hope surrenders to the authority of Anarchy, a phantom Shape[19] appears in a dazzling mist, annihilating Anarchy and rejuvenating the 'prostrate multitude'. Some of the warnings against the present evils and abuses uttered by the phantom shape have satiric undertones :

Paper coin - that forgery
Of the title-deeds, which ye
Hold to something of the worth
Of the inheritance of Earth.
....
Thou art Justice - ne'er for gold
May thy righteous laws be sold
As laws are in England.

The satiric passages in the early part are unusually forceful. Yet the poem has a deeper philosophical design that affiliates it to *The Revelation*, and makes it 'less satiric than prophetic'[20] - as Woodring puts it in repudiation of critical views of the poem 'only as a satire'.

Even a poem like *Ode to Liberty* (1820), with its philosophical survey of man's struggle for liberty throughout history, presents a masquerade of oppressors like Kings ('Destruction's sceptred slaves'), priests ('Folly's mitred brood') and Anarch ('like them, but mightier far than they'). In *The Tower of Famine* (1820) satire is penetratingly directed at the rising bourgeoisie dwelling in towers and raving 'for bread, and gold, and blood'. The title of the poem is sharply ironical, as the 'Tower' stands for 'wealth and magnificence' as well as notorious 'prison' in England, implying that the dwellers of this tower are actually imprisoned maniacs eternally famishing for more money and blood. The tower becomes a symbol of alienation, with individuals withdrawing into 'the bowers of solitary wealth' or marble-roofed 'prison-homes' - leaving the world squeezed 'bare' and desolate. Here the satirical tone seems to be replaced by the philosophical language of analysis.



## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Hendrickson, "Satura Tota Nostra Est" in Satire : Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. R.Paulson (U.S.A., 1971), p.41.

3. *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London, 1905 ; 1956), p. 626.*

4. From the review article No.VIII on "Prometheus Unhound, a Lyrical Drama in Four Acts, with other Poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley" in Quarterly Review (Vol. XXVI, No. L1, October 1821), p. 179. Emphasis mine.

5. Stephen Spender, Shelley (London, 1952), p. 6.

6. T. S. Eliot, "Shelley and Keats" in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London, 1933), p. 89.

7. Spender, p. 43.

8. Edmund Blunden, Shelley : a Life Story (London, 1946), p. 300.

9. *Poetical Works, p. 839.*

10. The general design of the poem is taken from The Devil's Thoughts (Walk), jointly written by Southey and Coleridge in 1799, satirizing the ills of contemporary society like the slave trade, heavy taxation, ecclesiastical corruptions etc. But Shelley attacks the more fundamental forces of evil systemically ingrained in religion, society, administration and even family life.

11. K.N. Cameron, The Young Shelley : Genesis of a Radical (New York,1950), p. 116.

12. *Poetical Works, p. 551 : Mrs Shelley's Note.*

13. King-Hele, Shelley : His Thought and Work (London, 1962), p. 74.

14. Shelley sent the poem to Hunt with the spelling 'Mask', but he also spelt it as 'Masque' in a letter to Hunt (14-18 November 1819) who published the poem in 1832 as 'Masque'. Shelley exploits the double convotations of the word showing the political figures wearing deceptive masks, and representing the whole political scenario as part of a traditional pageant. The word 'anarchy' also carries double connotations : the state of complete freedom from governmental control achieved by totally liberated individuals, and the present state of tyranny and exploitation which Shelley describes as 'the wildest anarchy' in a letter to Miss Hitchener, dated 19 August 1811).

15. Quoted in K.N.Cameron, Shelley : the Golden Years (U.S.A. 1974), p. 346.

16. *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. F.L.Jones (London, 1964), Vol.II, p. 117. Letter to Ollier (6 September 1819).*

17. Ibid., p. 119.

18. Ibid., p. 120.

19. This phantom, 'Shape' is similar to the 'glorious Phantom' of England in 1819 and of An Address to the People on The Death of Princess Charlotte (1817), and to the awful 'Shape of Demogorgon of Prometheus Unbound.

20. Carl Woodring, Politics in English Romantic Poetry (U.S.A., 1970), p. 625- refers disapprovingly to critics like Kenneth Hopkins [Portraits in Satire (London, 1958), pp. 272-273] who treat the poem only as a satire.

*Seemin Hasan*

# THE MYTHIC MODE IN SHELLEY'S LYRICS OF 1820

The shorter poems written alongside and immediately after the publication of *Prometheus Unbound* can be better understood when read from the point of view of their use of mythology. The lyric-drama as well as the poems of the period are characterized by intense mythopoesis. Also, Shelley follows the syncretizing tendencies of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century myth historians by interweaving multiple myths into the larger fabric of his plot. By inter-relating, inter-weaving and integrating primeval myths, Shelley seems to be deliberately re-mythologizing. In his own words, the process may be described as the act of the mind discharging its collected lightning.[1]

Shelley's use of mythology is not incidental or accidental. A voracious reader, he read and re-read the classics until they became indelibly imprinted on his mind. Phrases, ideas, images, characters, scenes etc. became part of his own thoughts. Homer, Aeschylus, Plato, Theocritus, Aristophanes and Lucan were much more than models to imitate. They were companions in nobility and depth of thought. In the preface to *Hellas*, the poet wrote --

> We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their roots in Greece. But for Greece - Rome the instructor, the conqueror, or the metropolis of our ancestors, would have spread no illumination with her arms, and we might still have been savages and idolators.[2]

To the Romantic poets, Greece was a symbol of liberty, order, and the worth of the individual, and Greek mythology was used as the vehicle or the expression of the deepest thoughts and feelings of the poet. However, even though similar themes were used by men of the same age, the resultant poetry was widely disparate. Shelley's individual contribution lies in the reinterpretation of the older mythic patterns into new, iconoclastic and symbolic mythographs. Unlike Keats, Shelley does not believe in the

exclusive power of mythologizing. His mythic patterns represent his search for the forms they can change into or pass beyond. He allows the older, institutionalized myths and mythic patterns and archetypes to progress into iconoclastic shapes and relations. The re-arranged combinations answer the call of the past and yet through an intriguing interplay of symbols disperse beyond the conservative frontiers. To organize this reappropriation, Shelley also frequently draws upon Biblical, Zoroastrian and Hindu mythologies.

Using mythology in poetry during this period was treated as a mark of progressive thinking or, at least, of detachment from the official faith. The church reacted strongly to this rather pagan trend. Comprehensive works on each of the three mythological groups viz. Greek, Oriental and Celtic were produced by clergymen in an attempt to prove that paganism was later than Judaism and a corruption of it. However, these works were condemned by the then powerful journal *The Edinburgh Review*. Mythology was treated as a subject of great controversy and satire. From the 1790s to 1812 the journal, carried several articles on mythology. The journal, obviously, exercised influence over the literary temper of the day and, through its controversies, served as the formal source of inspiration to many poets.

By its very nature and genesis the Romantic Movement was myth-oriented. It subsisted on myths of the golden age and the noble savage. From myth to mythology is a natural transition. Rational thinking gave way to individual response. Instinct, intuition, association were used for understanding the world and life. Wisdom and moral sense were no longer guided by the individual's response to the environment around him. Interest in ghost stories, legends, dreams and mythology was revived. The mythological imagination was reborn. Mythology gained in stature because it defined associations of the golden past with the present. The universe, according to the Romantics, was alive and vital and perpetually subject to change. The society before the poet was ugly and corrupt. The artist with his sharpened imaginative and creative faculties had to reform it. The days of the golden past and its noble savage could not be recaptured because man had progressed too far in the scale of evolution to go back to the state

of perfect innocence. It was the job of the poet to bring about a union of the Apollonion and Faustian creeds[3] and to create a faith that would be acceptable to all.

Thus, literature now became a philosophical and exploratory venture. The deepened layers of experience made the subject-matter of the poet more complex, and mythology served as a suitable medium of communication. The search for the noble savage (the ideal man of primitive society) and for the natural society from which the rational, modern urban had expelled himself, led the poets to the very heart of mythology. In order to recreate the atmosphere of the Golden Age, which they felt would provide clues for reforming the corrupt modern world, they reinterpreted mythology, thus giving it a symbolic significance. Mythology, so far, had served only as an allegorical medium. Now, it acquired new dimensions and challenges. The concept and the quest for sublimity, so common in the second half of the eighteenth century also contributed to it. Translations of classical myths, fables, and legends had enhanced the people's awareness of pagan and non-Christian legacy, and provided a framework for their reinterpretation. Biblical High Criticism promoted anagogic and symbolic interpretation of the supernatural and mystical concepts. Interpreted within this framework mythology revealed and defined subtle, complex and tantalizing emotional situations. The abstractions served as the metaphor, and the true meaning which lay beyond the apparent complication had weight and depth.



Nature meant a great deal to the Romantics and much poetry resulted from the contemplation of natural things. Shelley's response to natural events is noticeable in the lyrics of 1820. Emotion and the poetic impulse are generated through contemplation of some natural events like the rising of the west wind, the skylark's song, or the movement of a cloud. The poet bases himself in such an emotional upsurge and locating some analogous human experience goes on to weave fantasy images, stimulated ideas, moods, attitudes and experiences into his poetry. The resultant complexities can be deciphered more feasibly if the mythological persuasions are taken note of.

Among the poems of 1820 printed along with *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley includes a number of odes. In ancient times, the

ode was a choral form, providing a dramatic musical setting for the ritual or heroic theatre. The divisions of the chorus answered each other in strophe, anti-strophe and epode as they provided a commentary an some action being carried out simultaneously at the altar or on the stage. It may be observed that the ode incorporates the inherent cantatory character and magical intent of the primordial rituals. In 'Ode to Heaven' the strophe-antistrophe-epode stanza structure is used to present a debate meant for the education of the public. Western thought is woven into mythology. The political strength of strophe assertion, antistrophe stance and epode-response invest the mythological impulse with social and moral worth. The subject of the debate is the significance of "Evercanopying dome' viz. Heaven. Each of the three spirits projects environmental characteristics of the realm from which it operates. Inspite of all the differences, there are many similarities in the projected images. The task before the reader is to decide which of the three assertions are most suitable for the improvement of humanity.

The most widely accepted view is offered by the strophe. This is obvious from the large chorus in the strophe celebrating a deistic 'abode' of 'power'. The poet rejects such a realm, condemning it as the 'glass/Wherein man his nature sees' and hopelessly degrades himself. A similar hopelessness filters through the anti-strophe where the chorus rejects the first concept as a 'cave' of shadows obscuring a better 'world of new delights', that is far beyond normal human comprehension. This view, too, is rejected as highly hierarchical and the reader turns to the epode.

The epode projects a vision of political and personal freedom. The 'fading sphere' of the sky unfurls and expands into 'constellated sums' and 'orbits measureless'. Individual hopes expand into all-embracing mythological frames. Shelley mythologizes the notion of leading humanity towards achievement of its own potentials. The same mythic instinct is seen at work in another ode of the period viz. 'Ode to Liberty'. The principle of liberty in 'Ode to Liberty' is treated as a god-figure. This 'Spirit' is invested with the power to 'make chaos ever new'. to create restructurings of 'delight' by relating existing perceptions of life to the fertile and regenerative desires of 'love' striving beyond the

existence perceived at a given moment. Liberty could not have operated if the given moment did not allow reconstruction of the past and the present—

> Like the man's thought dark in the infant's brain,
> Like aught that is which wraps what is to be...'
>
> (ll. 55-56)

Systematic and heirarchical state religions obscure the dreams of Athens. Liberty must constantly recover the 'wrinkled image' from the 'fleeting river' of history on the 'caverns of the past'. The electric current surges up from 'The human spirit's deepest deep'. Liberty thus, becomes the iconoclastic shifting of social and mental inclinations pre-conceived at the heart of the older systems meant as a gift to posterity for future transformation —

> To judge, with solemn truth, life's ill-apportioned lot ?
> Blind love, and equal Justice, and the Fame,
> Of what has been, the Hope of what will be ?
> O, Liberty : if such could be thy name.....'[3]
>
> (ll. 263-66)

'Ode to the West Wind', 'The Cloud' and 'To a Skylark, can be grouped together as all three treat myth-figures with inherent aerial mobility. Aerial ascents are synonymous with achievement. However, all three emblems, West-wind, Cloud and Skylark can use their aerial mobility to ascend as well as to descend. Images of ascent and descent are interchangeable in the ancient Greek concept of time which is represented by an ever-revolving wheel.

The west wind emerges as a god-figure ensconced in a chariot. He is an 'enchanter' with a purpose. He has to fulfil the first phase in the fertility cycle by returning the seeds to their 'wintry bed'. He is the 'breath of Autumn' suggestive of his control over both death and birth.

Like Triton he blows a 'clarion' or a wartrumpet signalling cosmic, natural and political revolutions. He is also alternately the 'Destroyer and Preserver' oscillating between Shiva and Vishnu of the Vedic trinity. The 'tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean' in the

second stanza are suggestive of the Vedic myth of the Ganga. The Ganga, the most sacred of all Indian rivers, the cleanser of sins, and the giver of immortality, was originally confined to the celestial regions where it flowed from a toe of Vishnu. Brahma, the creator, at one stage, allowed the sacred river to descend to the Earth. Shiva broke the fall of the waters by allowing them to flow through his hair. By referring to the myth, Shelley seems to be acknowledging the Indophile trends of his day.

The ritualizational rhetoric of the second stanza communicates the visible effect of Dionysian superstition of the 'bright hair uplifted from the head/ of some fierce maenad'. Dionysius is the son of Zeus and Semele and is usually represented as accompanied on his conquests by a rout of votaries, male and female, Satyrs, Sileni, Maenads, Bassarids, dancing about him, tearing animals to pieces, intoxicated or possessed. He is a god of vegetation, a suffering god, who dies and is born over and over again. In Shelley's representation the maenad is engaged in a frenzy of worship.

From land the west wind moves to the 'blue Mediterranean'. Water represents the life spirit. It is the symbol of creativity and the medium of purification. All vegetation is nourished by water and man is reborn of water and the spirit. Thus the west wind completes the circular journey through the three elemental zones—sky, land and water. Shelley, now longs to join his consciousness to this self–extending deity. He begs the 'impetuous one' to 'lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud'. Such an approximation would help the poet to break the earthly confines and to 'quicken a new birth' where death will not end his efforts and his poems will ever remain the 'trumpets of a prophecy'.

