TR 92-9

BEYOND ALL WORDS: A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH TO THE PHENOMENON OF MYSTICISM IN LITERATURE.

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The principal claim of this thesis is that the mystical experience is a wide-ranging influence upon literature. It is a recurrent thematic concern of poets, novelists and playwrights; but even when mysticism is not an overt element in a text, analysis of its symbols can reveal references to emotions and experiences of a mystical character - as is frequently the case with fantasy. In a more essential way, certain widely-used techniques of poetry effectively reproduce the character of mystical events for the reader. Some theory does indeed imply that the mystical bearing is quite fundamental, at a certain level, to all creative literature.

This thesis explores the link between mysticism and literature through widely differing examples, to show how it continues to be found in otherwise divergent texts and contexts. Indeed, no attempt is made to provide an exhaustive overview; rather, certain special areas of interest are represented by selected cases. Mystical elements in Modernism, for example (especially in T.S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf), are contrasted with Romantic attitudes to mysticism, which Wordsworth and Coleridge are taken to represent.

A further goal is to analyse the character of literary mysticism, and to account for the connection between mysticism and literary practice. The view is adopted that the circumstances in which the infant first acquires language is of crucial importance in this regard, and that literary language often draws upon submerged recollections of these

early circumstances. Literature, it is argued, can employ signs and patterns of symbolisation in ways that actually attempt to 'undo' many of the everyday functions of words. The ultimate ideal of such literary techniques is to 'reverse' the process by which language was acquired and to 'return' the reader to a state resembling pre-linguistic experience, a goal which has much in common with the ambitions of mystics.

Jacques Lacan's theoretical writings touch at many points upon the early development of the child and the significance of its acquisition of language. This thesis consequently has recourse to Lacan's work and, where relevant, to related psychoanalytic writings by Sigmund Freud and Julia Kristeva. After an investigation of the main characteristics of mystical experience as such, the Introduction broadly outlines Lacan's theoretical position. Chapter 1 is concerned more specifically with Lacan's discussions of mysticism.

Part Two (Chapters 2-4) deals principally with the links between mystical yearnings and the Romantic ideal of the 'sublime'. In Part Three (Chapters 5-7) the relation between mysticism and Modernist developments affecting both theme and artistic technique is examined in works by three writers: T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and Fernando Pessoa. Part Four discusses particular literary presentations of 'evil' and of 'good' as embodiments of mystical perceptions. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century 'supernatural' fiction is selected to represent the first case, and certain New Testament and early Christian texts the second.

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The first inner stirrings of this thesis began nearly ten years ago, with an argument at the house of Bonnie and Brian Macaskill. I am working, for my future discussions, towards more rapid responses.

TEXTUAL NOTE

I have retained unemended the original spelling or punctuation patterns of quotations incorporated into my text. Biblical quotations of any length, where they occur (they are common in Chapters 10 and 11), are from the New English Bible. However, where I discuss a particular writer's interpretation of a Biblical passage, I have preferred to remain with the version their own text uses, most commonly the Authorised Version. Obvious textual clues readily indicate when the change occurs.

PART ONE: ORIGINS

INTRODUCTION

The main proposition of this thesis is that there is an innate connection between mysticism and many of the functions of language in art. What I set out to demonstrate is that both thematically and in its techniques much verbal art gravitates irresistably towards a 'zero point' of its own dissolution, a place where ordinary signifying functions are overcome - and that it does so in order to provide an artistic equivalent to the 'direct experience of reality' which mystics have spoken of down the ages.

In a sense, there is no special originality to this claim. Indeed, my whole argument is that the link in question - between mysticism and certain ways that language can work in poetry, drama and fiction - has been known and used by artists for a very long time, even if sometimes this use has been intuitive and unconscious. I am sure, too, that the principle in question is innately understood and exploited by many theorists of literature; the only real difficulty is that, for reasons that are not altogether clear, there is no very plain or explicit statement of the principle or direct investigation of what makes it happen, in precisely these terms.

For example, I believe that it is really to the mystical experience that Roland Barthes is referring when he talks of the reader's 'bliss' or '<u>jouissance</u>' in <u>The Pleasure of the Text</u>[1].

Certainly his descriptions could as easily suggest the transport of the mystic: especially when he talks of the 'loss of self' that the reader experiences in his enjoyment of literature. He sees the reader as a subject who 'is never anything but a "living contradiction": a split subject, who simultaneously enjoys, through the text, the consistency of his selfhood and its collapse, its fall' (Barthes 1975: 21). These terms are very close to those in which, traditionally, mystics have spoken of their ecstasies.

Again, Barthes's insistence that 'pleasure can be expressed in words, bliss cannot' (Ibid.) resembles the mystics' sense of the ineffable, inexpressible nature of their special experience.

> Bliss is unspeakable, inter-dicted. I refer to Lacan ('what one must bear in mind is that bliss is forbidden to the speaker, as such, or else that it cannot be spoken except between the lines ...') and to Leclaire ('... Whoever speaks, by speaking denies bliss, or correlatively, whoever experiences bliss causes the letter - and all possible speech - to collapse in the absolute degree of the annihilation he is celebrating'). (Ibid.)

Hence it is only in the sense of a half-truth - that what has never been stated openly is also never quite known - that this study has innovative value, for its main aim is the exploration and clarification, in so many words, of the connection between mysticism and the practice of literary art. While there are certainly implications for other arts, I have chosen to demonstrate the connection mainly through analysis of widely varying examples drawn from literature, the art of words.

Although I believe that the mystical element is quite fundamental as a potential of verbal art, I know that the best I can hope to show through examples alone is simply that a wide range of literary works displays such a connection, not that there is anything intrinsic about it - though it may perhaps be possible to go a little further than this by means of theory, where I may. Hence in what follows I shall be drawing extensively at times upon the illuminations that modern psychoanalytic theory can provide about mystical experience and its meaning. In particular, I shall follow Barthes's hint above, and make use of the theories of the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, who has given attention to this question.

To return for a moment to the question of originality with which I started. It was Jacques Lacan's view - as it was that of Socrates before him - that all true knowledge is simply recovery and expression in words of what is already unconsciously known. In terms of his own close relation to the work of Freud, Lacan had this to say: 'The originality we are allowed is limited to the scrap of enthusiasm we have adopted ... concerning what Freud was able to name' (tr. from Scilicet[2] I, vi, by Felman[3] 1987: 54).

In the nature of things, however, we can never refer back to an exact version of the past 'as it really was'; what is always inevitably recovered is only a 'reading' of the past, not the past itself. Lacan's own principle of méconnaissance suggests that we must expect meaning to be changed as it is handed on and

understood in new contexts: that is the only way meaning operates.

For the same reasons, I cannot claim to be 'true' to Lacan in what follows - for that would be in a strange way to deny the spirit of his teaching. He vehemently rejected the idea that he had a 'system' of thought (cf. Lacan[4] 1977[b]: vii-xv). Since the world does not - cannot - resemble the systems of language, any system, in his view, must inevitably be false from the start. In what was almost a last gesture, he dissolved his own school when he believed his pupils were treating his work as an object of devotion, as something final and authoritative. Anxious as he undoubtedly also was to correct or repudiate direct mistakes on their part, he could still say 'I leave everyone to go his own way in the direction that I point out' (Lacan[5] 1986: 217).

It is in this spirit that I have taken Lacan's thought as a point of departure for what follows. Shoshana Felman's apt description of the proper relation of psychoanalysis and reading helps to illuminate this question:

> Psychoanalysts know well from their clinical practice that there are no simple applications of psychoanalytic concepts. In practice (as a therapist or as a reader, a literary critic), one can use theories (as I am here trying to use Lacan and Freud) only as enabling metaphorical devices, not as extrapolated, preconceived items of knowledge. In much the same way that one cannot simply 'apply' Freud's concepts to a patient, one cannot apply Freud (or Lacan) to a literary text. The practice of psychoanalysis (as well as the experience of a practical reading) is a process, not a set of doctrines. In the process, one can <u>implicate</u> the doctrines, one can imply them, not apply them ... it is never simply there, at our disposal to apply. It is something that we necessarily keep losing and have to

> keep working at to find again. But we cannot find it (have it) once and for all. Like the purloined letter, psychoanalysis always has to be recovered.
> (Felman 1987: 11)

This state of affairs is a fortunate one, for I am obliged to be less prudent and evasively paradoxical than Lacan usually is when it comes to the mystical dimension of language. For Lacan, the symbolic order - meaning, primarily, words and language - constitutes an absolute and distinct territory. Since mysticism seems to be mostly about escaping the bounds of language and appearances, Lacan would probably have denied that there is a mystical dimension to language - or at any rate, to the fact of language (as I maintain). For Lacan, the mystical dimension is that 'impossible' realm which lies outside and annihilates the force of language - or would, if it 'ex-isted'.

My view is that, whenever it is not being deliberately repressed, and especially when the merely utilitarian functions of words are no longer to the fore, the 'other' dimension 'comes along with' words, affecting our responses to them. Puck-like, it transforms, dissolves, displaces, condenses, metamorphoses these logical counters we believed we were sure of: it makes them slip away under our hands, in the very act of taking them up. Especially at the uncertain borderlands of our fixed concepts - a place where art frequently transports us - we feel ourselves confronted with a different kind of reality, a reality which is not actually determined by the verbal. It is this subversive, unpredictable, 'plastic' quality to words that the literary

artist may choose to make use of, for his own particular ends - which are also perhaps, ultimately, the ends of language itself.

Lacan would disagree with none of the paragraph above - after all, it was he himself who first pointed out the 'sliding of the signified beneath the signifier' and identified its poetic uses (Lacan[6] 1977: 156ff). But he would say that the dimension I spoke of above is simply the unconscious - an aspect of the field of language and culture, and essentially still continuous with this field (although differently organised and not available, by definition, to conscious view). Because its effects may irrupt into the domain of supposed clear, conscious thought through the 'gaps' of speech, and the borderlines of concepts, the unconscious cannot be related directly to the mystical domain, in Lacan's view. The dimension mystics usually talk of is something utterly and radically beyond the field of language itself: something, indeed, more like what he refers to as the 'Real' order, where language plays and can play no part at all.

For the present I wish to reply only by saying that the very uncertainty about the appearances of our world which the 'sliding' of language produces in the hands of a skilful author or poet can have the effect of 'destabilising' our reality, as we ordinarily see it - and making us more open to another, non-verbal, mode of being behind it. Though these effects are usually held at the unconscious level, they are still there and affect us quite as much because of it.

What we as readers may experience on entering a new novel or poem might be a vague 'disquiet', 'anxiety', 'nausea', 'displacement' - something not very pleasant, perhaps, at first. But this 'unsettling' can actually have the result of setting us on the path towards the 'beyond' experience of mysticism, coloured by the imaginative character of the book or poem. Entering the new reality of the imaginative work we do, to an extent, put our own in question. Such effects happen, I believe, only because there is something about the nature of language itself which permits it.