Shelley uses some powerful mythological analogues in 'The Cloud' and 'To a Skylark' as well. The cloud, is a composite myth-figure, speaking out as a Nepheliad or, a cloud nymph. It has parentage and also some mythical history and functions —

I am the daughter of earth and water,
And the nursling of the sky,
I pass through pores of the ocean and shores,
I change, but I cannot die.

(ll. 73-76)

By giving the cloud a feminine identity, Shelley draws upon the most ancient pre-Aryan form of mythology which begins with the many-titled Mother-Goddess. The Mother-Goddess was immortal, changeless and omnipotent and motherhood was her prime attribute. The moon was her celestial symbol. In the poem the moon appears as 'that orbed-maiden with white fire laden...' At a stage, the Mother-Goddes split into three—the maiden, the nymph and the crone symbolizing the three aspects of moon, the new, the full and the waning.

Shelley's gift for picture-making results in fresh, vital and decorative mythographs. His intention, however, is much more than simply making such analogies. Like the west wind the cloud represents movement and continuity. It dies only to be resurrected again and again and thus yeilds a message of hope for mankind.

'To the Skylark' portrays the poet hidden 'in the light of thought'. And thought begins with the tracing of primordial vestiges. Apollo, the sungod is an important celestial presence. Being close to the sun, the skylark can sing 'unbidden.' In Romantic poetry birds are used as catalysts of spiritual change. In Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner* a bird is the precursor of the redemptive action. Keats's nightingale provides solace to the poet's wounded soul. Following in the same tradition the Shelleyan skylark represents the selfless provider of sweet thoughts.

Shelley's iconoclastic approach liberates mythology from the clutches of tradition and re-mythologizing invests it with interpretative and prophetic potential.

Shelley radically rearranges the traditional characters, images, myths and ideologies by breaking down old restrictions. This combination of the old and the new characterizes the poetry of the period. Douglas Bush suitably comments on Shelley's Hellenic inclinations— 'Whatever the defects of Eton and Oxford, they gave him the key to two literatures—even if the key needed to be oiled by Peacock—and Greek especially did more than anything else to turn a mixture of magnanimous crusader and eccentric crank into a poet.[4]

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4. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

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# PRIESTLY TALK IN JOYCE'S *A PORTRAIT*

Even before scholars began explaining Stephen Dedalus's artistic apprenticeship as a programmatic rebellion (*non serviam*), Joyce's presentation of the Irish Church and Stephen's growing alienation from Christian orthodoxy roused more heated controversy than anything else in *A Portrait.* The situation today is basically the same. The scorching words of Dante, Mr. Casey, and Simon Dedalus concerning the role of the church in Irish politics, the belittling symbolism with which Joyce portrays various priests, and the injustice of the church, personified by the wicked Father Dolan, still strike the reader with great power. Scholarship has performed the admirable service of limning Stephen's lapse from Catholicism while capturing its moral, psychological, and aesthetic drama. One item of the embryonic artist's predicament with his national church, however, has been largely overlooked, and this pertains to the linguistic practices of the Irish clergy, i.e., the ways in which Church functionaries in Ireland use the English language. But although Joyce's treatment of this motif is subtle, we shall nonetheless see that it fits too neatly with the twin themes of Stephen's developing artistic sensibility and Joyce's ironical handling of Stephen's self-image to escape further notice.

Imperative to the book's criticism of the modern Irish Church is the Church's shabby neglect of its glorious Continental origins. Joyce counterpoints in Stephen's mind the rich, ringing names of men like St. Francis Xavier, Lorenzo Ricci, and St. Aloysius Gonzaga with those of Father Peter Kenny and Father Dolan ("Dolan : it was like the name of a woman who washed clothes"). * Joyce accents, furthermore, the mean behavior of his modern clerics to contrast them and their saintly precursors : Father Dolan, the prefect of studies with the colourless eyes, pandies Stephen not only unjustly

* James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York : Penguin Books, 1976), p. 55. All page references pertain to this edition.

but with sadistic glee while Father Arnall stands inertly by; Father Conmee violates his priestly office by jocosely explaining to Simon Stephen's complaint regarding the pandying, which was tendered in confidence. The only vestige of the Church's prior majesty survives in the flaming rhetoric of Father Arnall's sermon. And even though language, one may argue from Pauline doctrine, is merely a form or a mode unrelated to the centre of Christian experience, at least two clergymen in the book fail to equal, let alone augment or amplify, medieval rhetorical standards. The motif of rhetoric assumes importance in direct ratio to the transference in Stephen's mind of language as a national or cultural issue to a religious one.

His first awareness of linguistic shoddiness among the priesthood occurs in the fourth chapter during an interview with Belvedere's director of studies. It is noteworthy that immediately after this talk Stephen repudiates any possible ambitions he may have had to become a priest. The director's disparaging reference to the Belgian Capuchins cycling in their monastic garb is not only uncharitable and undignified; it also establishes a negative response on Stephen's part which increases during the interview ;

> The director had begun to speak of the Dominican and Franciscan orders..... The Capuchin dress, he thought, was rather too. . . .
>
> Stephen's face gave back the priest's indulgent smile and, not being anxious to give an opinion, he made a slight dubitative movement with his lips. . . . .
>
> — I suppose they would retain it in the cloisters ? said Stephen.
>
> — O, certainly, said the director. For the cloister it is all right, but for the street I really think it would be better to do away with it, don't you ?
>
> -- It must be troublesome, I imagine ?
>
> — Of course it is, of course. Just imagine when I was in Belgium I used to see them cycling in all kinds of weather with this thing up about their knees! It was really ridiculous. *Les jupes*, they call them in Belgium.
>
> The vowel was so modified as to be indistinct.
>
> — What do they call them ?
>
> — *Les jupes.*
>
> — O ! (154-55)

Although Stephen has not yet embraced his artistic vocation at this point, he is nonetheless offended by the director's bad pronunciation. Thematic justification for his muted rancour can be found in his admiration of Newman's silverveined prose and in the imaginative response to language he displays as a child in regard to Dr. Cornwall's Spelling Book and to individual words, viz., *belt*, *suck*, *cancer*, *canker*, and later *foetus*. The fact that *les jupes* is a foreign locution gains significance when we recall Stephen's later remark to Davin that language itself is a net the literary artist must avoid (203). Tindall and other scholars after him have debated the problem of whether Stephen eludes the snares of nationality and religion within the narrative of *A Portrait*. But although the question of transcending language—the third trap for the writer—does not occur for Stephen-Joyce until *Finnegans Wake*, one may view Stephen's conversation with the director as a dramatic foreshadowing of the theme. Disregarding the problem of reading *A Portrait* as an initiation story, an autobiographical *Bildungsroman*, or a roman a clef, we must remember that Joyce, no less than Milton or Yeats, saw his literary output as an organic whole and designed an elaborate scheme of cross-references for this purpose.

Equally germane to matters of epistemology and stylistics in literature is Stephen's conference with the dean of studies of the University in Chapter Five. In this dryly humorous scene, the elderly English dean reveals himself to be ignorant of both etymology—in the case of the word *detain*—and current linguistic standards. Although people in Lower Drumcondra, where presumably the best English is spoken, use the word *tundish*, the dean refers to a *funnel*. His rather pathetic rejoinder to Stephen, aside from incorporating a horrid pun, violates the basic rhetorical precept of avoiding the juxtaposition of identical words that convey different meanings:

> — A tundish, said the dean reflectively. That is a most interesting word. I must look that word up. Upon my word I must. (188)

Joyce's masterful use of the expanding motif is evident in Stephen's reply to his mentor's solecism. Having committed himself to the priestly vocation of literature, Stephen now reacts consciously and indignantly to this careless verbal misfire—language now standing for him, the aspriring Hephaestus-Prometheus-like creator, as the enshrined vehicle and medium of his self-appointed craft :

> The dean repeated the question yet again.
>
> --Tundish! Well now, that is interesting!
>
> --The question you asked me a moment ago seems more interesting. . . said Stephen coldly.
>
> The little word seemed to have turned the rapier point of his sensitiveness against this courteous and vigilant foe. He felt with a smart of dejection that the man to whom he was speaking was a countryman of Ben Jonson. He thought :
>
> --The language in which we are speaking is his before it is nine. . . . . His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (189)

Bearing in mind the ironical contrast between Stephen's ambitions and his accomplishments, this interview with the dean occurs at a very strategic moment. Stephen had mused as a child that by thinking about things one could understand them. In the artist's workship, however, he is to learn that solutions come less easily. His own verbal inadequacy is seen in the maladroit villanelle to Eileen and also, curiously, in the essay he writes for Mr. Tate as an upper-classman in the College. Although Mr. Tate accuses Stephen of heresy, a better indictment of the essay might be slipshod writing. Stephen's failure to express himself accurately in a literary mode much less demanding than poetry or imaginative fiction prefigures the vast time and work he will have to invest before becoming a literary artist. The classroom episode and the *contretemps* with the dean fuse artistically in the mention of Drumcondra Raod, where Stephen goes immediately after Mr. Tate's class. The dovetailing of place names, plus the fact that Drumcondra Road is the street where Heron beats him for preferring Byron's poetry to Tennyson's, discloses a carefully woven tapestry which

includes the motif of spoken language. Stephen's prideful self-image prompts him to identify with Byron, the maimed romantic exile. Accordingly, just as Stephen suffers for his romantic iconoclasm, he later reproaches himself for his lack of solid literary achievement while presumably attacking the dean.

The major tensions in the novel—Stephen's view of himself as the uprooted lover-artist, his fierce dedication, his unproductivity and consequent self-scorn—in short, all of the elements of the budding artist's personality and his rhythmically developing scale of values gain depth through the motif of spoken language. Even Father Arnall, who comes closer than any of his counterparts to achieving the Christian ideal, loses his temper. The stirring cadenzas of his sermon survive only as formal ritual; for, in addition to giving way to temperamental outbursts, Father Arnall reveals himself, in the pandying episode, to be incapable of extending the fatherly protection Stephen deserves.

The linguistic abuses of the director of studies and the dean add dimension to Stephen's turning away from the Church by introducing a new term. Their lapse from the medieval ideal of rhetoric, dramatized by the sermon, creates an environment hostile to the literary artist. More importantly, perhaps, this motif sharpens Stephan's awareness of the challenge he is to face at the smithy of language.

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# MELVILLE'S "FEMININE AIR" & "MASCULINE SEA"

Debate continues whether Ahab or Ishmael is at the moral centre of *Moby-Dick*,[1] and while no one disputes the dramatic power of Captain Ahab, it is tempting to Ishmael's reasonable but passionate moderation—to favour relativism over absolutism, practical idealism over transcendental excess, passionate insight over truculent passion. Nevertheless, *Moby-Dick* is vast and well-nigh inexhaustible. Where texture is sensuous, speculation is often invited. And speculation can fruitfully begin in examining from one more direction the sexual imagery appearing throughout the novel and reaching a verbal and emotional climax in chapter 132, 'The Symphony.'

It is by no means uncommon in fiction to find contrasting masculine and feminine motifs. Melville differs from other novelists in having created unique symbols, in the frequency with which these symbols occur, and in the explicitness of the symbols for the time when his novel was written.[2] His sexual symbols can be androgynous. A predominately masculine character like Ahab or Moby-Dick may be endowed with feminine characteristics. Melville is surprisingly modern in anticipating twentieth century researchers like John Money and Anke A. Ehrhardt, who in *Man & Woman Boy & Girl* (Johns Hopkins, 1972) explore sexual ambivalence and trace it to a physiological or social, not a transcendental cause.

Concentrating the effect of this sexual counterpoise, Chapter 132, "The Symphony," states a moral proposition in typical Melville fashion, avoiding "a hideous and intolerable allegory" (203) by drawing allegorical inferences from symbols solidly entrenched in sensuous experience - symbols that have (to borrow Hawthorne's phrase familiar to Melville) "physical substance to stand alone."[3] "The Symphony," which is chiefly occupied with a tragic portrait of Ahab at the climax of several occasions when he repudiates his softer, feminine impulses,[4] opens with a prelude which weaves together the two strands of sexual imagery appearing throughtout

the novel. Each of the first two paragraphs mingles feminine and masculine counterparts :

> It was a clear steel-blue day. The firmaments of air and sea were hardly separable in that all-pervading azure; only, the pensive air was transparently pure and soft, with a woman's look, and the robust and man-like sea heaved with long, strong, lingering swells, as Samson's chest in his sleep.
>
> "Hither and thither, on high, glided the snow-white wings of small, unspeckled birds; these were the gentle thoughts of the feminine air; but to and from in the deeps, far deeps, far down in the bottomless blue, rushed mighty leviathans, sword-fish, and sharks; and these were the strong, troubled, murderous thinkings of the masculine sea. (532-3)

Notable is Melville's avoidance of a commitment to a Platonic diagram of absolutes in which either sexual counterpart might have been regarded as morally good, while its opposite is evil.[5] Melville mixes feminine and masculine in equipoise. The day is "steel" (masculine) "blue" (masculine and feminine, for the "all-pervading azure" embraces both "firmaments of air and sea...hardly separable"); "far down in the bottomless blue" the sea's azure balances the azure of the sky.[6] In the third paragraph of "The Symphony" Melville explicates his compound symbol : "But though thus contrasting within, the contrast was only in shades and shadows without; these two seemed one; it was only sex, as it were, that distinguished them" (533) Melville's masculine and feminine symbols collaborate to mould a single world, whether macrocosm or microcosm. The perfect day heralds a universe where male and female conjoin : "Aloft, like a royal czar and king, the sun seemed giving this gentle air to this bold and rolling sea; even as bride to groom. And at the girdling line of the horizon, a soft and tremulous motion...denoted the fond, throbbing trust, the loving alarms, with which the poor bride gave her bosom away."

The moral vision is relative and complex rather than absolute and simple. Melville seems Aristotelian not Platonic, for pure masculinity, if it existed, would not be a virtue but an extreme, requiring a mixture of the feminine, whereas pure femininity would require an infusion of the masculine. Somewhere between the two would be the mean, an equipoise.[7]

In the male world of the *Pequod*, Melville sets up an Aristotelian rather than a Platonic scale of values in balancing characters.

Excessive masculinity is embodied in Ahab as a masculine extreme: "Haggardly firm and unyielding...untottering Ahab."(533) On board ship he is an "absolute dictator." (96)[8] Although Peleg informed Ishmael that "Ahab has his humanities," (80) indicating that in Peleg's opinion he is not without feminine impulses, Ahab is afraid of those impulses, and tries to eradicate them. When they are manifested in his pipe, he tosses it into the sea. (126)[9] When they are manifested in his friendship for Pip, whom he has taken into his cabin, he repudiates friendship. (525)[10] When they are manifested in fear that he may display weakness by pitying Starbuck, he orders the first mate to stay on the *Pequod* during the final chase of Moby-Dick. (535)[11]

Ahab's treatment of officers and crew, like Captain Vere's, is consistent with his acceptance of a man-of-war world, with absolute power at the helm. Just as Vere deprived his officers of autonomy by dictating the verdict to be brought in by the drumhead court, so Ahab deprives his officers and crew of their independent humanity. When Stubb complains of noise made by Ahab's ivory leg pegging overhead (124)[12] the captain calls Stubb a dog and comes so close to kicking him that Stubb is not quite sure whether or not he has been kicked (125), or whether he dreamed it (127-8). Ahab browbeats Starbuck and once tried to bride him. (161)[13] He overmasters the crew and commits them to his programme of revenge.[14]

Not only is Ahab drawn as a symbol of absolute masculine power, his inner vision of evil is absolute. He regards Moby-Dick as no real whale but as evil incarnate.[15] So Ahab is either Platonic evil or an example of Aristotelian excess both as an embodiment of a philosophy and as a disciple of that philosophy. The narrator - Ishmael, Melville - shows his distrust of Ahab's absolutism in the noun/adjective monomania/monomaniac often applied to the captain,[16] and in other ways.

In the process of composing the novel, some time after the events, Ishmael, narrator, stands back in horror at the spectacle of himself being sucked into the torrent of Ahab's infamous quest : "I, Ishmael, was one of that crew; my thoughts had gone up with the rest; my oath had been welded with theirs." (175) In this lucid retrospect, he thinks of Ahab as "crazy"[17]: "...all evil, to crazy Ahab,

visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick." (181)

In Chapter 42, "The Whiteness of the Whale," Ishmael as an agent in the narrative, so far accepted Ahab's vision of evil as to be knocked off base momentarily to share the captain's view of a "palsied universe" of which "the albino whale was the symbol."(194) Later, as chapter 42 shows in the perspective of the whole novel, Ishmael as narrator adopted a relativistic attitude toward whiteness, which he came to regard phenomenologically as a neutral shade, good or evil according to the inclination of the beholder.[18] "The Whiteness of the Whale," where Ishmael is overpowered by Ahab's vision, carries him back to, and even beyond, his hypochondria of the novel's first chapter : but the whiteness chapter is by no means Ishmael's last word. Later he becomes more objective and, unlike Ahab, quite able to see the whale as a symbol of good, as for example in Chapter 68, "The Blanket," : "Oh, man! admire and model thyself after the whale! Do thou, too, live in this world without being of it! ...like the great whale, retain, O man! in all seasons a temperature of thine own." (306)

As a masculine symbol, Ahab fittingly interprets the counter assault by Moby Dick as an assault upon his masculinity. Just as in *Typee*, Tommo was "unmanned"[19] by an illness which concentrated its malevolence upon his diseased leg, so Ahab's wound decreases his manhood : indeed, considering that he wears an ivory leg "fashioned of the polished bone of the sperm whale's jaw" (121), there is sexual irony in the "seemingly inexplicable, unimaginable casualty" experienced by Ahab "not long prior to the Pequod's sailing from Nantucket" when "his ivory limb [was] so violently displaced, that it had stake-wise smitten, and all but pierced has groin...."(460)

There are other occasions when damage to the ivory leg signalizes Ahab's vulnerability. When he swung back into his rowboat from his visit to Captain Boomer of the *Samuel Enderby*, Ahab's leg "received a half-splintering shock" (460) which ought to have been a warning for him to follow Captain Boomer's example to give up the chase. Instead, Ahab ordered the ship's carpenter to make a new leg, using another piece of whalebone. The carpenter contributed another item to sexual irony, when he mused

that Ahab "has a stick of whale's jaw-bone for a wife!" (468) Here the irony is partly the fact that the image is phallic, an image that increases in suggestiveness in conjunction with the other image of Ahab wounded in the groin. His masculine self suffers the outrage of being assaulted by an even more powerful masculinity. His insult to Moby Dick, intended by wearing the ivory leg, is turned back upon himself. On still another occasion, at the end of the second day's chase, Ahab's vulnerability is once more symbolized when "the ivory leg had been snapped off, leaving but one short sharp splinter." (552). This time the carpenter made a steel leg from the broken keel of Ahab's wrecked boat, so that in the last encounter, when he is caught around the neck and hanged by a whale line, Ahab has been divested of his symbolic insult to the great masculine power of his antagonist. Emasculate, he is victimized as he feared.

Dough-Boy and Pip are symbolic counter extremes to masculine Ahab. To Dough-Boy, Ahab is his "lord and master,"[20] a common colloquialism for "husband," here denoting (I think) not an actual but a symbolic sexual partnership even though drawing upon deckhand witticism for the relationship between a captain and his cabin boy. Nowhere in his work, not even when Clarel weakly yearns for Vine,[21] does Nelville treat homosexuality flagrantly in gay-liberation manner, yet from *Typee* through *Billy Budd*, homoerotic imagery is inescapable and frequent and sometimes surprisingly candid.

Pip, after his tragic experience of being cast away, is a more pathetic emblem of Dough-Boy's feminine softness.[22] Ahab takes Pip into his cabin yearning to give expression to his humane instincts, but at the critical moment of his quest for the whale, he sends Pip away, associating him with a feminine weakness that can undermine his resolution.[23] Starbuck interprets the black boy's mad ravings as Platonic echoes from a heaven ruled by love.[24]

Dough-Boy and Pip are examples of too-little masculinity. Starbuck and Stubb fall somewhere in the middle ground between too-little and too-much. Starbuck comes short of the mean. On him rests the responsibility for checking Ahab's pride, a responsibility which he shirks. Ahab knows that in his pursuit of revenge, he has "laid himself open to the unanswerable charge of

usurpation; and with perfect impunity, both moral and legal, his crew if so disposed...could refuse all further obedience to him and even violently wrest from him the command." (211)[25]

As first mate, Starbuck has the duty to keep Ahab reminded of his obligation to investors, but he lacks courage. When the crew discover that oil is leaking from the casks in the hold, threatening to deplete the precious cargo, Starbuck hurries to Ahab's cabin with the news, only to be told rudely, " 'On deck! Begone ! ' " (470) After further complaint, Ahab's determination is screwed even tighter : " 'Let the owners stand on Nantucket beach and outyell the typhoons. What cares Ahab ! ' " (470) Finally he seizes a musket and points it at Starbuck, exclaiming, " 'There is one God that is Lord over the earth, and one Captain that is lord over the Pequod. –On deck! '" (470) Starbuck protests but retreats, his protest winning a satirical comment from Ahab, "He waxes brave, but nevertheless obeys; most careful bravery.' " (470)[26] On this occasion, Ahab's shrewdness finally prompts him to pretend to obey the letter of the law and he shortly gives an order to up Burtons and break out the casks (471), thus letting Starbuck have his way, without in the least diminishing the breach between captain and mate.

Starbuck fails twice more to wrest the Pequod from Ahab's control. When corposants play on the mastheads and send forked fire from Ahab's hand-forged harpoon where it projects beyond the bow of a whaleboat, Starbuck again admonishes the captain, "God, God is against thee, old man, forbear! '" (501) But although the crew "raised a half mutinous cry" (501), the first mate did not grasp the opportunity to seize the ship, and Ahab, quick for an advantage, "with one blast of his breath...extinguished the flame." (502) Later, during the typhoon heralded by the corpusants, Starbuck went below to report that he had trimmed sail in direct contradiction to the captain's orders. Coming upon the musket in its rack, he took it down and stood near the sleeping captain, rehearsing in his mind arguments for taking command at gunpoint. His courage quickly ebbed : "What! hope to wrest this old man's living power from his own living hands ? Only a fool would try it." (507) Whereupon he failed, too, in courage to murder Ahab, and, replacing the musket,

went up to order Stubb to wake the captain and deliver the message about the reefed sails.

Dramatically, it is not an accident that Starbuck chose Stubb to carry the message, for Starbuck and Stubb were balanced against each other, Stubb being as much off–centre toward the masculine as Starbuck is toward feminine compliance. Ahab stated this equation at the end of the first day's chase, when, having persuaded Starbuck to stay on board the *Pequod*, he berated Stubb for laughing at the boat wrecked by Moby Dick : "'...did I not know thee brave as fearless fire (and as mechanical), I could swear thou wert a poltroon.'" (545) He continued, "'Ye two are the opposite poles of one thing, Starbuck is Stubb reversed, and Stubb is Starbuck; and ye two are all mankind; and Ahab stands alone...'" (545)

Ishmael, once an impassioned actor in Ahab's defiant drama, later a reflective and objective narrator, stands at midpoint between Ahab and Dough-Boy (two extremes) and between Stubb and Starbuck, each off-balance, one mechanically too masculine, the other a Hamlet-like victim of his tendency to debate a conscientious obligation to set right a world that is out of joint. Ishmael, like Queequeg, from whom he learns the value of compromise, is a compound of masculine strength and feminine sympathy. Both Ishmael and Queequeg are ruggedly muscular. Like Jack Chase, "Captain of the Main-Top"[27] in *White Jacket*, Ishmael is not in the least effeminate. He is thoughtful, intelligent, ironic, and poetic, but he is also an active, robust male, who sets out on a whaling voyage with his eyes open, and who becomes involved in the rugged business of pulling an oar in a whaleboat, and participates in all the strenuous activity of catching and trying out whales. We follow his thought-stream without having to wince at sentimental self-pity or morbidity. One of his saving graces is his ironic sense of humour, which prevents the first chapter "Loomings" from degenerating into pathos, despite the fact that its main subject is introspective hypochondria. Pathos cannot survive the good humour of a narrator who undermines pomposity by adopting a vehicle of slang ("whenever my hypos get the upper hand;" and "who aint a slave?"); who ridicules himself by mock heroic analogy to the plight of Cato and the ancient Egyptians; who pokes fun at his family tree in sly

reference to "The Van Rensselaers, or Randolphs, or Hardicanutes" (read, the Ganssevoorts and the Melvilles); and who even risks a Rabelaisian joke about keeping out of winds from astern after you've eaten beans.[28]

Likewise, Chapter 94 "A Squeeze of the Hand" is both sexual ("Squeeze these lumps", discharge all their opulence like fully ripe grapes," "I forget all about our horrible oath; in that inexpressible sperm" — 414) and altruistic ("Why should we longer cherish any social acerbities?" — 414), but is kept from sentimentality by the ironic tone which laughs at sentimentality instead of exploiting it: "Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did this avocation beget; that at last I was continually squeezing their hands, and looking up into their eyes sentimentally. ...I saw long rows of angels in paradise, each with his hands in a jar of spermaceti." (414-415)

From the first, the comradeship of Ishmael and Queequeg was described in sexual imagery. Where Ahab withdrew from Pip, Ishmael, after an interval of caution over sleeping with a naked cannibal, accepted gladly Queequeg's friendship. The chapters describing their induction into comradeship are loaded with imagery of the marriage bed. Their bed in the Spouter inn is the one the landlord and his bride slept in "the night we were spliced." (18) Queequeg's wooden idol is "a curious little deformed image ...exactly the color of a three days' old Congo baby." (22) When Queequeg first found Ishmael in his bed, "he began feeling me." (23) In the morning when Ishmael woke up, "I found Queequeg's arm thrown over me in the most loving and affectionate manner. You had almost thought I were his wife... Queequeg was hugging me." (26) It is unnecessary to specify every detail of imagery familiar to all readers. British editors of the first edition found some of this imagery too suggestive and omitted certain words (placed here in italics): "his *bridegroom* clasp" (26) : "the unbecomingness of hugging a fellow male in that *matrimonial* sort of style" (27) : and "*in our heart's honeymoon*" (52) [29]

Ishmael-Melville's good humour, his irony, and even his naivety prevent such passages from becoming maudlin or effeminate. Both Ishmael and Queequeg are too forthrightly masculine for them

to become the butt of readers' jokes. Yet, their compassion, love and sympathy are candidly revealed. The symbolism joins masculine and feminine in a robust, yet loving compound. In the succeeding narrative this imagery is mined.

Queequeg is one of Melville's favourite characters. A man on a quest, like all the heroes of all the early novels (Tommo, Taji, Babbalanja, Redburn, Ishmael, White-Jacket, Pierre), Queequeg dramatizes the meaning of his quest. He left Kokovoko to seek among Christians "the arts whereby to make his people still happier than they were," (55) and he was forever puzzled by the lack of charity among his Christian comrades. One of his first acts after meeting Ishmael was to risk his life to save an insolent country bumpkin who fell overboard from the Nantucket ferryboat. He risked his life again to rescue Tashtego from the case of a sinking whale. And, of course, it was his coffin that saved the life of Ishmael. Queequeg is a symbol for the life-giver, as Ahab is the symbol for the destroyer.