Many of the most powerful devices of poetry - but of other kinds of writing too - depend on just this subversive potential of artistic language to act as a 'solvent' to our everyday ways of thinking and perceiving; we uncover an agent capable - at the farthest extreme - of inducing in us a return to the origins of the speaking process itself: one which takes us back to the 'borderline' conditions of the time in our lives when we first began to acquire and use words.

What I wish, therefore, to make the centre of attention in this study is what J. Hillis Miller once attempted in an interview[7] to explain as the unspeakable element of language, the unsayable 'nothing' that literature somehow evolves itself out of: 'One might think of passages where Heidegger says that people think that nothing isn't anything, but in fact it's an occulted revelation of being' (in Saluzinsky 1987: 229):

> there is an aspect of what happens to me when I read Stevens or Shelley or Dickens, which is the experience of something to which I could give no name; which, in that sense, is nothing, but which at the same time seems to be the encounter with something other than language which is woven into language and causes these effects. It is impossible to talk about this without mystification, without the misleading implication that you're falling back into some kind of religiosity. Nevertheless, that's the way it seems to me.
> (1987: 230)

Though some will understandably disagree, it seems to me that the value of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory here is that it allows us for the first time to discuss the source and hidden nature of these mysterious effects of language with the least amount of mystification - the least amount, at any rate, that the circumstances demand.

2

It is true that in many minds, the word 'mysticism' is hardly distinct from 'mystification'; it connotes simply some secret, vague, remote form of religiose edification, practised perhaps in solitary caves or corners of mosques or monasteries, or else in the equally cloudy pages of only half-intelligible manuscripts. Its adherents are consequently not expected to be particularly lucid or much in touch with the world. This popular impression is a pity, for, difficult as it is to describe, the mystical experience is an entirely concrete one for those who undergo it.

William James, who was as down-to-earth as an adventurous psychologist can be - part of his fame, after all, was as a

founder of philosophic Pragmatism - has left a lively account of different aspects of the experience in his Varieties of Religious Experience[8]:

> The simplest rudiment of mystical experience would seem to be that deepened sense of the significance of a maxim or formula which occasionally sweeps over one. 'I've heard that said all my life,' we exclaim, 'but I never realized its full meaning till now.' ... This sense of deeper significance is not confined to rational propositions. Single words, and conjunctions of words, effects of light on land and sea, odours and musical sounds, all bring it when the mind is tuned aright. Most of us can remember the strangely moving power of passages in certain poems read when we were very young, irrational doorways as they were through which the mystery of fact, the wildness and the pang of life, stole into our hearts and thrilled them. The words have now perhaps become mere polished surfaces for us; but lyric poetry and music are alive and significant only in proportion as they fetch these vague vistas of a life continuous with our own, beckoning and inviting, yet ever eluding our pursuit. We are alive or dead to the eternal inner message of the arts according as we have kept or lost this mystical susceptibility. (in Knight, ed.[9] 1950: 208)

It is instructive to recall the actual line of Wordsworth half-submerged in James's text: 'the light that never was, on sea or land'; Wordsworth's own mystical poetics will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. James actually experimented with nitrous oxide in an attempt to reproduce the full quality of the mystical experience by chemical means, and is unusually articulate about the results: 'Depth upon depth of truth seems revealed to the inhaler. This truth fades out, however, or escapes, at the moment of coming to'. Despite the evanescence of the state, 'the sense of a profound meaning having been there persists':

> Looking back on my own experiences, they all converge towards a kind of insight to which I cannot help ascribing some metaphysical significance. The keynote of it is invariably a reconciliation. It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictoriness and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melted into unity. Not only do they, as contrasted species, belong to one and the same genus, but one of the species, the nobler and better one, is itself the genus, and so soaks up and absorbs its opposite into itself. This is a dark saying, I know, when thus expressed in terms of common logic, but I cannot wholly escape from its authority. I feel as if it must mean something, something like the hegelian philosphy means, if one could only lay hold of it more clearly.
> (1950: 211; James's emphasis)

For all his natural plainness of speech, James encounters here the difficulty that attends any description of the heightened form of the experience: that it escapes the bounds of words altogether, and is consequently somehow intrinsically inexpressible (the Tao Te Ching[10], incidentally, begins with the line: 'The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao' [Feng and English 1973: 3]). One of the reasons for this James gives hints of above: it is that the binary oppositions on which speech depends are somehow abrogated and merged in the experience.

The 'wordlessness' or ineffability of the mystic state is one of the seven characteristics F.C. Happold[11] educes to define it (Happold 1970: 46). Another, the noetic, is the sense of profundity and enhanced meaning the world takes on - which comes out well in James's account. Others partially reflected there include the consciousness of the Oneness of Everything: the 'All in One and One in All' found in many religions with a mystical base. We think at once of the way that in Taoism the Ying and

Yang stand for the (illusory) opposites of experience drawn out of the primal unity. One thinks also of the meaning of Brahma in Hindu theology, and of the experience of sunyata[12] in Buddhism (Hoover 1980: 10) - or else of darsang (Dass 1976: x), the revelatory encounter with the Buddha[13]. In this context Happold quotes the Christian mystic Nicholas of Cusa, to the effect that God is found beyond 'the coincidence of contradictories' (1970: 46).

Other characteristics that Happold lists are passivity - the sense of grace, a 'something given' - and an impression of timelessness that persists in spite of the actual transiency of the experience itself. Although according to St John of the Cross 'the soul has in its power to abandon itself, whenever it wills, to this sweet sleep of love' (an opinion that not all mystics share), the illumination is not long-lasting (46).

Lastly, and not least in importance, is the conviction that 'the familiar phenomenal ego is not the real I' (48). Happold is reminded here of the Hindu notion of the atman, the 'deep self' that lies hidden behind the mundane personality. Certainly a common denominator among mystics is an intuition of the contingency and relative worthlessness of the everyday ego, which appears to be overwhelmed in a merging of subject and object at the highest moment of cosmic consciousness.

The Neo-platonist Plotinus[14], writing in the first century, insists that in this matter 'we are thinking of a soul as simultaneously one and many, participant in the nature divided in

body, but at the same time a unity by virtue of belonging to that order which suffers no division' (Ennead IV.9.3; tr. MacKenna 1954: 185). Our 'divided' personality is left behind in mystic contemplation, for in this state 'we must withdraw from all the external, pointed wholly inwards; no leaning to the outer' (Ennead 1.6.3; 1954: 247). With such preparation, the pure 'lover' is open to his own loss into the One of being:

> all learning left behind, established now in its own beauty, the seeker is suddenly swept beyond everything by the very crest of the wave of universal mind (nous) surging beneath, and is lifted on high, and sees, never knowing how; the vision floods the eyes with light but it is not a light that shows some other thing; the light is itself the vision. (Ennead VI.7.37. My emending translation. See MacKenna 1954: 204-5, and O'Brien[15] 1964: 28)

The motif of the contemplative as a 'lover' appears again in the ecstatic lyrics of St John of the Cross. Strange as this choice of motif might seem in a spiritual context, it should be treated neither as a distressing 'symptom' nor, for that matter, simply as a poetic conceit - as happens at moments, in a reverse way (lovers as disembodied souls), in Donne's 'The Ecstasy'. It serves rather to invoke the actual overthrow and merging of all opposites in mystical communion; the union of sexes acts as a paradigm for the event's other mergings and amalgamations. In this very broad sense, the sexual and the spiritual are hardly to be seen apart: mystical and sexual are equivalents.

As Jerzy Peterkiewicz explains St John's 'paradox of becoming the other person in love' in his book The Other Side of

Silence: The Poet at the Limits of Language[16]: 'The Bride and Bridegroom, Esposa and Esposo, were familiar representations of the soul united in Christ, and they communicated their joy in passionate dialogue' (Peterkiewicz 1970: 100).

> Oh night that was my guide!
> Oh darkness dearer than the morning's pride,
> Oh night that joined the lover
> To the beloved bride
> Transfiguring them each into the other.
> (tr. Campbell[17] 1960: 29)

Lest there should be any doubt, this stanza is from the poem entitled 'Songs of the soul in rapture at having arrived at the height of perfection, which is union with God by the road of spiritual negation' (1960: 27).

Peterkiewicz aptly describes the state of the poet - any poet - in these circumstances where 'the poet most resembles the mystic': 'the words, laid down in lines like a track, end abruptly in nowhere' (Peterkiewicz 1970: 97). It is important to see that in spite of the theological titles, St John's lyrical effusions are first and foremost poems as such, and their poetic technique is essential to their effect and meaning, and entirely of a piece with the aim of mystical expression. It is Roy Campbell's merit as translator to have remained remarkably true to the original versification. He enables us to see how St John's paradoxical metaphors poignantly evoke the meaning of the loss of self he invites - 'change my death to life, even while killing!' (45) - as well as the destruction of everyday wisdom and language:

> I entered in, I know not where,
> And I remained, though knowing naught,
> Transcending knowledge with my thought.
> (47)

It is in the repeated refrain that poetic device and theophanic purpose most clearly meet: the effect is to defeat the time-bound metonymic progression of prose; to undermine, in other words, the prose-power of the sense alone:

> The man who truly there has come
> Of his own self must shed the guise;
> Of all he knew before the sum
> Seems far beneath that wondrous prize:
> And in this lore he grows so wise
> That he remains, though knowing naught,
> Transcending knowledge with his thought.
> (47-49)

The repetitions of the poem function here like a kind of 'stammering' which impedes and finally subverts 'logocentric' verbal directness, in the service of mystical apprehension.

> Tan embedido, 'so drunken-reeling' in Roy Campbell's version, is a characteristic phrase. Balbuciendo, stammering, goes further in trying to suggest an uncertain state between the known language and the sudden knowledge without understanding (este saber no sabiendo). (Peterkiewicz 1970: 100)

But this 'disruptive' function of repetition cannot be seen as limited to St John's practice alone; repetitions are, after all, a feature of almost all verse. Interestingly, Peterkiewicz will not allow St John to be seen as both a mystic and, separately, a poet : 'the image of a disturbed stammerer is nearer to the nature of the poet. St. John, reeling drunk with

God, hurls his exclamations into mystical night' (Peterkiewicz 1970: 101).

St John's 'images of wilful contradiction' (104), images like 'luminous darkness' (Ibid.), function in the same way, to subvert clarity and ordinary apprehension. As Peterkiewicz puts it: 'Perhaps the unknown silence is at its closest to poetic truth when mystical opposites become the only language expressing the poet's via negationis' (105). Usefully, he quotes Jacob Boehme here: 'Every Divine good power has in the hellish foundation, as in the No, a contrarium or opposite, in order that the Yes or the truth may be known. And thus the darkness, as the foundation of God's wrath, has also come into a state of form' (104). Mysticism recognises that the binary oppositions of language are not ultimate, and may be used to undo each other.

Another feature of the Saint's poetry is less easily demonstrated. It is best described as a curious kind of freshness and illumination which somehow informs the 'things' referred to once they are 'transferred' into the poetic medium. Peterkiewicz interpets this as an almost preternatural precision of language, which 'suggests that he acts like a traveller returning from the other side [of silence], each object, each word has to be known again, for nothing is recognizably familiar' (98).