From Queequeg – from the "friendly and flowing savage"[30] — Ishmael learned forbearance and love, which made it possible for him to look at Ahab with understanding and pity, while at the same time he dissociated himself more and more from the prideful object of Ahab's quest. In this way, Ishmael the symbolic mean between extremes, is a Melville hero and spokesman. His eyes see Ahab as "monomaniac" and "crazy." Ishmael knows the horror of life — "Oh, horrible vultureism of earth!" (307), yet he keeps his poise. In Chapter 96 "The Try-Works" he stands in darkness at the helm, guiding the "rushing Pequod, freighted with savages, laden with fire, and burning a corpse..." (421) It is a hell-ship, and the "Tartarean shapes of the pagan harpooneers" are presiding fiends. Yet Ishmael stands apart : "in darkness myself, I but the better saw the redness, the madness, the ghastliness of others" (421) His descent into hell is made complete when he falls into a "brief, standing sleep" and wakes "...turned...about...fronting the ship's stern, with my back to her prow and the compass. ...Uppermost was the impression that whatever swift, rushing thing I stood on was not so much bound to any haven ahead as rushing from all havens astern." (421) He wakes to discover his error and to prevent the ship from capsizing. Like a ritual hero returning from a

decent into hell, Ishmael comes through this experience purified, more mature, stronger. He warns his reader against courting hellfire, as Ahab has done, lest the light of the true sun be blotted out.[31] While the hell journey matures Ishmael and teaches him the pervasive tragedy of life, too much confrontation of tragedy would "Invert thee, deaden thee; as for a time it did me. There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness." (422-3) There follows the parable of the Catskill eagle that dives "into the blackest gorges...yet in his lowest swoop...is still higher than other birds upon the plain, even though they soar." (423) Captain Boomer, like Ishmael, was borne "down to Hell's flames" (436), where he saw the vision of evil, yet returned into the light of sun and sanity. Ahab, while he knows that Boomer is right, cannot return from hell : "What is best let alone, that accursed thing is not always what least allures. He's all magnet." (439)

In his capacity of hero, interpreter, compromiser, Ishmael delivers the sermons on the blanket, the Catskill eagle, and the squeeze of the hand : "I perceive that in all cases man must eventually lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country..." (415)[32] His descent into hell is parallel to the two episodes where he returns from the dead : (1) when the whaleboat is picked up again after having been lost all night after the first lowering, and (2) when Queequeg's coffin saves him after the total destruction of the *Pequod* and the rest of the crew. After the first of these resurrections, Ishmael likened himself to the resurrected Lazarus : "...a stone was rolled away from my heart... I survived myself; my death and burial were locked up in my chest. I looked round me tranquily and contentedly, like a quiet ghost with a clean conscience sitting inside the bars of a snug family vault." (227)[33] His second rescue, as told in the brief epilogue, leaves him the heir of all the wisdom extracted from the *Pequod*'s voyage. To Ishmael's insight, to his sanity, his humanistic vision, the reader owes the book. It is hard now to imagine what must have been the utterly tragic effect of the British editions of 1851 and 1853, in which the epilogue was left out.[34]

Nevertheless, it is perhaps too simple to sketch this Aristotelian parable of Ishmael the compromising humanist, the mean between extremes. The parable may have had a great attraction for Melville, but is it the final, or only, word ? Interestingly, Ahab himself – with that aptitude for self-scrutiny already noticed, yet with obstinate defiance – gives the novel's most eloquent testimony to humanism. The passage is in "The Symphony" after the sexual imagery of the opening paragraphs. Ahab, talking to Starbuck, reminisces over his fifty–eight years, including his forty years[35] in the "Guinea-coast slavery of solitary command !'" (534) Once more he repudiates his "humanities," pushing aside the thought of his "young girl-wife": "'...old Ahab has furiously, foamingly chased his prey – more a demon than a man! — aye, aye! what a forty years' fool – fool – old fool, has old Ahab been! ...I feel deadly faint, bowed, and humped, as though I were Adam, staggering beneath the piled centuries since Paradise.'" (533)[36] Ahab, commanding Starbuck to stay on board ship, knows where sanity lies : "Close! stand close to me, Starbuck; let me look into a human eye : it is better than to gaze into sea or sky : better than to gaze upon God. By the green land; by the bright hearth-stone! this is the magic glass, man...'" (535)

There are two quests in *Moby-Dick*, leading to two goals. Both are anticipated in the quests of Melville's earlier novels. At the end of *Omoo*, Dr. Long Ghost remains behind in port, a compromiser, while the nameless narrator (*Typee*'s Tommo) sets out on another quest. At the end of *Mardi*, Babbalanja finds a haven in the earthly utopia, Serenia, while Taji continues his search for an unearthly ideal.[37] Ahab is Taji : "'...against all natural lovings and longings, I do keep pushing, and crowding, and jamming myself on all the time; recklessly making me ready to do what in my own proper, natural heart, I durst not so much as dare.'" (536)

Ahab's vision of evil is so pervasive and profound that he concludes that a man becomes human only by repudiating his sanity and his comfort, flinging himself doomed but defiant – hence a soul – against the merciless forces of the universe. It is part of Ahab's glory that he understands the attractiveness of the "magic

glass, man," which can phenomenologically reflect and give meaning to the void around it, and by teaching man to compromise, bring him to adapt himself to living in the void without challenging it. This attraction is what Ahab renounces.

It is part of Ishmael's wisdom that he understands Ahab and yet cannot be Ahab. Ishmael, the interpreter, in whom there is a counterpoise of masculine and feminine, is possibly the ideal man as Melville would like to conceive him. But under this attractive portrait there is a caution : Ishmael cannot be wholly unaware of the terribleness of the death's head portrait of himself as a resurrected Lazarus : "a quiet ghost with a clear conscience sitting beside the bars of a snug family vault." (227) If the feminine counterpoise leads at last to the sensibility which interprets, measures, cautions, survives at all odds, and to the careful family man, husband and father, "a quiet ghost with a clear conscience," is such a survival soul-satisfying? No wonder the hyena grins and laughs if man's choices are so equally grim.

Ahab's decision is clear. All masculine defiance, when he believes it is within his power to destroy evil, he strikes.[38] Defeated he carries defiance beyond his last hope : "'Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee, thou damned whale!'" (565)

Aristotelian and Platonic imagery are regarded with equal seriousness in *Moby-Dick*.[39] A symbolic equivalent for Aristotelian imagery of counterpoise and compromise is given as Melville's contribution to the argument for man's capacity to exercise a limited control within a diabolical environment. Prevented from absolute self-government, he can salvage something from the conflict between his will and destructive natural forces. Such a compromise seems to underlie the Babbalanja theme and the Media theme of *Mardi*, the horological theme of *Pierre*, and the pragmatism of Ishmael. Yet, Melville was constantly pulled from this attractive argument toward the defiance of Taji and Pierre and

Ahab, all demonic seekers sacrificing their lives to prove human nature, as if to be human is to defy the inhumanity of the rest of the universe.

Melville's ambiguity is basic and genuine, never shallow or merely literary. He does not erect straw men, or one real and one straw man. Ishmael and Ahab are equally honorable. Like Ishmael, many Melville heroes (Tommo, Redburn, Taji, Jack Chase, Pierre, Clarel, Vine, Billy Budd) combine masculine and feminine characteristics in almost Lawrentian terms—so many that it would be defensible to argue that in such an Aristotelian balance his deepest allegiance lies. On the other hand, the martyrdom of Taji is a masculine gesture (in spite of feminine qualities in his temperature), as is the defiant suicide of Pierre, and the self-immolation of Ahab. Even two of the most feminine Melville characters – Bartleby and Billy Budd[40] – are victims, destroyed by malevolence of an essentially destructive society. So there is finally paradox. The human ideal is a mingling of masculine and feminine. But as Ahab (and in *Moby-Dick*) Melville see it, the brute forces of the universe (reflected in human societies) seem uncompromisingly masculine. Therefore, it must be the destiny of some men, against over-powering odds, to become moral brakes (in Thoreau's vocabulary) against injustice – counter force against force. Thus Ahab against Moby Dick, as Ahab sees the whale.

Melville-Ishmael, the interpreter, wavers. If there are no absolute forces in the universe, relative forces, are what men must creatively mould. From another perspective, even relative forces can seem so gigantically stacked against man that the effect is of an opposing absolute. "The magic glass, man" creating his own values is forced to acknowledge that his power is infinitesimal. Acknowledging this, he delivers himself over to a gigantic antagonist; his choices are submission or defiance.

To return for a moment to the imagery of the opening paragraphs of "The Symphony" -- while there is in those paragraphs a mingling of masculine and feminine imagery in Aristotelian terms, there is also the Platonic image of an absolute godhead presiding over the scene : "Aloft, like a royal czar and king, the sun seemed

giving this gentle air to this bold and smiling sea..." This is, finally, Ahab's vision, for the sun, here benevolent, can also be a malevolent symbol of absolute tyranny : "I'd strike the sun if it insulted me.'" (162)

A true reading of Ishmael seems to be that, attracted as he is toward the idea of equipoise, moderation, common sense, he, like the reader, is filled with horror and admiration for Ahab's profound vision of a relentless antagonist who brays victims in a mortar. The total vision of *Moby-Dick* becomes paradoxical. Relativism and compromise, which deny the possibility of a pure ideal, become the goal for man, a made virtually unproductive and impractical because of the realities of a chaotic universe. So, the moral centre wickedly shifts. Ishmael, Melville's ideal human being, attracted toward a gospel of sympathy and love and moderation, stands back to marvel at Ahab - who pits himself barehanded against terrible forces of destruction, and who serves as an awful example that, given our surrounding element of chaos, a brave way to be human is to assert independence and defiance—quietly like Bartleby, or with Promethean glory, like Ahab.

One need not, at least, be a pawn of the Establishment like Starbuck. Vere, Captain Delano, and the lawyer for John Jacob Astor in *Bartleby*. All these are good men but not very good men. Pious, diligent earners, they conform to a Protestant/Catholic/Judaic ethic that elevates business and conformity. Melville doesn't like any of them very much. It is notable that none of them glows with sexual vitality of the kind that illuminates his heroes. Pale servants of an acquisitive society are not agreeable to Melville, who requires a passionate dedication to humanity not a dedication to the virtues admired in Western societies whose graces are founded on capital and commerce.

## Notes

1 All references are to *Moby-Dick*, Hendricks House, 1952, Luther S.Mansfield and Howard P. Vincent. A recent treatment of the moral centre is Joyce Sparer Adler's in her chapter "Moby-Dick as Symbolic Poem of War and Peace" in *War in Melville's Imagination* (New York University Press, 1981), where she considers not Ahab or Ishmael but the whale to be the centre - an emblem of "all-inclusive, endless, evanescent, never all-knowable life" (61), the antagonist of Melville's warped psyche. Mrs. Adler's effort to move the moral argument beyond human rationalism can hardly deny that in Melville's clash between Ahab and Moby Dick the whale is personified, the universe pictured as anthropomorphic.

2 To provide points of reference, I cite a few of countless examples of symbols with sexual overtones in *Moby-Dick* :

*Feminine Imagery* -- gentleness, softness, mildness :

1. "Ahab did, in the end, a little respond to the playful, allurings of that girlish air." (122)
2. "...to an fro I idly swayed in what seemed an enchanted air." (202)
3. "Beneath the unclouded and mild azure sky, upon the fair face of the pleasant sea, wafted by the jayous breezes, that great mass of death floats on and on..." (307)
4. "And how nobly it raises our conceit of the mighty, misty monster, to behold him solemnly sailing through a calm, tropical sea, his vast, mild head overhung by a canopy of vapor...and that vapor...glorified by a rainbow, as if Heaven itself had put its seal upon his thoughts." (372)
5. "And whatever they may reveal of the divine love in the Son, the soft, curled, hermaphroditical Italian pictures, in which his idea has been most successfully embodied, these pictures, so destitute as they are of all brawniness, hint nothing of any power, but the mere negative, feminine one of submission and endurance..." (373)
6. "For, suspended in those watery vaults, floated the forms of the nursing mothers of the whales, and those that by their enormous girth seemed shortly to become mothers." (386)
7. "But even so, amid the tornadoed Atlantic of my being, do I myself still for ever centrally disport in mute calm; and while ponderous planets of unwaning woe revolve round me, deep down and deep inland there I still bathe me in eternal mildness of joy." (387)
8. "A gentle joyousness -- a mighty mildness of repose in swiftness, invested the gliding whale." (539)

*Masculine Imagery* -- brutality, force, strength :

1. "Consider the subtleness of the sea; how its most dreaded creatures glide under the water, unapparent for the most part, and treacherously hidden beheath the loveliest tints of azure. ...Consider once more, the universal cannibalism of the sea..." (274) A mingling of feminine and masculine is revealed, for Melville here makes the sea female though hard : "Like a savage tigress...so the sea." (274)

2. "...thousands on thousands of sharks, swarming round the dead leviathan, smackingly feasted on its fatness." (291)

3. "...a shocking, sharkish business enough for all parties..." (292)

4. "Cannibals? who is not a cannibal?"(299)

5. "Oh, horrible vultureism of earth! from which not the mightiest whale is free." (307)

6. "When Angelo paints even God the Father in human form, mark what robustness is there." (373)

7. Chapter 95, "The Cassock": "Look at the sailor, called the mincer, who now comes along, and assisted by two allies, heavily backs the grandissimus, as the mariners call it, and with bowed shoulders, staggers off with it as if he were a grenadier carrying a dead comrade from the field." (417)

8. "But suddenly as he peered down and down into its depths, he profoundly saw a white living spot no bigger than a white weasel, with wonderful celerity uprising, and magnifying as it rose, till it turned, and then there were plainly revealed two long crooked rows of white, glistening teeth, floating up from the undiscoverable bottom. It was Moby Dick's open mouth and scrolled jaw; his vast shadowed bulk still blending with the blue of the sea." (540)

[3] From the title essay of *Mosses from an Old Manse*, reviewed in 1850 by Melville posing as "a Virginian Spending July in Vermont."

[4]. For analogy, see Captain Vere, instructing his drumhead court on the sentencing of Billy Budd : "The heart, sometimes the feminine in man, must here be ruled out."

[5] See the ironic commentary on Platonism (as ironic as John Crowe Ransom's in "Poetry : a Note in Qntology") at the end of Chapter 75, "The Right Whale's Head," where materialistic and idealistic opposites are balanced against each other in the image of the Pequod, carrying on one side the right whale's head, on the other, the head of the sperm whale : "This Right Whale I take it to have been a Stoic; the Sperm whale, a Platonian, who might have taken up Spinoza in his later years." (334) Three chapters farther on, at the end of chapter 78, "Cistern and Buckets," Melville comments again on Platonism, in wry speculation about the fate of Tashtego if Queequeg had not rescued him from the sperm whale's cistern into which he had fallen head first : "How many, think ye, have likewise fallen into Plato's honey head, and sweetly perished there ?" (343) Toward the end of chapter 101, "The Decanters," occurs a third mockery : "At the time, I devoted three days to the studious digesting of all this beer, beef, and bread, during which many profound thoughts were incidentally suggested to me, capable of a transcendental and Platonic application..." (443-44)

[6] Melville's method here is different from that in his poem "The Maldive Shark," where he does set up a Platonic opposition between perfect innocence ("The sleek little pilot-fish, azure and slim") and absolute evil ("Pale ravener of horrible meat"). Although in the poem there is collaboration between gentleness and brute force, the effect is grimly ironic, for the aim is not to achieve balance but to reduce gentleness to a slave.