> This freedom must surely extend to the language which can no longer possess him, even when it is ecstatically used.... This explains why some words become reversible in order to be precise, as in the paradox of arrimo, support, i.e. being without it in the world of things and yet having it all the time in God.... (98-9)

Significantly, we encounter all these techniques again in Wordsworth's poetic practice, with, I would claim, a similar mystical intention and effect: the attempted 'supernatural' precision and simplicity of the Lyrical Ballads, for example; the curiously self-defeating images like 'houseless woods', which succeed somehow only in amalgamating the idea of a natural scene and a domestic dwelling; the paradoxical phrases ('a light that never was, on sea or land'; 'the unimaginable touch of time'); the expected and unexpected repetitions, and the recurrent 'strange fits' of logic and of grammar.

If it has been instructive to examine the case of a mystic who turned to poetry, then as a final case we might consider a novelist who in later life delved deeply into the connection between art - principally visual art - and mystical experience. In his two treatises The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell[18], Aldous Huxley meditates on the results of his experimentation with mescalin. Through the drug he learns that what, in religious terms, 'is called "this world" is the universe of reduced awareness, expressed and, as it were, petrified by language', where man 'is all too apt to take his concepts for data, his words for actual things' (Huxley 1970: 20).

> 'I have always found,' Blake wrote rather bitterly, 'that Angels have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only wise. This they do with a confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning.' Systematic reasoning is something we could not, as a species or as individuals, possibly do without. But neither, if we are to remain sane, can we possibly do without direct perception, the more unsystematic the better, of the inner and outer worlds into which we have been born.

> This given reality is an infinite which passes all understanding and yet admits of being directly and in some sort totally apprehended. It is a transcendence belonging to another order than the human, and yet it may be present to us as a felt immanence, an experienced participation. To be enlightened is to be aware, always, of total reality in its immanent otherness ... (62-3)

Huxley talks of the variety of possible kinds of, at least, lower-intensity visionary responses. Some who participate

> discover a world of visionary beauty. To others again is revealed the glory, the infinite value and meaningfulness of naked existence, of the given, unconceptualized event. In the final stage of egolessness there is an 'obscure knowledge' that All is in all - that All is actually each. This is as near, I take it, as a finite mind can ever come to 'perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe.' (22)

Huxley's 'neurological' explanation (involving 'perception-valves', and the like), as well as the special character of his own 'experience', lead him to emphasize the radically new vision of physical reality the altered state can bring: 'Visual impressions are greatly intensified and the eye recovers some of the perceptual innocence of childhood, when the sensum was not immediately and automatically subordinated to the concept' (21). He is moved to speculate that jewels, so prominent on icons and in paradisal art, are a kind of 'recollection' of the preternatural colours of transcendental awareness: 'precious stones are precious because they bear a faint resemblance to the glowing marvels seen with the inner eye of the visionary' (84). Stained-glass windows are a stimulus of the same order, having a

similar transcendental effect (87-8). The widespread use of luminous colours in church lighting suggests some recognition by religious authorities of the power of jewelled windows to induce an appropriately mystical frame of mind.

In spite of his mention earlier of the first vision of childhood, Huxley's physiological explanation inhibits interest on his part in explanations of other kinds. He fails to inquire, for example, into a possible subjective mental source for these enhanced perceptions - such as regression to a prior, infantile mode of seeing. As we shall discover, there can be no final and satisfactory account of mysticism which excludes the part that infant perceptions can continue to play in adult mental life.

Huxley's account is forceful, however, in its recognition that the 'horrific' otherside of this sensory paradise might equally be encountered, especially when the unprepared mind is overcome by the unbearable rawness of 'too much reality':

> The fear ... was of being overwhelmed, of disintegrating under pressure of reality greater than a mind, accustomed to living most of the time in a cosy world of symbols, could possibly bear. The literature of religious experience abounds in references to the pains and terrors overwhelming those who have come, too suddenly, face to face with some manifestation of the Mysterium tremendum .... Following Boehme and William Law, we may say that, by unregenerate souls, the divine Light at its full blaze can be apprehended only as a burning, purgatorial fire. An almost identical doctrine is to be found in The Tibetan Book of the Dead, where the departed soul is described as shrinking in agony from the Clear Light of the Void ... in order to rush headlong in to the comforting darkness of selfhood ... (45)

3

Many weighty books have been and will continue to be written on Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis. Since this thesis is not about Lacan - although it makes use of some of his ideas - a comprehensive introduction to his work is beyond its scope. Nonetheless it will be necessary to acquaint the reader briefly with some terms and central concepts, and then to go on to say how they may be adapted to our present needs.

Lacan's unique insight, as is generally conceded, was that all the areas of interest to psychoanalysis are bound up inextricably with questions of language: how it is acquired, how it functions in the creation of our world, what it is. Since the therapy psychoanalysis offers is that of the so-called 'talking cure' - it depends entirely on the dialogue between patient and analyst - its theory is clearly incomplete without an understanding of the psychological function of words. The brilliant linguist Roman Jakobson had already suspected that there were connections to be made between linguistics and Freudian theory[19] (Jakobson 1988: 60), but it was Lacan who actually married psychoanalysis with the developing science of structural linguistics in his remarkable reinterpretation of Freud. So fundamental are both language and psychological development in shaping our world that this theory has implications far beyond its original range.

The place to begin is probably with the 'mirror stage'. According to Lacan, the moment when the infant gains an idea of its own independent existence is crucial. This comes about either through imitation, by identifying itself with some other child of similar age, or by a 'recognition' of itself in some reflecting surface. In each case, there is an identification between the subject and some image it takes as its own, as its 'self': 'The mirror stage is interesting in that it manifests the affective dynamism by which the subject originally identifies himself with the visual Gestalt of his own body: in relation to the still very profound lack of co-ordination of his own motility, it represents an ideal unity, a salutary imago ...' (Lacan[20] 1966: 12;tr. Lemaire[21] 1977: 80).

This union between the child and its image is of course illusory, imaginary in Lacan's terms. Before this point of the mirror stage there is only an undifferentiated reality, containing no true sense of separation between the infant and its mother's body: 'Experience of oneself in the earliest stage of childhood develops, in so far as it refers to one's similar, from a situation experienced as undifferentiated' (1966: 13; tr. Lemaire 1977: 79).

The 'imaginary' mirror stage thus represents a middle, transition point between the Real order, where experience was unmediated by words, and entry into the Symbolic order, governed by language. Thus in the brief space of its first years or months the child passes through all three of Lacan's orders: Real,

Imaginary and Symbolic. In a sense, it parts company finally with none of them, although the last two will dominate its future world, to the exclusion of the Real. Its conscious life will be determined by its 'imaginary' identifications and by the ordering of its environment through the words it learns - from others, inevitably.

Since language is a pre-existent cultural fact to which the child must gain access, it acts as a 'third person' of sorts in the child's world; Lacan calls this entity 'the Other'. To begin with, the father - who, Oedipally, intrudes between the infant and its possession of its mother - represents this 'external' totality, this Other. In a metaphorical sense, the world of words remains under the male sign, a reflection of the power of the father's 'Name'.

Understanding that it must accept the father's rights, since it is powerless to do otherwise, is the child's first experience of 'law' and 'authority'. These forces are associated also with the ordering function of language which the child must come to terms with if it is to take up its new (and perhaps somewhat unwelcome) existence as a social being:

> In the Oedipus, the child moves from an immediate, non-distanced relationship with its mother to a mediate relationship thanks to its insertions into the symbolic order of the Family ... In the Oedipus, the father plays the role of the symbolic Law which establishes the family triangle by actualizing in his person the prohibition of union with the mother.
>
> (Lemaire 1977: 7)

The realisation by the child that he bears his father's name is symbolic of his whole relation to society's world of language, which is always mediated through signs and accompanied by prohibitions. Hence Lacan's pun Le Nom-du-Pere/Non-du-Pere. Even objects, henceforth - like spoons, cups, rattles, balls - are not to be pure items of experience, part of the sensory variety of an unbroken whole, but must be labelled, placed in a prearranged order of use and meaning. It is in this sense that they fall under the sign of the phallus, under the father's domination (though of course by now the mother is participating in his function, too, offering it her support).

As we have seen, this is a story of separations: from the womb, from the mother, from direct and immediate access to reality, both physical and emotional. All this is because of language, which incarnates the split; for in the sign the 'signifier' is both distinguished from, and yet determines, what is 'signified' - a parallel situation to the mirror stage, where the reflected image takes precedence over an intangible reality: 'We can think of the small child contemplating itself before the mirror as a kind of "signifier" ... and of the image it sees in the mirror as a kind of "signified". The image the child sees is somehow the "meaning" of itself' (Eagleton[22] 1983: 166).

It takes little imagination to appreciate the devastating emotional journey represented here. Indeed, 'splitting' (Spaltung in Freud's terms) becomes the main motif of the human mental

world. After all, everything conscious, for this being whose whole development is division, begins with

> the trauma of the primordial moment when the body senses its split from the Real. This experience can neither be included in the Imaginary, the realm of illusory wholeness, nor can it be part of the Symbolic, the domain which grants a conditional identity. The traumatic moment can thus return in psychosis as the experience of the 'fragmented body', unique for every subject, remainder and reminder of this fracture, appearing in art as images of grotesque dismemberment - Lacan cites Bosch. (Wright[23] 1987: 113)

Most potently, the subject's own 'self' is not a whole entity, but a bundle of innate divisions and contradictions - however much he might wish to impose the imaginary 'unity' he discerns in his signifier, his mirror image. But this imaginary self is not really self-subsistent either, for, as part of the world of language, it is inseparably tied to 'the field of the Other'. Hence, 'the subject of the statement', the 'I' we refer to when we talk, exists in entire and utter exile from the 'I' who speaks, 'the subject of the enunciation', about whom, naturally, nothing can be said.

Lacan goes so far to liken this artificial formation, this supposedly unified ego, to a form of neurotic symptom. The ego, says Lacan, is itself

> structured like a symptom .... Inside the subject, it is nothing other than a privileged symptom. It is the human symptom par excellence. The ego is human being's mental illness. (Lacan[24] 1975[b]: 22; tr. Felman 1987: 12)

According to Lacan's view of it, desire itself (as opposed to the mere 'demand' of, say, natural appetite for a specific attainable object) actually comes about directly because of the subject's divided state in language, arising from 'the split (Spaltung) which the subject undergoes by virtue of being a subject only in so far as he speaks' (Lacan 1977: 269).

> Demand always 'bears on something other than the satisfaction which it calls for', and each time the demand of the child is answered by the satisfaction of its needs so this 'something other' is relegated to the place of its original impossibility. Lacan terms this 'desire'. It can be defined as the 'remainder' of the subject, something which is always left over, but which has no content as such. Desire functions much as the zero unit in the numerical chain - its place is both constitutive and empty.
> (Rose in Mitchell and Rose[25] 1982: 32)

Thus desire itself is an effect of language. It comes into being because of an essential 'lack' that the sign represents: 'the object that is longed for only comes into existence as an object when it is lost to the baby or infant. Thus any satisfaction that might subsequently be attained will always contain this loss within it' (Mitchell in Mitchell and Rose 1982: 6). But there is also a deeper lack, the yearning for a lost wholeness that was ended by coming into language at all.

> Desire persists as an effect of a primordial absence and it therefore indicates that, in this area, there is something fundamentally impossible about satisfaction itself. It is this process that, to Lacan, lies behind Freud's statement that 'We must reckon with the possibility that something in the nature of the sexual instinct itself is unfavourable to the realisation of complete satisfaction'. (Ibid.)

Man remains a creature tormented by the idea of a lost unity.

> At the same time 'identity' and 'wholeness' remain precisely at the level of fantasy. Subjects in language persist in their belief that somewhere there is a point of certainty, of knowledge and of truth ... The Other appears to hold the 'truth' of the subject and the power to make good its loss. But this is the ultimate fantasy. (Rose in Mitchell and Rose 1982: 32)

The sexual desires themselves participate in this fantasy, 'each sex coming to stand, mythically and exclusively, for that which could satisfy and complete the other' (1982: 33).

Because he is lost in language, the goal man desires escapes from him eternally along a chain of signifiers which has no end: 'Signification always relates back to another signification' (Lacan 1975: 263); the meaning of words mostly turns out, metonymically, to be other words. This is only to be expected, since '[t]hings only signify within the symbolic order. The emergence of the symbol creates a new order of being in the relations between humans' and Reality: 'a symbolic order, from which the other orders, imaginary and real, take their place and are ordered' (Séminaire I, xix, 263; tr. in MacCannell[26] 1986: 46).

Lacan sums up the subject's state as follows:

> the subject as such is uncertain because he is divided by the effects of language. Through the effects of speech, the subject always realizes himself more in the Other, but he is already pursuing there more than half of himself. He will simply find his desire ever more divided, pulverized, in the circumscribable metonymy of speech. (Lacan 1986: 188)

To an extent objects themselves as the 'objects' of desire are mere 'hallucinations'(167) of the pleasure principle; they are unreal also because we know objects not directly but only as picked out by words, as having their set (but not fixed) place in the differential order of meaning and desire. It is because everything he wants rests on language that man's desire is always 'the desire of the Other' (158); though not even the totality of language itself could actually satisfy him.

Object small a (as distinct from the large A of L'Autre [Other]) is Lacan's term for the thing we 'signify' that we think we want. Of course, the self is only one among such word-produced objects, 'a privileged object, which has emerged from some primal separation, from some self-mutilation induced by the very approach of the real, whose name in our algebra, is the objet a' (83).

This verbal 'uncertainty', this propensity of words to chase away from us into the field of meaning, is potentially of great use to the poet, however dispiriting it might be to the philospher. It is a special freedom which in a way, guarantees him his occupation; and, at the same time, sets him and his function over and against the normal uses of speech. Because of its workings, in the poem it is always the structures themselves which determine the exact meanings of the word; just as, on a larger scale,

> [t]he word is instituted in the structure of a semantic work, that of language. The word never has only one use. Every word always has a beyond, sustains several functions, envelops several meanings. Behind what discourse says, there is what it means (wants to say), and behind what it wants to say there is another meaning, and this process will never be exhausted.
> (I, xix, 267; tr. in MacCannell 1986: 47)

In a way, this expansion of meaning infinitely into the unsaid is the unconscious itself, a dimension of the structure of the Other: 'The discovery of the unconscious ... is that the implications of meaning infinitely exceed the signs manipulated by the individual' (Lacan[27], Séminaire II, 1978; tr. in Felman 1987: 77). Hence Lacan can say 'the unconscious is outside' (Lacan 1986: 123) and also, perhaps less happily, 'the unconscious is the discourse of the Other'.

One might indeed see the unconscious as a kind of poet manque, working in the non-existent 'gap' between words, carrying the sliding of language to its extremes of allowed possibility. But this cannot happen at random; the unconscious obeys its own rules of combination, has its own 'grammar' and rhetoric, dependent on condensation (metaphor) and displacement (metonymy). Hence Lacan can claim that the 'unconscious is structured like a language' (20), producing its own combinations 'quite as elaborate as at the level of the conscious' (24).

The implications of this for criticism are summed up by Felman as follows: 'articulated knowledge is by definition what cannot exhaust its own self-knowledge' (1987: 77-8): '"It is obvious," says Lacan, "that in analytic discourse, what is at

stake is nothing other than what can be read; what can be read beyond what the subject has been incited to say"' (Felman 1987: 21; reference from Le Séminaire XX, 1975: 29, Felman's translation). And yet there are rules for criticism, too: not all interpretations are possible, Lacan says; only those 'that must not be missed' (1986: 250).

4

It must be evident how applicable Lacan's model of psychic life is to any discussion of mysticism. For both Lacan and the mystic, objects as such belong to a partly illusory screen of appearances. Bearing only a contingent reality, they are not reality itself. Language, too, is seen as a closed system, unable to contain or communicate anything - any reality - outside its own system of differences. Both psychoanalyst and mystic are opposed to 'systematic' knowledge, whether of language or idea. Above all, for both figures the everyday self has no ultimate validity; for the mystic, indeed, it may be discarded and forgotten in the ultimate moment of cosmic consciousness.

On the other hand, one probable point of difference between Lacan and the mystic lies in the use that may be made of such knowledge. It would not really be proper, to Lacan's way of thought, to speak of a 'higher' reality; especially one that might, in principle, be accessible in some other way than -

perhaps - through mystical experience. So long as we think or talk - or act or perceive - we are part of the system of signs:

> we must hear the irrepressible cries that arise from the best as well as the worst, attempting to bring them back to the beginning of the chase, with the words that truth has given us as viaticum: 'I speak,' adding; 'There is no other speech but language.' The rest is drowned in their tumult.
>
> 'Logomachia!' goes the strophe on one side. 'What are you doing with the preverbal, gesture and mime, tone, and tune of a song ...? To which others no less animated give the antistrophe: 'Everything is language: language when my heart beats faster when I'm in a funk, and if my patient flinches at the throbbing of an aeroplane at its zenith it is a way of saying how she remembers the last bomb attack.' (1977: 124)

From every point of view there is no other reality, so long as we are using speech to talk about it. Hence the Real must be defined 'as the impossible', Lacan underlines (1986: 167).

And yet as the only available or promising 'place' to locate the mystical experience (and of course, by using these spatial terms we are already being metaphorical and hence, in this context, inaccurate; we are already bumping our heads against the limits of language) we are bound to investigate Lacan's concept of the Real.

According to Benvenuto and Kennedy[28]

> The Real seems to include the domain of the inexpressible, of what cannot be symbolized, and to be the Order where the subject meets with death and inexpressible enjoyment .... It also seems to be connected to nature, as a 'brute external force' that has to be controlled
>
> (Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986: 166)

We see that 'the Real' is to Lacan essentially that domain which we know by inference to exist 'outside life', insofar as life is what is known and constructed through the medium of words. The Real is both 'the impossible' (Lacan 1986: 167) - and also, interestingly, the inevitable point of return: the 'real is that which always comes back to the same place - to the place where the subject in so far as he thinks ... does not meet it' (49). Since the Real (in spite of all we say) does exist, it will have its way: in the end, words will find themselves stumbling over it 'in the dark', so to speak - without ever effecting its appropriation.

Hence the link between brute nature - that area physicists try to delimit and predict through their formulae - and death. Death marks the limit of life and is as inexpressible as is jouissance, some of whose character it is traditionally held to share. The Elizabethans, in seeing sexual ecstasy as akin to a dying, were simply acknowledging the irremediable elusiveness of both states, states that evade equally the powers of human thought and language.

Lacan's former pupil Catherine Clément[29] notes some additional ways in which the Real may be expressed: the Real

> 'does not wait, and in particular does not wait for the subject, since it expects nothing from speech' (Ecrits 1966: 388). It is 'a punctuation without a text,' pure act, raw behaviour, sudden and unfettered. 'It is identical with its existence, noise from which one can hear everything, and ready to demolish what the "reality principle" constructs under the name external world' (Ibid.) .... The Lancanian (sic) concept of the

> Real, then, partakes of both the Id's disconcerting and unpredictable powers - always ahead of its time - and the terrifying archaic images associated with the Mother. (Clement 1983: 169)

So, obviously and inevitably, there are many different ways of approaching the entity in question, and no single means of gaining a clear idea of it. Lacan, the interpreter of dreams, suggests a helpful analogy: that we could, if we wished, 'see the dream as the counterpart of the representation' (Lacan 1986: 60), as the equivalent of our waking word-bound perception (although we cannot of course wake from this 'waking' as we can from the dream). If so, then the 'real has to be sought beyond the dream - in what the dream has enveloped, hidden from us, behind the lack of representation of which there is only one representative'; i.e. its remainder, the image, the signifier. This hidden element of the Real is something like Freud's 'kernel of our being' (Kern unseres Wesens), the point 'where the dream reaches down into the unknown' (Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986: 176).

> The real may be represented by the accident, the noise, the small element of reality, which is evidence that we are not dreaming. But, on the other hand, this reality is not so small, for what wakes us is the other reality hidden behind the lack of that which takes the place of representation ... (1986: 60)

And yet Lacan's meaning still remains elusive, his expressions as delphic as ever. Is he alluding to Sleeping Beauty, woken only by desire? Or passing hints about the source of the Freudian 'total drive'? No doubt in this nearly

unspeakable region ambivalent and 'tricky' speech is the only appropriate kind.

What we are justified in concluding, however, is that, phenomenologically speaking, Reality is neither purely mental or physical, psychological or natural, but something having the force of both; it is somewhere where these verbal oppositions no longer apply.

Given all this information, what should we conclude? Is the Real then the site of the mystical experience? What Lacan himself would almost certainly tell us is that we cannot properly say.

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Chapter 1: LACAN AND MYSTICISM.

As it happens, in the final decade of his life Lacan turned in his seminars to matters bearing directly on the mystical experience. The first section of this chapter is to be devoted to a brief account of Lacan's twentieth seminar series, which he delivered from 1972 to 1973. It was published in 1975 as Encore[1]. I shall be concentrating especially on chapters 6 and 7, entitled 'God and the Jouissance of The Woman' (note that the final 'The' [La] is printed with a slash, i.e. crossed out) and 'A Love Letter', respectively. These chapters have been translated by Jacqueline Rose[2] (in Mitchell and Rose 1982: 137-161), and I shall mainly be using her version of the text.

In this late work Lacan turned to the topic of Woman's status in the symbolic world, exploring the way the feminine is recognised and figured by the language system. In the seminars of his last decade Lacan seems to be pushing psychoanalysis to its limits - to the limits of what may intelligibly be said about the human psyche. Thus his approach here is even more than usually provisional and experimental: an attempt - as if from a Pisgah mount - to sketch outlines of future directions of psychoanalytic thought. What is of special interest to our present purposes is that this project led Lacan to important statements about mysticism and the ultimate Reality of the mystics - which is, in his view, associated with the 'feminine' aspect, the non-existent beyond, of language. Perhaps most surprising of all these statements, to some eyes, is his announcement that the mystic

writings are 'neither idle gossip nor mere verbiage, in fact they are the best thing you can read - note right at the bottom of the page, Add the Ecrits of Jacques Lacan, which is of the same order' (1982: 147).