[7] "So then it seems every one possessed of skill avoids excess and defect, but seeks for and chooses the mean, not the absolute but the relative." And : "We ought also to take into consideration our own natural bias; which varies in each man's case, and will be ascertained from the pleasure and pain arising in us. Furthermore,

we should force ourselves off in the contrary direction, because we shall find ourselves in the mean after we have removed ourselves far from the wrong side, exactly as men do in straightening bent timber." Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*, Everyman, 1942, 34-5; 42.

[8] See also :

1. "Supreme lord and dictator" (119)
2. "Ahab was inaccessible." (150)
3. "'There is one God, that is Lord over the earth, and one Captain that is Lord over the Pequod. (471)
4. "'Ahab stands alone.'" (545)

[9] "What business have I with his pipe? This pipe? This thing that is meant for sereneness... I'll smoke no more.'" (126)

[10] "Lad, lad, I tell thee thou must not follow Ahab, now, ...There is that in thee, poor lad, which I feel too curing to my malady. If thou speakest thus to me much more, Ahab's purpose keeps up in him. I tell thee no; it cannot be. ..And now I quit thee.'" (525)

[11] "'No, no; stay on board, on board. - lower not when I do; when branded Ahab gives chase to Moby Dick.'" (535)

[12] Ahab has disregarded his usual "considerating touch of humanity." (124)

[13] "'But come closer, Starbuck; thou requirest a little lower layer.'" (161)

[14] See the three blasphemous ceremonies, when the crew are made to celebrate with him a ritual of revenge :

1. The end of chapter 36, "The Quarter-Deck," where he forces the crew to join in a toast drunk in the brimming sockets of harpoon heads. (163-64)
2. The end of chapter 113, "The Forge," where he tempers in blood the harpoon head, hand-forged for taking Moby Dick. (484)
3. Chapter 119, "The Candles," where, with his feet on the Parsee, he worships the spirit of fire by flinging out his counter challenge : "I know now that thy right worship is defiance.'" (500)

[15] In chapter 36, "The Quarter-Deck," Ahab vilifies Moby Dick : "'...it was that accursed white whale that razed me'" (160), and "I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it." (162) In chapter 38, "Dusk" Starbuck interprets the whale as Ahab has expounded its meaning to the crew : the crew have been persuaded, Starbuck complains, that Moby Dick is demogorgon, an infernal deity associated with Chaos and Night (*Paradise Lost* II, 965; *Moby-Dick*, 689-90), or it is the gnostic Demiurge, a god or creator representing the evil principle : "'The white whale is their demigorgon, Hark the infernal orgies!'" (167)

[16] For example, see 181, 182 (three times), 184, 196, 198, 290, 421, 427, 460, 541.

[17] In *Billy Budd*, likewise, the surgeon wondered if Vere were "insane."

[18] It is the "wretched infidel," refusing to wear coloured and colouring glasses" (194), who is appalled by whiteness, seeing in it only "the monumental white shroud" (194), which is a projection of "the subtle insanity of Ahab respecting Moby Dick." (210)

[19] *The Portable Melville*, Viking, 1952, 311.

[20] "Dough-Body, the steward, thrusting his pale loaf-of-bread face from the cabin-scuttle, announced dinner to his lord and master." (145)

[21] "So feminine his passionate mood/Which, long as hungering unfed,/All else rejected or withstood..." *Clarel*, Melville *Works*, Standard Edition, London, 1924, Vol. XIV, 287.

[22] In chapter 93, "The Castaway," Dough-Boy and Pip are to some extent equated : "In outer aspect, Pip and Dough-Boy made a match..." (410)

[23] Pip's petition confirms Ahab's notion that he ought to guard against becoming dependent on Pip : "'...do ye but use poor me as your one lost leg ; only tread upon me, Sir; I ask no more, so I remain a part of ye.'" (525)

[24] "'So, to my fond faith, poor Pip, in this strange sweetness of his lunacy, brings heavenly vouchers of all our heavenly homes.'" (476)

[25] Ahab confesses his guilt for having usurped power :

"I am madness maddened. ...The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails." (166)

"'my motive and my object mad'" (183)

The narrator comments on his captain's betrayal of the interests of stockholders :

"Had any one of his old acquaintances on shore but half dreamed of what was lurking in him then, how soon would their aghast and righteous souls have wrenched the ship from such a fiendish man! They were bent on profitable cruises... He was intent on an audacious, immitigable, and supernatural revenges." (184)

[26] The last phrase is reflected in Pip's comment on his own cowardice, "shame upon all cowards'" (476), spoken in the presence of Starbuck, and reflected again in another comment by Pip when Ahab takes leave of him for the last time : "'Let's drink shame upon all cowards!'" (526)

[27] Dedication to *Billy Budd*.

[28] "...never violate the Pythagorean maxim" (599)

[29] See Hendricks House Ed., (624)

[30] Whitman, *Song of Myself*, Section 39.

[31] "Look not too long in the face of the fire, O man." (422)

[32] See also : "...in the port is safety, comfort, hearthstone, supper, warm blankets, friends, all that's kind to our mortalities." (105)

[33] See Hendricks House Ed. : "Ishmael has come to terms with his environment as his great captain could never do." (736)

[34] Hendricks House Ed. (831)

[35] "'I struck my first whale -- a boy harpooneer of eighteen! Forty -- forty -- forty years ago!'" (534)

[36] An echo of an earlier passage, where the search for the origin of man's evil is also carried back to Adam, the father of all and first sinner : "...far beneath the fantastic towers of man's upper earth, his root of grandeur, his awful essence, sits in bearded state; an antique buried beneath antiquities, and throned on torsos; So with a broken throne, the great gods mock that captive king; so like a Caryatid, he patient sits, upholding on his frozen brow the piled entablatures of ages. Wind ye down there, ye prouder, sadder souls! question that proud, sad

king! A family likeness! aye, he did beget ye, ye young exiled royalties; and from your grim sire only will the old State-secret come." (183)

[37] Media enters upon a third quest -- whose meaning is symbolized in his name; neither the static ideal of earthly paradise, nor the demonic ideal of self-immolation in pursuit of an unearthly vision propels Media, who sets out at the end of the novel to redeem and reform his imperfect kingdom.

[38] "'I'd strike the sun if it insulted me.'"

"'I will dismember my dismemberer.'" (166)

"He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it." (181)

[39] Note 5, above, gave examples of ironic comments on Platonism. Melville is as capable of dealing ironically with the formal aspects of Aristotelianism. In the image of the *Pequod* with the right whale's head on one side and the sperm whale's head on the other, he appears to ridicule the Aristotelian notion of compromise : "So, when on one side you hoist in Locke's head, you go over that way; but now, on the other side, hoist in Kant's and you come back again; but in very poor plight. Thus some minds for ever keep trimming boat. Oh, ye foolish! throw all these thunder-heads overboard, and then you will float light and right." (326) In these sallies, Melville is not so much ridiculing the philosophies of idealism or rationalism as he is making fun of the windiness and abstraction of formal philosophy. Like William James, he might have been attracted toward the down-to-earth practicality of pragmatism.

[40] Billy - like Tommo, Jack Chase, Ishmael - is by no means effiminate.

*Charu Sheel Singh*

# PERFORMATIVE (DIS)FIGURATION IN KENNETH BURKE'S THEORY OF POETRY

The importance of Kenneth Burke as a literary theorist is immense. The reason is simple enough : he goes back to primitive religion and ritual to find vital sources for the evocation of poetic metaphor in the psyche and the being of the poet. Burke holds that language has a magical quality since it evokes certain presences and names them. "What we may need is correct magic, magic whose decree about the naming of real situations is the closest possible approximation to the situation named."[1] There are three ingredients which Burke discovers in a given utterance : the spell, the counter-spell and the curse. In religion it would correspond to the prayer, the indictment, and the invective. In dream it would correspond to the dream, the dream-gone-sour, and the nightmare.

Burke's poem is a poem as symbolic act, and the act is the thing poetry is chiefly constituted of. Burke offers three sub-divisions of the act in poetry : dream, prayer and spell. The dream constitutes the unconscious or the subconscious factors in a poem; the prayer is the communicative aspect, while the spell is the whole lot of "little commands" as Burke says - "each work pulling us in a different direction and these directions tending to cancel off one another, as with the conflicting interests of a parliament."[2] Burke takes the body - the human body itself - as a vital component of the medium of the Infinite Poem. The body enacts the dancing of an attitude which the poem is. Burke's tremendous appeal as a theorist lies primarily in this that he *involves* human organism with poetic constituents to form the symbolic act of his poem. One can very easily remember Lord Siva dancing *tandava* (the dance of death) with his one leg up and hands thrown in the air in two different directions. It will be seen that body-movements work in tune with particular sounds to evoke particular effects. Burke's insights are sound indeed, but there is more in classical performing arts that needs to be exploited by a literary theorist. Burke, however, has recourse to psychology when he says that "the whole

body may finally become involved, in ways suggested by the doctrines of behaviourism."[3] Further, Burke cites Sir Richard Piaget's theory of speech as gesture which involves the selection of words on the basis of tonality. The example he gives is that of a man in the act of gripping. Gripping involves not merely hands but the lips and other muscles as well. A man, asked to utter something in the posture of gripping, can only utter *M . M* — therefore is the proper tonality of the act of gripping. Burke rightly points out that the relationship involved here is not an onomatopoetic one between sound and sense, but between the visual design and its auditory vibrations.

Piaget's attempt is commendable. J.L.Austin and John R. Searle's theories of the word as act have brought about a dynamism to language that was visible earlier only in primitive rites and forms of magic. Searle's hypothesis is simple enough : "...speaking a language is performing speech acts, acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, and so on; and, more abstractly, acts such as referring and predicating; and, secondly, that these acts are in general made possible by and are performed in accordance with certain rules for the use of linguistic elements."[4] A general objection ordinarily put to Searle's theory is that he assumes the priority and pre-givenness of language rules and assigns speech acts only a secondary importance. Speech acts function only within a given framework which does not allow them to break the boundaries of determinacy. It might be argued in defence of determinacy theory that outside determinacy it is all chaos and unintelligibility in expression; however, a language theory, as I believe, which limits the expressional element to codified rules instead of evolving speech in the form of acts, only serves as a deterrent to speech-acts. Simultaneously, there is no valid ground to suppose that all speech-acts, uttered with language-rules in the background, will fall outside the boundaries of grammar and intelligibility. Rules are formed in any language-speaker in the initial stages of its use by him, and the point of disagreement with Searle is precisely this that when creative imagination, at the time of imagining something creatively, is told that such are the rules by which it has to function, it may deaden into rational speech as opposed to poetically creative

discourse. But Searle might be defended for he is not talking exclusively of poetic discourse. He believes that a proper study of language is its *langue* whereas he is concerned only with its *parole*, expressive part. This is how Searle clarifies his position :

> It might be objected to this approach that such a study deals only with the point of intersection of a theory of language and a theory of action. But my reply to that would be that if my conception of language is correct, a theory of language is part of a theory of action, simply because speaking is a rule-governed form of behaviour. Now, being rule-governed, it has formal features which admit of independent study. But a study purely of those formal features, without a study of their role in speech acts, would be like a formal study of the currency and credit systems of economics without a study of the role of currency and credit in economic transactions.[5]

It would appear from the above that Searle is for a study which simultaneously takes into account the performative and theorectical aspects of language. But my point is that intense creative imagination does involve a dialectic tension between what it utters in time and what theoretical rules will permit it to utter. In a theory-oriented view of language, historical antecedents constrict this play of signifiers, while, as Burke says, when writers have freedom from history, and there is nc danger of historical accidents complicating the process of mimesis, words can surely be used in their intense metaphoricity.

Motives are another name for situations and both play a central role in the poem as the symbolic act. Various motives and situations combine to form a net of inter-relationships, of which the poet is not always conscious. Obviously, the poet is not an autocrat who has all the meanings of language at his command. The uttered always defies the poet's intentional meaning. When such relationships have developed dialectic tensions, there is a ritual which the poem enacts. The social sphere constitutes situations and acts while there is another world of mere stimulus-response relationships. Burke says : "The general perspective that Is interwoven with our methodology of analysis might be summarily characterised as a *theory of drama*. We propose to take *ritual drama* as the Ur-form, the 'hub,' with all other aspects of human action treated as spokes radiating from this hub."[6]

Burke's methodology, then, involves physical science and social sciences. The former form the background, while the

latter the action of the poem. Burke calls the former a "calculus of events," the latter a "calculus of acts." The error of the social sciences has been that they have tried to appropriate the map of action to the scenic calculus. One might understand Burke when he calls the role of mechanistic (physical) sciences as a scenic calculus. But the problem arises when he also calls it a calculus of events for events cannot be visualised without action and action, by its very nature, also creates an *event* of its occurrence. Burke's position does not seem to be very convincing. He says that "there is an interaction between scene and role. Hence, dramatic criticism takes us into areas that involve the act as 'response' to the scene."[7] Burke's division of the world into a scenic one and the other responding to this scene to create an act, contradicts a more plausible view which will hold that the scene itself is a form of act which is preceded by rituals that the history has already enacted, and which are submerged into the bosom of the scene. It is also not proper to take scene (as an stimulant to dramatic action) as purely mechanical or physical. It is only when the scene is visualised as an act that it can create an anti-act or its companion act. Giving it a non-human character would only take us into the world of Blake's Tharmas, who, in order to be creative, spreads water all over, which is all he can do in order to be creative. A physical scene will most likely give stimulus only to a physical act. But Burke says; "an ideal calculus for charting this physical realm must treat it as life-less (in the idiom of mechanistic determinism)."[8]

If Burke is trying to evolve a dialectic in order to create a tensional poetics, the dialectic is not to be found precisely in the human versus the mechanistic; it could be found in the human versus the non-human, situation versus the loss of situation, machine versus anti-machine, etc.. Burke comes quite close to reforming his vocabulary but never quite does it. He says : "the realm of the dramatic (hence of dramatic criticism) is neither physicalist nor anti-physicalist, but physicalist-plus."[9]

There is one more important theory in Burke's book under discussion – the theory of the poem as constituting the stages of the dream, the prayer, and the chart. Burke would call any literary artifact a poem which is made up of invention, creation, formation,

and poetic construct. Burke draws heavily on Freud for the first stage. He views the life of man in terms of a dream passing through the stages of childhood, youth, old age and rebirth. Even civilization has its own dreams - those of Hegel-Marx and Freud, for example. All these dreams create their own circle of freedom and confinement through which man satisfies his many-sided quest. Freud's notion of foetus as a world within a world enlarges possibilities of the poetic metaphor. "It is in the study of the poem as dream that we find revealed the ways in which the poetic organization takes shape under these necessities"[10] Dream, in fact, is a recurrent motif in many religions, and it is surprising why Burke should have been overawed by Freud for this and many other concepts.[11]

Burke borrows from Freud two categories - "condensation" and "displacement" for the analysis of the poem as dream. Burke interprets the two : "Condensation, we might say, deals with the respects in which house in a dream may be more than house, or house plus. And displacement deals with the way in which house may be other than house, or house minus."[12] Condensation would imply synecdochic representation, and Burke considers all art to be synecdochic. He refers to the god-function in metaphysics, or for instance, the concept of Logos, which is a summation of all other functions. Synecdoche plays such a god-role in art. In a curious blending of Freud with an overview of the shaping forces of civilization, Burke strikes at the idea of the poem as utterance :

> The necessary function of the Freudian secular confessional, as a preparatory step to redemption, gave further strength to the same picture. Add the 'complex in terms of the simple' strategy (with its variants - higher in terms of lower, normal as a mere attenuation of the abnormal, civilized as the primitive sublimated); add the war of the generations. Or (as those who hated the idea of class war took in its stead either the war of the generations or the war of the sexes)- and you get a picture that almost automatically places the emphasis upon art as utterance, as the naming of one's number, as a blurting out, as catharsis by secretion.[13]

Burke understands psyche and prayer both as communion and communication. The prayer's most vital aspect is incantation which takes us into the world of rhetoric. The prayer would examine the use of formal devices, ways of fulfilling expectations, "in short, all that falls within the sphere

of incantation, imprecation, exhortation, inducement, weaving and releasing of spells; matters of style and form, of meter and rhythm, as contributing to these results..."[14] The gestural aspect is somewhat subordinated to the choice of proper vowels or consonants to carry the appropriate gesture properly. By chart, Burke means poetic diction. "Except that his (poet's) way of defining the word is not to use purely conceptual terms, as in a formal directory, but to show how his vision behaves, with appropriate attitudes."[15] These three, the dream, the prayer, the chart, are to be taken as methodological tools for the analysis of poems and they are not exactly to be found in poems as such.

Dialectic is inevitable in any form of tensional poetics or dramatic criticism as Burke calls it. Published after *The Philosophy of Literary Form, A Grammar of Motives* is a study of agents and their motives. Here Burke develops an important concept of "dialectic substance," which has ironical implications : "For it derives its character from the systematic contemplation of the antinomies attendant upon the fact that we necessarily define a thing in terms of something else. 'Dialectic substance' would thus be the over-all category of dramatism, which treats of human motives in the terms of verbal action."[26] Burke's concept of the symbolic action is not confined to external nature only. There is an internal nature which is made up of cultural accretions in men as agents. This gives the external nature its dialectic counter-part. Since a poem is always, though not exclusively, a dialectic in terms of its shifting metaphors and images which hide vital motives the reader gets the opportunity of contemplating over the subject from the standpoint of various objects. As Burke says that "In a more restricted sense, however, the dialectical considers things in terms not of *some* other, but of *the* other."[17]

The basic dialectic is the Heideggerian Being versus Non-Being which ultimately transcends the material existence into the Oneness (of God) and even goes beyond it. However, one may not entirely agree with Burke when he equates Hegelian pure Baing (Idea?) with the concept of Non-Being as abstract Oneness. And quick comes Aristotle's "pure Act" as equivalent to God. Symbolic areas are defined as involving, among others, modes of

transubstantiation and rituals of rebirth, which help the individual identify himself in terms of the collective motive. Expounding his concept of the tragic poetics, Burke draws from the entire European tradition —Hogel, Marx, Leibniz, etc,. Tragedy for Burke is a special kind of dialectical process. The action of the agent represents his character, but the agent's seeing his self in terms of his situation enables him to transcend himself. For this, Burke discovers a parallel in Hegel: "In the Hegelian dialectic, for instance, the series of dyings is presented as a gradual process towards greater and greater self-realization. For spirit has its counterpart in objectification; and by seeing himself in terms of objects, 'from them the individual proceeds to the contemplation of his own inner being'" [18].

There are active and passive aspects to an agent which enable him to move from one mode of self to the other[19]. At the centre of dialectical motivation Burke places the act (Greek poiema), the sufferance or state (Greek pathema), and the thing learned (Greek mathema). Burke formalises this trinity into actus-status pair which he can visualize working on the instants of the Poem's conflict, in history and its development, and even in terms of sociology. The movement from actus to status could mean *class* substance also. The dialectical difference would arise out of different occupational acts corresponding to different social status. To get closer to Burke's argument, we should remember that things are reduced to acts, and individual motives to universal motives, which, in turn, are imagined as substances. Myths, gods, heroes, apart from being what they are, are acts and motives without which their indentity cannot be established. Mind-Body, Being-Nothing, and Action-passion are the chief pairs of Burke's theory of dialectic substance. The first pair can easily be reduced to materialist or idealist notions. The second pair is more generally known as essence-existence. In Plato, reality is in being and the appearance in existence. The pair could also be taken to mean *becoming* and *having-become*. Burke keeps the interpretative possibilities of his model pair open: "In any given work, the pairs usually merge and divide in many ways, depending upon the particular interests that set the course for that given work. And once you have localised a form,

the requirements of this particularised logic come to the fore." [20]

It should, however, be clarified that Burke would not like the mind-body pair to correspond exactly with a given state in consciousness to a given physical state. He rather imagines the existence of two concentric circles – one the smaller (of matter), the other the larger (of consciousness). Burke might have learnt this from Coleridge for whom "understanding" is a narrower term than the "reason." Burke surprisingly does not mention Blake, who, under "reason" derogatively associated the "infernal trinity" of Bacon. Newton and Locke, who form the Anti-Christ. Understanding in Blake is the better aspect of reason but it is below his highest category "Imagination." The concept of the transcendence of dialectic in Burke obviously has is roots in the idealistic philosophies of Kant and Santayana. The dialectic, when in its utmost crisis stage, gives birth to a new motive which proves crucial for transcendence.

As opposed to all notions of the trnscendence of the dialectic, a purely materialist dialectic, as of Marx, is bound to generate one category after another endlessly. Marx inverted Hegelian categories, for in Hegel, dialectical categories necessarily imply historical and individual development, and the *process* as such takes the form of a Spirit, which works as a superagent, always guiding the course of the events of history in its march towards the "pure Idea." Marxism shifts the changing role from agent to the scene or material conditions. This is, however, vital to understand that dialectical materialism is a philosophy of idealism by implication, in spite of its thoroughly materialist methodology, in its call upon social unification and in its vision of a classless society which always remains a dream. Burke says that the ghost of communism haunts Europe for Marx said that "The history of hitherto all existing society is the history of class-struggles." This was Hegel completely inverted for he had held society and state themselves to be the conditions in which freedom is realised. Marx said that the state serves as means of coercion in which the dominant social class always maintains its status-quo. Burke says: "The entire dialectic thus traces a series of stops whereby each class produces the conditions leading to its overthrow by the class that is to succeed

it, until the proletariat, as the ultimate class, produces conditions that lead to its own dissolution as a class."[21] This last, which does away with the concept of State as such, compels Burke to say that Marxism allies itself with anarchism in its distrust of the State. It would appear, though, that Burke has overlooked the implications of class-struggle, for the proletariat, while creating conditions of its own dissolution, is always *conditioning* other to form their own class in order to replace the proletariat. Though this is not what Marx intended (for he visualised a classless State), but such is the rationale of the dialectic. It can be transcended only when the materialist view is supplemented by a higher mental and spiritual view which should necessarily involve not merely materialist replacement but also spiritual transformation.

The clue could be taken from George Santayana who grounds the spirit materially: "Santayana celebrates in spirit (and its variant, imagination) its ability to transcend the mechanical flux of nature; yet at the same time he stresses its location in animal psyche, which depends upon the conditions of material existence."[22] Santayana's four realms of being are: matter, essence, spirit and truth. The naive looking statement by Santayana that we see what we see implies a naked perception of things in all their nakedness, devoid of illusions about them. Santayana calls essences what we know as appearance and the perception of them as intuition. These essences of Santayana, Burke equates with his concept of the agent.

In consonance with the development of his dialectical and dramatic criticism, Burke studies the cyclical chart of terms in relation to narrative and logical forms, and religion and theology. Burke says, and the moral is drawn from Christianity, that the idea of sacrifice plays a crucial role in the charting of terms and is intrinsic to the idea of order. Burke derives *knowing* and *rest* concepts as important implications from his study of St. Augustine's *Confessions* - especially the last four books. *Knowing*, Burke calls intellectual, and *rest*, purgative or moral. "Thus, Christ would mediate in two senses : from the standpoint of willing in he would mediate as a ransom for men's guilt. This would be mediation in the sense of intercession. From the standpoint of *knowing*, He

would be the principle of mediation between the two realms of nature and the supernatural, time and eternity. The role as ransom would be that of dramatic catharsis. But from the purely dialectical point of view, in His dual nature of both God and Man, Christ would be an ambiguously middle term bringing these two different realms together, by 'translating' back and forth between them."[23]

Christ's mediation could also be taken as signifying the two aspects of language, one dialectical and the other cathartic. However, Christ's sacrifice would succeed sacrificial Pagan religions who annually used to have sacrificial ritual in their religion. The figure of a man who is also a God, is more appropriately Krishna than Christ, for Christ is the son of God; He may be part of God but is not God himself. In the Hindu tradition Krishna serves the mediating purpose well and shows the ways of devotion, duty, purposeful meditation as mediating junctures through which He can ultimately be realised. Krishna's doctrine of "detached attachment" would be taken both as dialectical and as transcending the dialectic.

Burke's central question is this: "If there are two distinct order of terms, and the second is said to emerge out of the first, where the term at which these two orders touch the term that would mark the *principium* of the emergent order?"[24] Burke's answer to this question is : "In terms of narrative and personality, Christianity proposes to solve this dialectical problem by the doctrine of a 'God-Man' as mediator between the two orders. But when this mediatory role is viewed rather from the other side, *as the beginning of the distinction between the* two orders—then the personal, narrative idea of a God-man is replaced by the strictly logical idea of a *first term.* And this temporally first term must nonetheless lie outside the order of 'temporal first'; otherwise it would not belong to the other order, the 'eternal.'"[25]

In the Gita, the dialectic is constituted primarily by a world of Nature (*prakriti*) which is female, and a world of spirit (*Purusha*) which is male, being a part of God. It is only with the conjunction of the two that the world as a visualizing process could be thought of. Even these two, Krishna declares, are not fortuitous but *willed* by Him. When the God-incarnate copulates with Nature, the world comes into being with its

different modes and postures. Krishna as the mediator is both inside and outside the world. Krishna tells Arjuna that He is rightly visualised as present in all things and all things present in Him. But, in spite of this relationship, He transcends the dialectical pairs by his sheer divine powers and mystical insights. Christ, on the other hand, is not a God-Man at one and the same time as Krishna is. Krishna is time and eternity both, and this fact surpasses any amount of the profundity of experience. This dual character and the transcendence of the dialectic gives Hinduism both a world in its multifarious activities in time and a world which is not exactly outside time (as Burke would have it in order to locate his eternal beyond "temporal firsts"),[26] but in it, and yet out of it. This view does not try to locate a beginning for time in order to discover Eternity. Krishna tells Arjuna that the beginnings and ends of the world are not known; what is known is the middle. This middle is precisely the world as time as we are in, and the way out of time is through Blakean "gates" in the human body, the nine gates of the human body as the Vedic verse says,[27] which are also the nine channels to reach beyond time into Eternity.

Burke's reference to St. Augustine who did not say that "God *was* before all time, but that before all time God is" does not really solve the problem since it posits a God who *is* before time but not into it, siting like a monolith, willing to counter dialectic as a fearful devil, and not assimilating it into the ramparts of his being. What is implied by a reference to religions other than Christianity is that had Bruke studied them he would have been in a better position to show the role of mediation in a world governed by dialectics and the devils of relativism. Burke's cycle of terms is three-tier : original sin, sufferance, and redemption. Ultimately, Burke proposes redemption by vicarious atonement [28] where,, after death, the individual passes into the eternal life. This simply establishes the linearity of narrative form and violates Burke's earlier arguments for a dialectical substance, which ultimately culminates in a Hegelian progression towards the Idea. The narrative, however, cannot be continued on the same plane, i.e., linear, but has to be forgotten and dissolved or upgraded to the non-linear level, where things are not in time but manifest time in their imaginative instants

of eternal manifestation. Time, in such a process, is dissolved and culminated into Imagination – the eternity of things where all our eternal lineaments are imprinted. Burke's line of argumont that "The narrative, interpreted theologically, promises an ultimate linear progression to end all linear progressions (as time...ends, and the realm of eternity or 'principles' takes over),[29] implies that the world of time and eternity are existing one after the other, and that where one ends, the other begins. Burke, however, admits that the circularity is intrinsic to the Christian concept of order though the method of narrative is rectilinear.

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6. Burke, Philosophy of Literary Form, p. 103.

7. *Ibid., pp. 114-115.*

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9. Ibid., *p. 116.*

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11. Burke says : "Freud's terminology is a dictionary, a lexicon for charting a vastly complex and hitherto largely uncharted field. You can't refute a dictionary. The only profitable answer to a dictionary is another one." Ibid., p. 272.