The ironic and paradoxical language in which these seminars are couched has led to often very divergent interpretations of them - as, I am sure, was actually Lacan's intention. Many find themselves uncertain whether he is debunking the idea of a distinct and separate feminine identity, or acting in complicity with the proponents of such psycho-sexual 'essences'. The truth is that he is actually doing both; for after all his statements come from what in his view are the very limits of what can be said. And the right (though unsayable) attitude is that both perspectives are correct; which view we happen to uphold is determined by where we stand to view the question.

If, for example, we choose to adopt the standpoint of language itself (which, in a sense, we must, for we are language), then to speak of a beyond is nonsense - and to associate this 'beyond' with femininity only compounds the absurdity. For, from the point of view of language - and hence of anyone, male or female, who speaks from a position 'inside' language - what cannot possibly be articulated cannot be conceived. In effect, it does not exist.

Such an argument is effectively impugnable: it is entirely consistent and logically complete - provided that we take language as our starting-point and our only sure ground.

Yet, on the other hand, there are those who suspect that since language is human-created, it cannot possibly be suited to circumscribe the whole of reality, or adequately convey all the kinds of experience there are or possibly could be. Some confirmation of their view comes from such unexpected sources as quantum physics, which itself encounters a microworld which ordinary language and logic cannot adequately describe.

The real difficulty for such persons arises when, acting on their suspicions, they rashly ignore Lacan's warnings and try to do the impossible, to see beyond the bounds of language. What they encounter there may not even be a 'nothing', exactly. There may actually be 'something' there, a something which resembles the traditional domain of the mystics - which Lacan himself acknowledges. The problem is, they see <u>what cannot be said</u> - and they can tell us nothing precise about it, for it is by definition 'beyond all words'.

Lacan admits that the difficulty we find ourselves in is not 'mere verbiage', or easily dismissible, as we might hope. Benvenuto and Kennedy account for this 'double' or equivocal position of his in <u>Encore</u> as follows:

> Lacan considered that the search for the origins of the subject, or what he ambiguously called the 'limit experience of the non-existent' (what is not created by language), had led many analysts to jump off the tracks of language. In the search for the 'pure feeling' which corresponded to the search for the thing-in-itself, they found themselves running deperately from one infantile phantom to another. In Lacan's view this desperate quest, which represented a turning away from what can be represented, could only come to a halt in front of the mysterious Real Order, the order where life meets only death and enjoyment. But the Real Order cannot be spoken about, for it does not belong to language. Even though he may speak, the subject is not allowed to

> know about his beginnings; he can only describe a chain of discourse around the Real which always slips away from it. All human knowledge according to Lacan is built on this 'ignorance', or what he described in partly philosophical terms as 'the original repression of the experience of not-being'.
>
> After birth the visible world dominates, and one can say that sight guarantees the existence of things over what cannot be seen. Thus the visibility of the phallus predominates over the black hole of the female genitals. The phallus would seem to represent the knowledge of the world, and the vagina another knowledge, or rather what Lacan called a 'not-knowledge'. The phallic function includes the woman as a contingency, a part singled out within 'the gates', or 'the bars' of the feminine side, the 'dark side'. The place of the subject's origin (in the woman) is barred, or repressed. The woman functions as 'not-all' (pas-toute) ...
>
> (Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986: 186)

So Lacan's own recourse to ambivalent and oblique language in order to articulate the truth about our psychological situation, is something forced upon him by the limitations of words themselves, by the fact that he is obliged to straddle a paradox when discussing the mystical experience and its origins. (But when, in a sense, was he not in this position? Perhaps we have simply worked our way down to the most fundamental of paradoxes, that on which all the others rest.)

Thus the awkwardness, the ambiguity, the paradoxicality, arise because he is attempting to address the nature of the beyond of language from a standpoint still within its borders. And as a scientist, a researcher, the heir of Freud's rationalism, he is surely bound to adopt the necessary prejudices of the symbolic along with its perspective. As if to emphasize this necessity, he indeed sometimes slips into an almost chauvinistic tone when talking of the 'Woman', the

'feminine', whose ethos pervades this condition of being 'beyond language'. (Read in the way I suggest, the Encore essays, with all their apparent chauvinism, actually become a remarkable and unique triumph of half-ironic style.)

In the extract above, Benvenuto and Kennedy allow us to see why it is that the mystical experience should happen to be inscribed on the 'female' side. If the experience actually involves a regression to a time in everyone's private history when words are not yet the main agents in the subjective construction of reality, then this is also a time when the mother's influence is paramount: indeed at this stage the child - of either sex - cannot yet differentiate him/her self from the mother's being. To attach a 'female' character to the wordless 'not-knowledge' of the mystics is also appropriate in other ways: symbolically speaking, the 'absence' or 'black hole' of the female genitals contrasts with the perhaps even too-assertive 'presence' of the male phallus; while, on their side, words are constantly offering us a similar illusion of presence, a promise which they cannot actually fulfil. Again, since after the Oedipal event words are associated with the 'Name of the Father', with 'male' law and authority, it seems entirely fitting that the pre-verbal realm should somehow be seen as a specifically 'female' domain.

These connections may not be exclusively metaphorical or metonymic ones, in the event - though they are, of course, largely that. It may be that Lacan is actually tapping a profound source of influence on the way our culture perennially interprets ideas of 'masculinity' and

'femininity'. Perhaps the Jungian 'animus' and 'anima' have their true source in subliminal responses to these psychological relations. Into this area, however, Lacan refuses to be drawn. He remains indefatigably paradoxical in his treatment of such subjects.

Despite his apparent adoption of the 'phallogocentric' point of view in Encore (and his seemingly cock-sure support for the supremacy of words) there is a hidden counter-meaning which arises - because, I think, at the very same time, his judgment, his intuition, rather wickedly and perversely encourage him to enroll himself on a different, perhaps even a superior side: the side of the woman, which does not, properly speaking, exist - or, at least, 'not-all' of it does. 'On the whole one takes up this side by choice - women being free to do so if they so choose' (143): for, as Virginia Woolf also maintained nearly fifty years earlier, biological gender has nothing to do with psychological 'sexual' temperament; it cannot predetermine the gender divisions of the psyche:

> when any speaking being whatever lines up under the banner of women it is by being constituted as not all that they are placed within the phallic function. It is this that defines the ... the what? - the woman precisely, except that The woman can only be written with The crossed through. There is no such thing as The woman ... of her essence, she is not all. (144)

A very good example of a male who made the 'feminine' identification, in Lacan's view, is St. John of the Cross. His example is also useful for Lacan in so far as it adumbrates and encapsulates many elements of what he intends to discuss in these Encore seminars:

> The mystical ... is something serious, which a few people teach us about, and most often women or highly gifted people like Saint John of the Cross - since, when you are male, you ... can also put yourself on the side of not-all. There are men who are just as good as women. It does happen. And who therefore feel just as good. Despite, I won't say their phallus, despite what encumbers them on that score, they get the idea, they sense that there must be a jouissance which goes beyond. That is what we call a mystic. (147)

Lacan raises discussion of the concept of the feminine orgasm vastly above the rather unfortunate level at which Freud left it - though, of course, Lacan does not want us to suppose that he is literally or exclusively discussing women's bodily sensations: indeed, most of what he says is meant symbolically. Much of the time, he is rather impishly playing, for his own symbolic purposes, with popular ideas of the different quality or duration of the female orgasm. On the other hand, perhaps he really does wish to imply that there is a separate, a 'masculine' or a 'feminine', way of being in orgasm. What might differ here would not be precisely the sensations involved, but the attitudes and expectations that precede them. The 'feminine' way of experiencing orgasm, then, might relate it not to power or domination but to a form of mystical transcendence.

Whatever the context, for him the true feminine ecstasy is that which entirely escapes the domain of the phallus, associated symbolically with the signifier, with language, and hence with the Other and the domination of Culture. It is, potentially, a different realm of being: an impermissible supplement to the symbolic order; 'a supplementary jouissance

(144)', the nature of which is radically Other to the very nature of speech.

> There is a jouissance, since we are dealing with jouissance, a jouissance of the body which is, if the expression be allowed, beyond the phallus. That would be pretty good and it would give a different substance to the WLM [Women's Liberation Movement]. A jouissance beyond the phallus .... (145)

This unique mode of experience belongs to a 'her', then, which is not precisely identifiable with all the female sex: this 'her', after all, is a '"her" which does not exist and which signifies nothing' (145). Indeed, strictly speaking, 'she' knows nothing - and certainly can say nothing - about 'it'; and then, it 'does not happen to all of them' (Ibid.). Nonetheless, the psychological feminine only has meaning at all in relation to this jouissance, this ecstasy beyond all speaking:

> There is woman only as excluded by the nature of things which is the nature of words, and it has to be said that if there is one thing they themselves are complaining about enough at the moment, it is well and truly that - only they don't know what they are saying, which is all the difference between them and me. (144)

Lacan's jibe is as multilayered as ever. He 'knows what he is talking about' as representative of the phallus and language, which women don't; and yet 'all the difference' between the woman's position and his own is simply that he 'knows' (even if he can't exactly say) where the 'feminine' stands in relation to discourse. As it happens, just while he is realising the shortcomings of the world of words and of material culture, and the corresponding importance of the

'feminine' beyond it, women themselves are clamouring for a larger stake in the power-relations of the formerly masculine State. Wryly he implies that, aside from his 'masculine' aim of advancing conceptual knowledge by specifying the feminine domain, he places himself on the Woman's side - whatever actual women may be doing or desiring.

The difficulties of expression uncovered here are after all nothing new in Lacan. It is clear we are coming close to the source of the mi-dire, the 'half-speak' he has used throughout his career, partly in imitation of the writings of the female paranoiacs whom he studied at its start: Marcelle, Aimée, and the notorious Papin sisters. Catherine Clément draws together the two phases - clinician and lecturer - of Lacan's history according to just this theme:

> From the mystic to the madman is but a stone's throw ... Thus it was logical that Lacan should have begun this thinking with insane women - and the logic of that choice became more and more evident with each new page that he wrote and each new word that he uttered. He never stopped thinking about women: Hadewijch of Antwerp followed Marcelle, Saint Theresa followed the Papin sisters - always the women were the same. Whether locked up in hospitals where Lacan discovered them or sanctified by a tradition that idealized them even as it misunderstood them, 'inspired' women inspired Lacan throughout his long life. This was one of his principal lives: the most enigmatic, most difficult, and most recalcitrant of all, just like female ecstasy (jouissance), with which Lacan, in declaring himself to be a mystic, sought to identify himself ... The mystics who aroused Lacan's interest [at first] were of a quite different sort [from the Beguines or Bernadette of Lisieux]. Their raptures were criminal; their pleasures took the form of actions. Aimée and the Papin sisters were insane and they were mystics, but they were also criminals.
> (Clément 1983: 66-7)

What the extract above clarifies for us is the nature of an essential difference between Lacan's approach and Freud's; this difference seems to lie in a certain ambiguity in Lacan's professed respect for rationality. Profound conceptual thinker and clinical doctor that he was, there was an anarchic strain in his dealings with authority and order that is not found in Freud, who is entirely on the side of the civilising superego.