12. *Ibid., p. 277.*

13. *Ibid., p. 280-81.*

14. *Ibid., p. 282.*

15. Ibid., p. 283.

16. K. Burke, A Grammer of Motives (N. York : Prentice Hall, Inc. 1945), p. 33.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid., p. 39.*

19. In the Gita Krishna talks of raising the self by the self; self is its own friend, and, likewise, its own enemy.

20. A Grammar of Motives, p. 419.

21. *Ibid., p. 205.*

22. Ibid., p. 218.

23. K. Burke, The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1970). pp. 136-137.

24. Ibid., p. 145.

25. Ibid.

26. Madam Blavatsky says in Isis Unveiled that the Genesis does not begin at the beginning. Seven more creations precede Genesis of the Bible.

27. "A lotus with nine gates enveloped by three strands, -/ In it is a being strange, possessed of self : /That (it is that) knowers of Brahma know;" Atharva Veda, 10. 8.43.

28. See p. 184 in The Rhetoric of Religion.

29. Ibid., p. 223.

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# REVIEWING ENGLISH STUDIES

While resisting the temptation to preface a brief review of a rather odd assortment of three essays on the recent crisis in English studies in the Anglo-American academic world with comments on its implications for the status and role of English in the Indian context, one could at least begin with the reminder that one's exposure to English studies nearly three decades ago had something in its Leavisian mould that could, without distortion of facts, be said to have contained the germs of what in the present critical parlance has come to be called 'theory'. What the Leavisian or New Critical paradigms were opposed to was, among other things, a certain inherited reluctance to move beyond positivism in literary study and the urge to locate such studies within a framework comparable in its certainties to the patterns obtaining in the more rigorous of the social sciences. The older version of historicism and research-oriented scholarship, both in Britain and the United States, as Guy and Small point out in their brief reference to the Leavis-Bateson controversy, originated in the scholarly and historicist dissatisfaction with the imposition of subjective and almost arbitrary thematising patterns on works of art. Guy and Small rightly suggest that neither Leavis nor his opponents chose to exploit the epistemological significance of their respective standpoints. The situation, no doubt, was not a simple one, and any reductionist attempt to see it in terms of a simple objective-subjective polarity would miss the point that a certain kind



* **Politics and Value in English Studies.** By JOSEPHINE M. GUY and IAN SMALL (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press), 1991, 195 pp.

**Exploding English : Criticism, Theory, Culture.** BY BERNARD BERGONZI (Oxford : Clarendon Press), 1990. xii + 240 pp.

**'The Future of Theory in the Teaching of Literature'** by GERALD GRAFF in **The Future of Literary Theory.** Edited by RALPH COHEN (New York and London : Routledge), 1989, 445 pp.

of objectivism was involved with the New Critical-Leavisian project and also that the so-called historicist objectivity had as one of its motivating forces the unconscious urge to find greater coherence in the past than it actually had. One would nevertheless agree with the authors of *Politics and Value* that the pattern of conflict in the 'forties and early 'fifties repeated itself in the later decades. One could legitimately generalise a little further and find in the repeated pattern a re-enactment of earlier conflicts – if such conflicts could be regarded as episodes in the history of mind's effort to achieve freedom or our illusion of that freedom. The Coleridgian-Romantic and the Leavisian-Modernist paradigms (and the recent 'theory' paradigm) are all in their various ways part of the incessant and non-conclusive endeavour for the mind to feel free to interpret experience lying beyond the constraints of the definable. The oft-repeated platitude about the recent 'crisis' in English studies and the no less familiar statement that crisis attended the very birth of the discipline have this much of truth in them that since the displacement of the neo-classical-empiricist framework at the end of the eighteenth century more and more of the area of the indefinable in human experience has successively been brought within the scope of a critical and coherence-seeking intellectuality. English studies as an organised body of knowledge not only marks an approach to but is a part of this modern, post-Renaissance, intellectualism, a remarkable phenomenon that could absorb and bring within its purview its own antithesis of non-rational anti-intellectualism. Contextualised in this way the growth of poststructuralist theory since the late 'sixties is not the aberration that it appears to some, and this notwithstanding the feeling of *deja vu* that some of its poltical projects, specially those relating to programmes of political action, evoke in minds not prone to millennial dreams.

Leaving politics aside for a moment (though politics is at the heart of the present crisis), one could, in an attempt to bring a larger perspective to bear on the issue, suggest, as both Bergonzi and Graff do, that a theoretical paradigm underlay the concept of English studies at the end of the nineteenth century. Guy and Small give a brief account of the debates that eventually led to the emergence of English studies as an intellectual discipline in the

present century. They contextualise this debate within a discussion of the nature of intellectual disciplines in general and specially within the framework of ideas that ultimately led, as they suggest, to the identification of the object of study in English as coherent, unified and autonomous. This is the most interesting and original part of their book, and we will return to it later. What, however, one would have expected at least Professor Bergonzi to stress is the fact that the so-called Arnoldian-humanistic paradigm — undoubtedly the implicit justification of English studies as an intellectual discipline — represents not a newfangled contraption for the enslavement of minds in class interest but a consensus of literary opinion spread over a number of centuries. Humanism may have been a late nineteenth century retrospective construction and its imposition on the centuries since the Renaissance may have coincided with the institutionalisation of English yet something like it had all along given point to much literary and critical activity and is enshrined in numerous Essays, Dissertations, Defences and Apologies — counterparts, in terms of their dissemination of values, of the modern academic study of literature. All this is not being said necessarily to put the traditionalist point of view in a privileged position but merely to suggest that a questioning of the values underlying literary study in the present century is also an examination of the framework of creativity in literature itself from the Renaissance onwards — at least in its conscious and deliberate aspects.

That the stakes are high in the conflict between the upholders of Coleridgean-Leavisian and Coleridgian-New Critical paradigms on the one hand,and those of Cultural Materialism (in Britain) and Deconstruction and New Historicism (in the U.S.A.), on the other, goes without saying though an awareness of the sharpness of the division is not very common in this country for reasons that reflect rather adversely on the quality and extent of our involvement in English studies. Wordsworth had much in common with Pope and Dr Johnson ( the presence in the Preface of 1800 of what Lovejoy called the 'uniformitarianism' of the eighteenth century can be cited as an example ) and Leavis did indeed have more to share with Arnold than with Tillyard. The assumptions, however, underlying the contributions of the various practitioners of 'theory' put

everything from Sidney to Eliot in doubt. Defying common sense and ordinary logic, 'theory' either undermines the structures of rationality on which communication is founded or contextualizes discourse within the dynamics of power in all of its, mostly covert, manifestations. In this latter respect it ultimately seeks power to undo the effects of power and thus counters its own latent cynicism with unstated and stated visions of a futuristic altruism. There is no doubt that a thing cannot be put out of court merely on the charge of being cynical or nihilistic if facts give sufficient warrant for, or justify, cynicism. Everything thus would depend on the validity and force of the analysis with which the practitioners of 'theory' subvert the structures of rationality or power. This is something, however, which 'theory', inspite of its pretensions otherwise, should ill afford since, it would appear, the real motivating force behind it is a little less defined though more powerful than an appeal to reason or logic which the ability to analyse mainly assumes. Large frameworks of thought are always accompanied by corresponding movements of feeling and sensibility which facilitate acceptance, or, alternatively, patterns of thought generate their own antitheses and in the ensuing conflicts acquire passionate commitments. Positing such or similar dialectics may enable us to see that literary thinking till the recent past has been a large but single movement of thought rejecting at a number of stages what appear to be limitations imposed by versions of restrictive empiricism on the freedom to incorporate unpredictably renovative constructions in cognate areas of thought — themselves attempts, not entirely arbitrary, to expose for discursive amplification aspects of experience already available to intuition in numerous cases. The complaint has been forcefully voiced by Guy and Small that migrant ideas from other intellectual disciplines though rejected in their original habitat find their way in critical thought and are paraded as novelties. Such criticism, however, is misdirected since importations and appropriations of this nature, heavily value-laden and not amenable to empirical verification, get incorporated into literary thought in accordance with the laws of organic growth or the logic of inner consistency and coherence and in the context of large movements of sensibility. The myth of Origins and that of the Common Man along with certain epistemological developments towards the close of the eighteenth century made the shift to the Romantic paradigm

century made the shift to the Romantic paradigm possible. Similarly, incorporation in the general sensibility of insights from anthropology and Bergsonian vitalism along with the ready availability of the organic metaphor in close collaboration with the idea of the symbolic charge of language and its links with the unconscious—much of it as eclectic and appropriative as anything since — led criticism into the imposition of patterns of cohesion to such an extent that for most of us any deviation from the New Critical orthodoxies seems an unpardonable offence. Considered thus the developments from the eighteenth century or earlier onwards appear more as easy and evolving transitions rather than sharp breaks or revolutions. The case of recent theory is different in that it would seem to have jettisoned all communication with earlier ( and normal) modes of discourse. The case for theory has perhaps been overstated though the practical implications in terms of the rift between theory and tradition — as recorded, for example, in Bergonzi's book and Graff's essay and implied throughout in the book by Guy and Small — are too serious not to be noticed by students of English anywhere.

Graff believes, with Eagleton, that 'the proper antithesis to tradition and humanism is not literary theory, but the kind of conventional literary study that asks no theoretical questions and assumes that as long as students are exposed to the major texts and periods, the larger theoretical and cultural issues will take care of themselves' ('The Future of Theory in the Teaching of Literature'. p.255 ). Believing as he does that current theory re-formulates the traditional, humanistic, Arnoldian questions (though it rejects the Arnoldian answers), Graff would welcome the inistitutionalisation of theory in the interdisciplinary form of something like 'Cultural Studies' or 'Cultural History' with a core consisting not of major 'authors' or 'masterpieces' (concepts to be problematised ) but of a group of debatable theories and contexts. Graff's approach has much to recommend itself since his main concern is with a problem that all those who are involved in English studies find interesting : the corporate visibility of the discipline. The ordinary graduate student in American universities (owing in the main to the breakdown of 'humanistic coherence' which had in the intial stage provided theoretical grounds for the subject) has to work with partial

and, so to say, ad hoc frameworks of theory in different courses preventing thus any movement from listless positivism to any vital theoretical grounding. The recent infusion of 'theory' has acquired an additive character instead of giving an over-all sense of direction.

Graff pleads the case for a broad theoretical framework extending beyond deconstruction and poststructuralist feminism to include 'a Matthew Arnold, an F.R. Leavis, a George Orwell, or an Edmund Wilson' in its purview. Looking back on the history of English studies in the United States, Graff rightly finds that the very fact of choosing to teach literature was a theoretical choice. Research in English studies, whether institutionalised or otherwise, had, and still has, a theoretical motivation deriving ultimately from its roots in the cultural theories of Herder, Schlegel and others. (Indian parallels in the field of modern historiography — and even English studies – easily come to mind. ) Theoretical grounding of literary study, as Graff rightly points out, continued in the early days of New Criticism. It can indeed be said that the paradigm shift brought about by the New Critics could not have been possible without theoretical re-thinking. The social thought of the New Critics is paralleled by Leavis's nostalgia about the lost sense of community, and in both cases literary study moves beyond contextlessness which later became the dominant orthodoxy of academic criticism. The de-contextualisation of literature brought about by the later phase of New Criticism has left the average student with nothing else but 'thematisation' and contextless explication of literary passages.

The essay by Graff focuses attention on two aspects of the present crisis in American universities : the confusions generated by the absence of appropriate theoretical orientation and the conflict between 'theory' and the traditional ( largely New Critical ) approach to literary study. The suggestion made by Graff with reference to the former, though rightly focused, does not seem to lead to a solution. His contention is that the lack of enthusiasm among graduate students and the confusion among students and instructors alike with regard to the aim of higher literary study is *always* caused by the absence of proper theoretical orientation. The history of the institutionalisation of English studies reveals the

conversion into orthodoxies leads to the degeneration of literary study into lacklustre 'positivism'. This may very well be true as evidenced by the unintelligent though popular application of the 'thematising' approach by the average student in our own country, or by the earlier 'life and works' study of literature popularised by English Men of Letters kind of series in the beginning of the present century. The point, however, is that degeneration of this kind is inevitable in all versions of institutionalisation. Can the high tension of theoretical insights be maintained when the wider cultural forces responsible for generating them have spent themselves? The problem is not amenable to an easy resolution as the law of gradual stasis in all cultural phenomena operates against it. One cannot see how a near-total victory for 'theory', even if it were possible, would be able to prevent insight from being converted into routine.

Strong conviction and not merely orthodoxies born of apathy and indifference are on the side of tradition. There are isolated minorities working with hypotheses and criteria that do not easily fit into the consensus either of the new paradigms or of the residue of New Criticism or Leavisism. Such minorities have always existed and are occasionally and retrospectively drawn into new patterns in accordance with historical contigencies. There are sophistications of the New Critical stance still deriving support from versions of Kantian epistemology besides quasi-mystical, quasi-religious commitments outside the main Western tradition. Then there are a large number of Shakespearians, Miltonists, Wordsworthians and Eliot devotees besides 'period' and 'genre' workers who remain unconcerned with theory except in a minimal way based on common sense. How could an apology for theory based on an appeal to the historical sense entice people away from a position that denies history ? Moreover , some of the proponents of theory themselves — deconstruction, for example — are ahistorical though one fails to see how deconstruction could have come into being except at a moment charged with historical significance : de-contextualisers themselves need a context. The situation being what it is - slightly differently etched in the Graff essay - conflict is inevitable and irresoluble. Under the circumstances , the 'resolution' suggested by Graff — that the conflict itself be staged for its educational value — seems quite

reasonable. Theory too (in order to prevent it from being converted into the esotericism of a coterie) must welcome debate.