This temperamental gulf is discernable in the qualitative differences in their styles. According to Clément, Lacan - this man 'who searched for the correct distance' - was actually obsessed 'by the love of madness throughout his life' (78); and though he was a kind of mystic as well as a healer, 'Mysticism is incompatible with maintaining the correct distance'.

It is women especially who are popularly associated with the inability to 'maintain the correct distance'; and Lacan's identification with the Woman is carried into his mi-dire, the subversion of his own language. This necessarily involves the relation of his speech to truth, through the knowledge that there is more to truth than can be spoken. Medire, upon which midire puns, is after all the French word for 'slander' (35):

> 'I tell the truth - not the whole truth.' When the truth is conceived 'whole,' it cannnot be anything but the complement of the man. But the truth is not 'the whole truth,' it eludes the grasp of man, his culture, and his language. And since any privation dialectically entails a 'surplus,' since to assert without negation and to assert by means of a double negative are not the same thing, if women [sic] is not 'the whole truth' she will enjoy a privilege that men lack. To tell the truth, she will enjoy - simply that. For the 'surplus,' which Lacan says is a supplement rather than a complement, is female orgasm (jouissance). (Clément 1983: 63)

But clearly this jouissance - though it is 'of the body' - is not a matter of the sexual organs. It is, however, sexual in the sense that everything that relates to the human identity has a sexual origin, in the primal relation of the infant to its mother or father. In this context (it needs, finally, to be said) 'sexual' simply refers to a desire involving, potentially, the whole being. And in the mystical ecstasy the whole being of the mystic is absorbed and transformed; the ordinary 'self' is seen for the small thing it is and left behind.

Hence Lacan is correct in identifying this special kind of ecstasy as sexual, in essence: a plus-de-jouir (meaning, significantly, both 'surplus joy' and 'no more enjoyment': for in a sense it is non-existent). Though mysticism and sexuality seem far apart, the cases of the mystic women Hadewijch of Antwerp or Saint Theresa show many signs of the connection:

> As regards the Hadewijch in question, it is the same as for Saint Theresa - you only have to go and look at Bernini's statue in Rome to understand immediately that she's coming, there is no doubt about it. And what is her jouissance, her coming from? It is clear that the essential testimony of the mystics is that they are experiencing it but know nothing about it. (1982: 147)

Lacan omits to discuss certain other features of Bernini's sculpture, the 'Ecstasy of St T[h]eresa' - such as, for example, the piercing dart being administered by an oddly smiling - even smirking - pre-adolescent cherub. Yet such elements are perhaps just as relevant to our understanding of

the work. For it is in the emblem of returning childhood - the amoral pre-Oedipal realm before knowledge of good and evil - that we may find hints of the source of Teresa's heavenly transport. (Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the infant cherubs in art always function with this significance: they are primal messengers, psychopomps, from 'other' realms of being, which also exist outside [before] speech.) So this is, we may say, where Theresa comes <u>from</u>, in every sense.

In view of this meaning (though Lacan avoids its precise articulation), to talk of mystical spirituality simply as sexual 'sublimation' would be a vast over-reduction:

> What was tried at the end of the last century, at the time of Freud, by all kinds of worthy people in the circle of Charcot and the rest, was an attempt to reduce the mystical to questions of fucking. If you look carefully, that is not what it is all about. Might not this <u>jouissance</u> which one experiences and knows nothing of, be that which puts us on the path of ex-istence? And why not interpret one face of the Other, the God Face, as supported by feminine <u>jouissance</u>? (1982: 147)

The Heideggerian-sounding term 'ex-<u>is</u>tence' seems at once to imply both our coming into being as 'selves' from a prior undifferentiated <u>pleroma</u>, as well as the contrary possibility of 'ex-iting' from this present plane of supposed reality in the manner of the mystics. In other words, it betrays all the inevitable paradoxicality characterising Lacan's broad stance.

Catherine Clément correctly underlines that Lacan properly belongs among that auspicious list of thinkers 'for whom mysticism and religion have nothing to do with each other' (1983: 66). The most Lacan will admit about God's existence is contained in his announcement that '<u>God is</u>

unconscious' (Lacan 1986: 59). However, we must note that in stating this he is self-consciously placing himself in opposition to Nietzsche's 'myth of the God is dead - which, personally, I feel much less sure about, as a myth of course, than most contemporary intellectuals, which is in no sense a declaration of theism, nor of faith in the resurrection' (1986: 27). Indeed, Lacan sees considerable affinity between psychoanalysis and 'the religious register':

> there is no doubt some affinity between the research that seeks and the religious register. In the religious register, the phrase is often used - You would not seek me if you had not already found me [sic]. The already found is already behind, but stricken by something like oblivion. Is it not, then, a complaisant, endless search that is then opened up? (1986: 7)

Here again we find the suggestion that it is into the deep past, rather than into an unknown future, that we must look in order to appreciate the force and power of religious leanings.

That God is unconscious in Lacan's reckoning, implies no loss of power on His part - rather the reverse, in fact. If the unconscious is 'the discourse of the Other', then, in a sense, God is the Other, or, at least, an aspect of the Other. In this guise he 'lays down the law', just as the Other does: 'That the symbolic is the support of that which was made into God, is beyond doubt' (1982: 154).

But God's being is not entirely exhausted by this formulation - especially if one takes the desire of mystics into account. It is clearly not this God they are relating to, the God who determines language; hence the paradox: 'one can see that while this may not make for two Gods, nor does it

make for one alone' (1982: 147). It is clear that this other mystical God-face - whose exact location remains unexplained - is closer to the Aristotelian 'unmoved mover' than it is to the judgmental God of the Old Testament:

> it becomes clear that the supreme Being, which is manifestly mythical in Aristotle, the immobile sphere from which originate all movements, whether changes, engenderings, movements, translations or whatever, is situated in the place, the opaque place of the jouissance of the Other - that Other which, if she existed, the woman might be. It is in so far as her jouissance is radically Other that the woman has a relation to God ... (153)

I shall have to leave detailed discussion of the existence of these not-quite-two Gods to my chapters on 'Occult Fiction' (Chs. 8 and 9), where their joint bearings and ramifications should become plain. Suffice it to say that they appear there in a very different character, whose natures are prefigured in Lacan's mysterious statements of 1964 upon the dark Other:

> the offering to obscure gods of an object of sacrifice is something to which few subjects can resist succumbing, as if under some monstrous spell. Ignorance, indifference, an averting of the eyes may explain beneath what veil this mystery still remains hidden. But for whoever is capable of turning a courageous gaze towards this phenomenon - and, once again, there are certainly few who do not succumb to the fascination of the sacrifice in itself - the sacrifice signifies that, in the object of our desires, we try to find evidence for the presence of the desire of this Other that I call here the dark God. (1986: 275)

Whatever may be said of battles among the gods, it is certain that in our own experience we find two principles at war when it comes to this question of the jouissance; indeed, two kinds of jouissance whose opposition might surprise us. We

find that phallic enjoyment attempts to circumscribe and exclude the alien feminine ecstasy, at its very heart.

The difference between these varieties of bliss is well characterised by Jacqueline Rose: 'In relation to the earlier texts we could say that woman no longer masquerades, she defaults: "the jouissance of the woman does not go without saying, that is, without the saying of truth", whereas for the man "his jouissance suffices which is precisely why he understands nothing"' (Reference from Seminar XXI, vii: 16; Rose in Mitchell and Rose 1982: 53). This 'defaulting' from the symbolic is something that male enjoyment will hardly tolerate; and, after all, it is the phallus that signifies.

Nonetheless, in spite of all its self-importance, Lacan is hardly complimentary with regard to the pleasure of this phallus which upholds the signifying function. Indeed, he actually has this to say: 'phallic jouissance. What is it? - other than this, sufficiently stressed by the importance of masturbation in our practice, the jouissance of the idiot' (1982: 152).

We see how the phallus and its representatives, to whom authority, precedent, and the maintenance of law are paramount, will do all in their power to extirpate this enjoyment which should not exist. That they will excommunicate that which puts all their structures in question, goes without saying. Benvenuto and Kennedy outline the situation thus:

> Lacan explains the woman's enjoyment as having a something extra, supplementary, 'encore!'. She has a surplus of enjoyment which cannot be integrated into language, unless it is placed under a prohibition, such as the law of castration. ... The surplus of

> enjoyment left over by language becomes the unconfessable crime which is pursued by the law of the father, who is the upholder of the phallus as legislative power. The law looks for the truth, but only to put it behind bars, to keep truth on the run, from one signifier to another; the truth retreats and re-appears like a mirror-image, a semblant, it moves in and out like waves lapping on the shore, still it goes on, encore ... disguised, mute, fading away, ungraspable.
> (Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986: 190-1)

The 'bars' mentioned are of course the typographical bars dividing signifier from signified. In its attempts to 'hold down' the sliding of the signified beneath it, the signifier sees its greatest threat in a jouissance which seeks to escape its limits entirely. 'The linguistic bar between signifier and signified now comes to take on a new meaning - the subject is barred to jouissance' (Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986: 180).

Because 'accomplished discourse, incarnation of absolute knowledge, is the instrument of power, the sceptre and the property of those who know' (Lacan Seminar II[3]; tr. MacCannell[4] 1986: 7), in its guise as power, the control of the signifier is - albeit unconsciously - ranged against this intruder, this 'feminine' experience of being which defies its absolute rule and authority.

This state of affairs is compounded by the fact that '[t]here is, as Lacan rightly pointed out, a disquieting ignorance about feminine sexuality, almost as if such ignorance were something inherent in language itself' (1986: 189): women, even women analysts, do not seem readily capable of analysing what constitutes their 'difference'. Lacan suggests that this is because that difference is centred in what escapes language altogether.

Thus from the start there seems something dangerous about female jouissance, this form of enjoyment which inherently defies linguistic expression. What is especially interesting in this is that it is pleasure itself - including the male variety of jouissance - which is set against its extraordinary counterpart. We are speaking here of the Pleasure Principle of Freud, that which goes to sustain the Ego - which is itself nothing but the creation of its own pleasures. And, of course, mystical jouissance is threatening to the self and its existence: 'For it is pleasure that sets the limits on jouissance, pleasure as that which binds incoherent life together, until another, unchallengeable prohibition arises': the law of the Father, which channels pleasure into socially appropiate forms (Lacan 1977: 319).