Professor Bergonzi's book needs a slightly different kind of attention for it purports to be more than a gesture of impatience with 'theory' though 'impatience' perhaps is not the right word because of the occasional ambivalence that one detects in his book. *Exploding English* is an account of an eminent academic's lifelong encounter with changing trends in criticism and literary studies . It appears , however, that his personal 'history' of English studies is focussed round the theme of 'theory' vs tradition; the account of the founding of the discipline and of the earlier conflicts ultimately leads to the impact on English studies of the recent French critical thought, specially that of Derrida, Lacan and Foucault . There are a number of points of contact between Bergonzi's book and the essay by Graff. Like the latter, Bergonzi, too ,notes the fact that what appears like a healthy , democratic pluralism in the English faculties in moments of hope and when looked at from the inside is nothing but fragmentation and incoherence for the outsider.Referring to the debates at Cambridge provoked by the 'MacCabe affair' in the early eighties ' he points out how English emerged as a 'fissiparous discipline''where there was little or no agreement on fundamentals, '(p.17). (Psychology was another such discipline.) The same point is made by Graff when he refers to the low corporate visibility of English. (In fact Graff thinks that in the popular mind the professors of English are associated with the correction of grammatical errors only).There is little doubt that the absence of cohesive and unitive methodologies in the discipline of English (and recently the lack of unanimity as to the proper subject-matter in the displine) are the central areas of concern in the three pieces under review (Guy and Small direct their effort towards establishing the autonomy of literature within an appropriate epistemological framework). While Graff's present essay is of narrow scope concerned as it is only with the issue of the future of theory in the American academic establishment and what shape the conflict may take in the days to come,Bergonzi's book is a detailed and sensitive consideration of things as they are in the light of the origins and development of what he calls the English synthesis — the framework of approaches and attitudes that

provided the rationale of English studies since its inception early in the present century.

The epistemological rigour with which Guy and Small invest the origins of English studies in the late nineteenth century and their conviction that these origins are far from political do not occupy a prominent place in Professor Bergonzi's account of the disciplinary basis of English which suggests that the authors of *Politics and Value* have been a little too reductive in their polemic zeal to controvert the cultural materialists. There is no doubt that Bergonzi's analysis of 'the English synthesis 'begins a little late. The chapter entitled 'Foundations' in *Exploding English* makes much of the Newbolt report of 1921 though the document is more relevant as providing the basis of Leavisite-Cambridge English than as the 'foundation' of English when the debates about replacing philology by literary study were going on at the end of the nineteenth century. Guy and Small, on the other hand, give too much salience to Bradley's epistemologically purer aestheticism as opposed to the cultural- materialist view that nationalism-imperialism provided the real motivation for the founding of the discipline. There is no doubt that the roots of Bradley's concern with the purity of the artistic impulse are not really to be discovered in the aestheticism of the 'nineties but in his access to the Coleridgian view of the imagination. The fact, however, is that Bradley the theorist is at odds with Bradley the critic. The aesthetically pure theorist of the imagination and of literature divested of its ethical trappings is nevetheless an unconscious apologist of the empire and its cosequence in terms of tragic glory and frustration. Commentators have not failed to point out that *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) is anachronistic in that its view of the substance of Shakespeare's major tragic plays is in fact an imposition of a latter-day sensibility on to Shakesppearian drama. The causality which it discovers in Shakespearian tragedy in terms of the character-will-catastrophe nexus is as much political as ethical or tragic. The point at issue is that the attempt to isolate Bradley as providing a 'purist' rationale for English studies is not really justified since his major contribution to English studies is not entirely free from a covert ideological stance.

Bergonzi does in fact concede that the nationalist impulse did contribute to the English synthesis. The Newbolt Report, no doubt, came too soon after the first world war but an insistence on 'Englishnesss' ran as an undercurrent in Leavisite Cambridge English. It was in fact a part of the mythology focussing on a lost world in Leavis's writings just as conservative political stance was a part of early New Criticism in the United States. Bergonzi is also right in reminding us that the Leavisite proposition was underwritten by a Wordsworthian concern with the popular roots of language : poetry in relation to the state of the English language is a recurring theme in contributions to the Leavisite Pelican Guide volumes.

The idea of the English synthesis —how a number of interests came together to provide justification for the study of English— seems to me more true to the facts of the situation in English studies than the kind of epistemological 'purity' insisted upon by Guy and Small. English studies have indeed always been a mixed and assorted group of interests and tendencies—biographical, historical, religious, political and aesthetic. The components of the English synthesis, according to Bergonzi, originated at various times but came together to motivate the different activities generally associated with the institutional status of English studies. Bergonzi thinks that the English synthesis has so far consisted of nationalistic, religious, ethical, aesthetic and rhetorical elements. Nationalism, as we saw above, has generally expressed itself in a concern for the English language though its other manifestations, too, have played their role in the development of English studies. This factor, Professor Bergonzi rightly points out, has been remarkably absent in the establishment and progress of English as an academic discipline in the United States. Nationalism, for obvious reasons, has in that country been more a matter of commitment to a certain political ideology than anything else. For the same reasons, democratic pluralism of an ethnic variety faced lesser overt resistance in the United States when in the recent decades the demand for the expansion of the canon made the continuance of the established orthodoxies difficult. The nationalistic segment of the English synthesis in Britain became weak with the internationalisation of the English language and the disruption of 'the mystical fusion of nation, language and literature'

(p.32 ) that had inspired the Newbolt Report. (Incidentally, in one's pursuit of English studies in this country one could sympathize imaginatively with many manifestations and urges of English nationalism—not just the Leavisian and *Scrutiny* concern for the colloquial roots of linguistic life and vigour in Shakespeare, Donne and Eliot but also with the scholarly endeavours of the generation of academics at the turn of the century whose main interest lay in extending the literary horizons of English back into time for nationalistic reasons. )

The discussion in Bergonzi's book of the religious (associated with the expressive paradigm ), the ethical (deriving from classical sources and mimetic in its essence), the aesthetic ( the epistemologically 'pure' in Guy and Small valuation), and the rhetorical elements, though brief, is illuminating. The religious strain in English studies came to us from the romantic divinisation of the imagination and the Arnoldian attempt to substitute poetry for religion. Its presence could unmistakably be felt in Cambridge English though it is also implied in some versions of New Criticism. The strain is very pronounced in the Shakespeare criticism of the 'thirties and the 'forties revealing itself in a certain solemnity of tone that transformed the improvising and historically and theatrically conditioned art of Shakespeare into works of scriptural sanctity, a far cry indeed from their recent 'degeneration' into textualities of incoherence and disruption.



While one may agree with Professor Bergonzi in his suggestion that C.S. Lewis stands in some kind of binary opposition to Leavis and also that the transition from Lewis to Barthes is easier (as exemplified in the quotation from Catherine Belsey where she tells us about her graduation from Oxford to structuralism) than from Leavis to later developments, an 'outsider' would nevertheless find the salience given to Lewis a little odd, and this notwithstanding so much that is so immensely engaging about Lewis. The reluctance does not have its source merely in the recognition that Lewis did not shape the course of English studies in the profound ways that Leavis did. The difficulty lies, paradoxically enough, in the very excellence of Lewis as a critic in some way : his deeply felt and very personal experience of literature and his unique and rare insights which, however, were a little strangely mixed with some

contemporary critical themes and which now, in retrospect only, look like anticipations of later developments. Lewis's unLeavisian 'disengagement' with literature emanated more from his religious world-view (attempting to put literature in its place) than from anything resembling structuralist abandonment of the concept of Literature itself. Could it not be said that moving from Leavis to Barthes is a 'transition', however different the two conceptual systems, while the shift from Lewis to Barthes marks a 'break' ?

Professor Bergonzi has tactfully given us a clue to his approach to recent theory in the titles of his two main chapters on the subject: 'Theory Among the English' and ' Who is Derrida, What is He :' The irony would directly implicate him in an adversarial position but for the presence of a certain ambivalence. There is the following acknowledgment on p. 116: ' Some of this writing [in the rainbow coalition of recent theory] is acute and interesting, the product of lively minds with genuine insights into the state of contemporary culture. I would often rather read it than more conventional forms of literary scholarship.' The two chapters referred to above do not attempt a direct account of any of the French authors—Barthes, Derrida, Foucault and Lacan. Instead, Bergonzi gives brief analytical accounts of books written in English along with his own response to them. The procedure is interesting because it helps the reader to keep English studies in focus all the time. It may have been opted also for the reason that French thought requires a very different perspective—something that, according to Professor Bergonzi, is ignored in English. The structuralist banishment of the author, for example, can be better understood in the context of the existentialist stress (in the 1940s) on the individual ego, and this 'cold, formal impersonality' of classical structuralism ' becomes itself overturned or deconstructed by poststructuralist "playfulness"' (p. 108). This contextualisation is reasonable as well as interesting in that it leads us to a kind of historically contingent relativism. Raymond Tallis, quoted by Bergonzi (p. 112). raises a pertinent question in *Not Saussure*: '...why have ancient radical doubts about the ability of language to express a genuine extra-linguistic reality....been revived in recent decades to the point where they seem to have achieved an almost popular appeal ?' The point is not that Saussure is wrong or has been misunderstood;

it is not even related to the currency of particular fashions: the anti-foundationalism that the problem implies focuses attention on the question whether the sequentiality of intellectual events since the early modern period is self-cancelling or cumulatively goal-oriented.

Apart from his own perceptive comments on aspects of the work of the supporters of theory, Professor Bergonzi also refers to some of the prominent detractors of the movement. Throughout he gives the impression of being open and receptive to new ideas though himself having grown up in a very different critical ethos and owing allegiance to values of a different order — something that becomes clear in the last chapter of his book. However, at some places his lack of sympathy with the new approaches is more apparent than his fairness. On p. 106 he quotes an unnamed contributor to *Re-Reading English* : 'The notion of the sacrosanct text is alien to the period and yet it is central to the literary criticism of Shakespeare'-- a remark with which few Shakespearians would now like to quarrel. However, Bergonzi's comment on it is: 'In what spirit, then, was the First Folio produced in 1623 ?' The idea of the sacrosanct text may not have been alien to the period as a whole but it has certainly lent a falsifying and distorting tone to much Shakespeare criticism. Stanley Wells has little to do with deconstruction or theory and yet he would be happy to see the idea banished for ever from Shakespearian studies.



Unlike Graff whom Bergonzi quotes at the head of his chapter on Theory and who would prefer the open staging of conflicts, Bergonzi is ready to welcome a parting of ways. Believing as he does that the aesthetic segment of the English synthesis is still intact and also that poetry approximates to music while the novel comes closer to the more discursive and 'impure' subjects like biography and history, he would see English Departments bifurcated into those of Cultural Studies and Poetry. This is the most touching part of the book dramatising the dilemma of senior academics who, though receptive to new insights, still cling to the traditional idea of literature which they find enshrined in poetry in some essential ways. It may be said, however, that this is probably more of a reaction against the Morris Zapps of critical theory than a refusal to accommodate change. The institutionalisation of

poetry as an academic discipline would hardly solve the problem that besets the study of literature as a whole; theoretical issues are as germane to the study of poetry as they are to other literary genres - textuality in relation to cultural textuality, the denial of mimetically-conceived referents, the inherent self-deconstructive potentialities of texts, the play of unconscious psychic energies and the lack of interpretative stability. There is no doubt that if theory problematises literary study, one can retort by problematising theory itself, by objecting to its contentions, but the point is that the study of poetry cannot now be carried on in an atmosphere free from strife, and so the utopian Department of Poetic Arts would not be the heaven of pure aesthetic delight envisaged in Bergonzi's last chapter.

*Politics and Value in English Studies* is a praiseworthy attempt to introduce logic, system and intellectual precision into the discussion of theory and literary study though to what extent the attempt succeeds is difficult to determine in an area where logical precision and exactitude, however valuable they may be as ideals, are hard to come by. The point of departure for the authors is the contention that the nature of diciplinary knowledge and the sources of intellectual authority in particular disciplines must be constantly kept in view while dealing with the attempts to determine the intellectual procedures and explanatory paradigms of that discipline. The recent radical critiques of English are based on the postsructuralist assumption that all literary judgements are value-laden (contrary to the structuralist project to make literary judgements entirely value-free) and that all values in such judgements are political. The radical critiques also endeavour to widen the scope of literary study to include, in Eagleton's words, all discursive practices, to reduce literature to textual semiotics. These objectives, the authors contend, are short-sighted and philosophically untenable. On the other hand, the authors themselves contextualise the discussion in an account of the growth of disciplinary knowledge in the nineteenth century—how the generalist gradually gave place to the specialist and the vocation of the sage was professionalised so that modern disciplines came into existence. It is not only in this connection that a philosophical perspective is brought to bear on literary

discussions in the book; the treatment of fact/value dichotomy is also philosophically-oriented. The authors briefly but pointedly trace the history of the rejection of all objectivity (even in the natural sciences) from human knowledge in the philosophy of science debates in the 1960s. It was as a parallel to Gadamer's perception of the over-all subjectivity and relativism of knowledge that the postsructuralist ventures into sceptical thought had their origin.

The authors' objections to radical critiques are manifold though all of them are mainly logical. Any rigorous and exact conception of an intellectual discipline would demand that object of study in that discipline should be autonomous and discrete. In their last chapter they show that the disciplinary nature of English studies could emerge only with the recognition of the aesthetic identity of literature. What is said in a despairing and tentative tone by Bergonzi ( that the study of poetry could be founded on a recognition of the aesthetic segment of the English synthesis) is asserted with conviction reinforced by logical precision by the authors of *Politics and Value*. (Incidentally, while dealing with the cultural materialist description of literary values as political, Guy and Small try to show that Eagleton's attempt to reveal the political nature of the aesthetic has failed.) The argument that English studies can only be founded on a clear recognition of the aesthetic identity of literary study is strongly supported by the fact that literary historiagraphy and text-editing both presuppose identification of literature as autonomous and discrete. What, however, the authors do not take into account is the fact that in text-editing the distinction between the historical-documentary and literary-aesthetic is not always very clear. As in this, in other spheres also an epistemologically pure aesthetic judgement is an exception rather than the rule.

The academic study of literature has always been a mixed and assorted affair, variously motivated, though always accepted by the practitioners as a challenge. It has at times tended in the direction of a coherent autonomy but such a direction, except in isolating purely rhetorical features, has always been subsumed in other concerns. In view of all this, we should not, in the name of the sanctity of intellectual disciplines or philosophical exactitude, put those approaches completely out of court that seem to challenge

assumptions that are more a matter of logic than of living truth. On the other hand, the claim in radical critiques that literary study should be synonymous with the study of discursive practices is difficult to be put into practice, and when done so, not likely to continue. What can be expected (or wished for) is that, fringes apart, literary study would have learnt, as ever, fresh ways of renovating itself.

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