> Pleasure, for Lacan, is bound to desire as a defence against Jouissance, and is a prohibition against going beyond a certain limit of jouissance. Jouissance, like death, represents something whose limits cannot be overcome. In Lacan's thought the 'other' of life, the negativity to be overcome, non-being (in Freudian terms the death drive) paradoxically becomes the centre of life.
> (Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986: 179)

It may be because it is innately 'unlimited', without bounds, that jouissance poses a threat to the borders and boundaries of the rational conceptual world. Its ultimate limits are unbreachable only because they cannot be discovered. In this, once again, it notably resembles the state of death.

It is because of the wide disparity between the two kinds of enjoyment that Lacan makes the astonishing declaration that there is no sexual relation.

After all, for the two varieties of jouissance to interrelate there would have to be a crossing over the line of language into its beyond, which is impossible. Again, there is no sexual relation because, owing to the dominance of the phallic signifier in our everyday lives, in sex it is the clothes, the signifiers, that relate, not the people. The situation - where people relate sexually to images, not the humans behind them - is like the story of Picasso's parrot, who bonded with its master's clothes:

> Pro-menade: Clothes - that promises la ménade; take them off and you have the ménade [Bacchante]. To enjoy the body when it has no clothes on leaves intact the question of what makes the One, i.e. the question of identification. All love is like the parakeet, who identified with Picasso's clothing.
> (XX, Encore, i, 12; tr. in MacCannell 51-2)

As this extract indicates, the question of the sexual relation brings into prominence the problem of the 'One'. What real meaning can 'one' have in this relationless context? Certainly, the appeal of the woman - 'as the object which envelopes an absence, the lack of the phallus - unchains the desire to be One again. But, as Lacan understood it, sexual intercourse does not work for the lovers of One' (Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986: 187). (We shall have to return to this important problem of the One in the following section.)

As Lacan's 'promenade' statement indicates, woman is not man's complement, but his supplement - and that is very

different. Beneath the outward signifiers of our culture (indeed, few items could better represent the relations of individual and Other than our clothes, those products of the external dictates of fashion and display which still we call our own) lies not our individual embodied self, but only the unpredictable and chaotic frenzy of the maenad: the infinite and unknowable feminine bacchante, whose dance denies all individuation.

'Lacan has discovered that [what we ordinarily talk of as] sexuality exists only at the level of representation ... Lacan writes that we can never know the body except as a form, or figure' (MacCannell 1986: 52). In other words, the body - at least whenever we think about it - is itself only known to us as a representation - not, as we thought, something continuous with our very self.

Yet the very selves we mean when we speak of ourselves or others have very little more than the status of clothes - they too are representations, signifiers, part of the world of language which is not that of the Real. Beneath this level of words lies only the Lust-Ich: he who speaks, but about whom nothing can really be known (the enunciating subject); and, of course, the hidden side of his desire. In his statement above, Lacan gives us every reason to believe that this desire (impossible desire before any 'object') should itself be characterised as feminine, as having the femininity of the maenad.

The 'absence' that characterises the true sexual relation, then, is encountered in analytic practice only as 'a

resistance, the silence which represents the impossibility of knowing or speaking' (Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986: 184): 'The analytic discourse keeps bumping into an empty space, the area excluded by language'(Ibid.).

This feminine 'difference' that Lacan locates has inspired some of his female pupils - such as Michèlle Montrelay[5], Luce Irigaray[6] and, to an extent, Julia Kristeva[7] (insofar as she wishes for a 'regressive extinction of symbolic capabilities' [Kristeva 1980: 270]) - to valorize the role of the pre-Oedipal mother in this regard, as emblem of this radically 'different' existence:

> The objective is to retrieve the woman from the dominance of the phallic term and from language at one and the same time. What this means is that femininity is assigned to a point of origin prior to the mark of symbolic difference and the law. The privileged relationship of women to that origin gives them access to an archaic form of expressivity outside the circuit of linguistic exchange. This point of origin is in the maternal body, an undifferentiated space, and yet one in which the girl child recognises herself. The girl then has to suppress or devalue that fullness of recognition in order to line up within the order of the phallic term .... Women are returned, therefore, in the account and to each other - against the phallic term but also against the loss of origin which Lacan's account is seen to imply. It is therefore a refusal of division which gives the woman access to a different strata [sic] of language, where words and things are not differentiated, and the real of the maternal body threatens or holds off woman's access to prohibition and the law.
>
> (Rose in Mitchell and Rose 1982: 54-5)

On the whole, Lacan himself was unhappy about this development among some of his female followers; his reasons for unease have, I think, been misunderstood. To some extent Encore itself was a reply to Irigaray, who was actually

expelled from the movement in 1973. Jacqueline Rose accounts for the disagreement as follows:

> For Lacan, as we have seen, there is no pre-discursive reality ('How return, other than by means of a special discourse, to a pre-discursive reality?', Seminar XX: 33), no place prior to the law which is available and can be retrieved. And there is no feminine outside language....'there is nothing in the unconscious which accords with the body'. (Seminar 21 Jan. [1982: 165]; Rose in Mitchell and Rose 1982: 55)

Perhaps the problem here is simply that Montrelay and Irigary have seen only one side of the question, Rose another. For the truth is that the real situation is irremediably paradoxical (as I have tried to emphasize in my own account above). What Lacan objects to in the efforts of his feminist pupils is that their accounts lose touch with this inherent paradoxicality. They seem to suggest that the human condition in language might be other than it is, which is a failed hope. The only 'way through', utterly 'beyond all words', is the jouissance of the mystic.

And yet it is still open to us to point out that this paradoxicality goes further than is imagined. Language itself is, after all, itself an utterly paradoxical construct: it is the one definitive attempt to arrive at a 'something' created upon nothing - this is the ultimate implication of all Lacan has to say on this score. And it is too much to hope that it would retain no traces within itself of the 'nothing' that is its origin, even if only as a 'lining' - which is the Lacanian term Kristeva frequently uses in this regard.

For there is a law of Reality which is imposed upon language: that, within the totality of langue, there are no absolute 'differences', but only différance, as Derrida has it. Its elements, its signifieds, concrete objects, only give the illusion of being truly substantive entities, in so far as they may be spoken of. In fact they are the products of a process of binary division within the core of meaning, based upon differential contrasts, not upon absolute separation: this has been the continuing burden of semantics based this century upon the discoveries of Saussure. Which means that language may have its 'death drive', too: that it may betray its desire to return to its own elastic origins, to the 'nothing' (which is everything) out of which it has been constituted.

The contention of this thesis is that, indeed, literature and its brand of language are special arenas where precisely this drama unfolds itself: the drama of origins. What one wants to say is that it is precisely the form, the generic factors, the artifice, the figured tropes of art - all that is 'unreal' within the artist's arsenal of craft - that serve the unconscious end of 'displacing' the reality we know; enough, at least, to return to us some measure of our aboriginal freedom.

This might occur by reawakening in us 'one of the stages in the constitution of the subject': a stage which is fleetingly in place only at the very outset of the acquisition of language. During this stage the sign itself can best be represented by a signifier without content, a fraction whose

denominator is zero; which suggests it has an infinite value. While such a temporary but privileged state of affairs lasts, the effect is 'the infinitization of the value of the subject, not open to all meanings, but abolishing them all' (Lacan 1986: 252): 'What, in effect, grounds, in the meaning and radical non-meaning of the subject, the function of freedom, is strictly speaking this signifier that kills all meanings'. Freedom itself, Lacan implies - including the freedom over which wars are fought - is in origin nothing but a continuing recollection of this privileged condition, before the pre-determinations of language and culture recast the subject in their shape.

What literature returns us to, then, is a special dispensation of the child, one Lacan also identified in his reconsideration of one of Balint's cases: 'He speaks of how a child's word is often considered oracular, may even be idolised, but no matter how seriously it is taken, no child is ever considered bound by it' (Seminar I, xviii, 255; tr. MacCannell 1986: 49).

'A child's word, given, Lacan writes, 'before' entering the world of work, is not his bond'; the situation is 'instead that of the child as not engaged by his word, unlike the adult, who is 'enslaved' (Lacan's term) by it' (Ibid.). If Lacan is to be believed, the 'fictional' dimension of all art is a gift to us from this (just) pre-linguistic state of freedom, a condition of childhood which it celebrates. But 'not to be enslaved' by the word is also, of course, a mystical attribute.

Theory is empty without evidence; and, as I say, no amount of evidence could finally establish that a primary quality of art would be its propensity to play dangerously about those levels where the world's appearances and their symbols are made to undermine their own nature and signifying function, in service of some, or one, deeper truth about reality. What can be demonstrated, however, is the wide currency of themes and artistic techniques which have precisely this aim in view; and this is what my subsequent chapters, taken together, will endeavour to perform. What I want to show is that a greater cross-section of literary art than might be expected chooses to align itself with Hadewijch and St Theresa, in terms of its ultimate aims; that there is, or can be, a mystical dimension to literature and its language, that inheres in its very nature and practice. A dimension that is - for those sensitive to its necessities (and perhaps it has only been adherents of the realist school, and their debased followers down to the soap operas and TV jingles, who have been less than sensitive in this regard) - available ready at hand in the materials with which they have chosen to work .

Though what goes 'beyond' is never the language itself, the 'beyond dimension' is, I believe, essential nonetheless to the functioning of this art as literature. All this leaves open, of course, the question of the 'where' of this beyond. Since the moment that Lacan began to interrogate, as the possible site of the unconscious, the 'nothing' which is all that divides the être-pour-soi and the être-en-soi in Sartre's

philosophy, analysis has had a credible tool with which to investigate this question. This 'nothing' and 'noplace' is also the Wo es war of Freud's slogan (1986: 45). Again, it is also very like the Ungrund of Jacob Boehme[8]: 'For Boehme this Void, this dark abyss, is not sterile and passive but is active and fertile, possessed by a motivating energy and Desire (Trieb)' (Waterfield[9] 1989: 27).

> Therefore Christ saith, Unless you be converted and become as children, you cannot see the kingdom of God. Also, you must be born again (that is, we must wholly disclaim and depart from our own reason, and come again into resignation and self-denial into the bosom of our mother, and give over all disputings, and, as it were, stupify or mortify our reason), that the spirit of the mother, viz. of the eternal Word of God, may get a form in us, and blow up or enkindle the divine life in us, that so we may find ourselves in the spirit of the mother in the cradle - if we desire to be taught and driven by God. (Boehme 1989: 72)

And in spite of Lacan's many dicta warning against too much interest in any pre-linguistic region of experience, there are others which have a different effect: 'the subject is there to rediscover where it was - I anticipate - the real ... I use, quite intentionally, the formula - The gods belong to the field of the real' (Lacan 1986: 45).

2

This section has to do with the problem of One. The question of the deeper meaning of this category is very wide-ranging, and arises whether we are talking of the first numeral, or about the 'oneness' two human beings ought to feel in a sexual

relationship - or even if we mean the One of the mystics. 'This One has resounded endlessly across the centuries,' notes Lacan. 'Need I bother to evoke here the neo-platonists?' (Lacan in Mitchell and Rose 1986: 139).

It is probably this last example - the one that Lacan hardly bothers to evoke - that in fact most concerns him in his discussion. For the Platonic and neo-Platonic One is another name for the Absolute of metaphysics: the ultimate Reality that underlies appearances, according to many systems, or the final category from which all others derive. For Lacan, all such profound concepts are best approached psychologically (though this is not, in the last analysis, to limit them). Since he adopts this psychological perspective, Lacan feels quite happy in slipping undetectably from one manifestation of One to another; indeed, at times he is clearly discussing them all at once. For the purposes of argument he is apparently willing to accept the Platonic idea that the category remains essentially similar in whatever context it appears - even if it turns out to be, in all these contexts, an illusion. We are clear, at any rate, where our investigation should begin: 'it is on the level of language that we must interrogate this One' (ibid.).

In this section I find myself obliged to argue, partly on the basis of the artistic evidence of future chapters, for two emendations to Lacan's theory; or rather, I ask that we should choose to understand one or two things he says in our own individual way. The practical advantage of these emendations

is that they simplify the placement in the theory of a good deal of the material to come.

In preferring the intuitions of art (admittedly, as I 'read' them) to those of Lacan himself, I am encouraged by Lacan's own advice[10] to psychoanalysts 'to remember with Freud that on his subject the artist always precedes him, and that he has no business acting the psychologist where the artist blazes the trail for him' (Lacan 1965; tr. Durand[11] 1983: 860).

The two points I wish to make may be themselves expressed in Lacan-like dicta. Firstly, where Lacan was given to insist that there is 'no Other of the Other' (Mitchell and Rose 1982: 151), I wish to agree but to add that 'there is, however, a One of the Other'. This maxim, whose bad grammar is - I hasten to say - one of its advantages, goes directly against some of his pronouncements.

The second point concerns the manner in which the mind's past influences its present. A basic tenet of Freudianism is that the 'deep' past - including the preverbal past - continues to participate in the mind's present acts, through the unconscious. For Lacan, however, the central events of psychic life are those that accompany and succeed our coming into language. Language is thus both cause and cure of everything that takes place in the mind's life. Trauma, on this basis, is simply what causes an apparent gap in what should be the unbroken narrative of the subject's life. The unconscious, indeed, is really only that part of the story,

including what has gone into its construction, that misses direct articulation in the apparent 'text'.

If this is so, we are led to conclude either that the preverbal past plays no part in the text at all except in so far as it has 'set up' the conditions of the present, or else - as I prefer - that our preverbal history continues to take part at a structural level. Of course as we know any trauma affects the way the unconscious acts: it affects us through 'form' as much as through 'content'. The difference is that the 'deep past' contributes to the whole character of the unconscious. I am not talking here about biology or instincts, but about history turned into activity, working through the unconscious.

My contention is that this happens from the beginning, a point which is by no means clearly stated in Lacan, though it is hardly to be missed in Freud. In strict theory Lacan was inclined to deny a direct equivalence between the form the unconscious takes and its history - at least after the Oedipus event (the status of its prehistory up to and including the event is rather less clear). He says: 'If knowledge is so often, in theoretical writings, related to something similar to the relation between ontogenesis and phylogenesis - it is as the result of a confusion ... psycho-analysis ... does not centre psychological ontogenesis on supposed stages' (1986: 63).

What Lacan seems to be criticising here are notions of psychological development that privilege something similar to the Freudian oral or anal stages, and which maintain that

these stages continue to affect normal adult behaviour in some subliminal way. For Lacan at this point, the Oedipus event is the primary mechanism; otherwise, the early history of individuals can effect no permananent or inevitable modifications to the form the unconscious adopts. To think of things in this way would be to make psychological events too much like a sort of biological or organic 'program'; whereas Lacan wants to maintain that the unconscious is a feature of language itself.

There are other of his statements, however, which can be read as suggesting convertibility of a sort between psychology and history: cf. 'The unconscious is that chapter of my history which is marked by a blank ...: it is the censored chapter' [Lacan 1977: 50]). Of course, one can still argue that - despite its own very notable blank in our memories - in the time before the Oedipal event nothing was being written, since there were no words; hence the pre-Oedipal can count only as the text's margin, its endpapers. Nonetheless, there seems something unsatisfactory and arbitrary about this starting-point which is not the beginning. What kind of life was it then, before we spoke?

At any rate, we see how Lacan's argument against taking the view that the unconscious is a form of 'active memory', and hence there from the beginning, rests on the great importance of language, which is acquired, not given. He would insist that the unconscious is not only structured like a language, but its existence presupposes language. The

unconscious, properly speaking, is only forced into being by speech.

One may perfectly agree with this point, and yet still retain the suspicion that though individual prehistory takes up its meaning as an aspect of the 'unconscious' only with the arrival of language - and is irreversibly transformed by that arrival - it is still not displaced by this event.

On this basis, I wish to hazard the notion that, in the case of the unconscious, form does largely follow history, or, rather, that 'ontogeny is phylogeny'. If this principle is even partially accepted, then the corollary is that <u>all</u> of the universal subject's prehistory needs to be taken into account, without prejudice with respect to time. Simply put, this means that we need to follow the trails of the mind's past back even as far as the embryo. The birth-event itself is not a defensible beginning.

One understands all the reluctance on this score, of course: it is to introduce onto a fraught scene what seems just another irresolvable mystery: what <u>is</u> awareness? When can one say it has begun? Yet this problem - of dealing with the unstatable - has not prevented theorists from dividing up the hardly less problematic region of the pre-Oedipal among themselves, on the basis of inferences they draw from its effects; indeed, the major differences within psychoanalysis seem often to rest on conflicting interpretations of just this ground.

To return, however, to the first of my issues: the One. The question of the One did, of course, absorb Lacan's

attention deeply in the last decade of his life; and rightly so, for a great deal depends upon it. As he himself put it: 'instead of one signifier we need to interrogate, we should interrogate the signifier One' (Seminar XX: 23; in Mitchell and Rose 1982: 47).

A central way in which the One is essential to our world of variety is that there can be no meaning without it, for all the importance of the Other. We must be influenced by at least the illusion of unity or possible unities to pick out concrete objects and individual persons, and to treat them as if they were coherent entities. Though meaning may be organised within the field of the symbolic (and hence the Other, which grades and sorts the symbolic objects of our world), it depends upon the function of the imaginary - for, above all, the imaginary imagines One, just as the child imagines an identity between itself and its reflected image. More plainly, it is only through the medium of a gestalt that meaning - meaning of any kind - comes to us; for 'good form and meaning are akin' (1975; in Mitchell and Rose: 163).

Lacan pictures the 'consistency presupposed to the symbolic' in the quest for meaning as 'naturally configured' by the circle: the deceptive symbol of the complete and the centred. The mythical subject who finds the face of his persecutor among the random dots and blotches of the Rorschach test is thus a representative figure: what he discovers there is a relation; hence, wholeness. But though this face is 'meaning', its meaning is still paranoid, merely personal, a

sign. For signification to occur, on the other hand, the sign must come within the field of the Other, its codes and rules.

Not least among the closely related matters that are implicated here is that of form in art; for if, like the split subject, this supposed unity of the form is merely illusory - something we talk ourselves into accepting - then a radical reinterpretation is called for. Robert Con Davis[12] puts such a case unequivocally, by linking the narrator of fiction - and, consequently, the story he tells - with the 'split subject' of Lacanian theory: 'since the subject (narration) is marked by this irrevocable split, what we are accustomed to calling unity and wholeness in form and seeing as concepts centrally important to narration and interpretation are unceremoniously ousted' (Davis 1983: 857).

He means that the work of art, as product of the split subject, must inevitably reflect its incompleteness (for, in a sense, it is itself a subject, just as a signifier is subject for another signifier, in Lacan's view [1986: 198]). Again, if the work is produced in language, it is seamed through and through with the 'lack' which the phallic signifier does no more than commemorate: hence language and wholeness are intrinsically at odds. This, as we know, is the starting presumption of deconstructive criticism (and Lacan clearly considered that Deconstruction simply built upon his own intellectual foundation [MacCannell 1986: 14-15]; certainly, he invented the term, employing it in some of his titles - for example, 'The Deconstruction of the Drives' [(1964) 1986: Ch. 13]).

However, all this is not enough for us simply to dispense with the idea of form-as-unity outright; there is a something left, and this something needs interrogation. Robert Con Davis does admit that 'these concepts do not just vanish; we still have some reason to speak of wholeness and unity'. He goes on to insist, however, that such concepts are to be relegated 'to the status of being (in Jacques-Alain Miller's term) a mere "suturing" over of the fundamental split with the various commitments (threads) of ideology, the inevitable ideological bias that we bring to any one approach to the subject in a narration in hopes of promoting a view of meaningful significance and wholeness' (1983: 857).

As with most criticism of ideology, this example lays itself open to a predictable tu quoque. The possibility that antagonism to the One as artistic 'form' might itself be ideologically motivated could just as readily be assumed - especially if this One is seen primarily as an expression of humanist individualism, for example. Both Marxism and Structuralism[1] do, after all, share ground in their opposition to humanism - though for very divergent reasons.

And there is a certain input from Modernism too. As Fredric Jameson[13] notes: 'To a certain degree, the theoretical problem of the status of the subject in narrative analysis is itself a reflection of the historical attempt of modernistic

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[1] cf. Levi-Strauss, Myth and Meaning (New York: Schocken Books, 1978): 'I never had, and still do not have, the perception of feeling my personal identity. I appear to myself as the place where something is going on, but there is no "I", no "me". Each of us is a kind of cross-roads where things happen' (4-5; Quoted in MacCannell 1986: 16).

practice to eliminate the old-fashioned subject from the literary text' (Jameson 1977: 381-2). Hence, and without denying that - for example - ideology has a totalising aim, it is still open to us to propose that this question of wholeness cannot adequately be left on the ideological level, as the quote from Miller above perhaps invites.

The question is, can we really do without the One? Lacan insisted, we must remember, not that the One had been annihilated, but that 'There is something of One' (in Mitchell and Rose 1982: 138). He goes on to affirm that 'This There is something of One is not simple - to say the least'. Indeed, it is all the more serious as opposition to the One goes against the meaning of Eros in Freud, defined as 'the gradual tendency to make one out of a vast multitude' (ibid.).

Lacan's slogan above has all his usual ambivalence. There cannot, of course, be 'something' of One: One stands alone against the many. To divide it up is to introduce the many into the heart of the One, which is conceptually awkward, to say the least. The dictum thus stands to warn us against assuming, in our innocence, the unproblematic authority of the One.

It is certainly true that Lacan's primary position is to deny the validity of any self-existent One. He feels it is his responsibility as a scientist and as a teacher to encourage us to take an Aristotelian, not a Platonic position on the One: we are enjoined to see such categories only as already inscribed within speech and bound by its inadequacies and limitations. They are in no sense - or, at least, no clearly

statable sense - transcendental Platonic categories, but simply features of language, part of an illusory but inevitable reality: 'for everything concerning the speaking being, reality is of one order, that is to say, fantasmatic' (Lacan 1972-3; in Mitchell and Rose 1982: 159).

But then, as Lacan's own discourse goes to show, not everything true is clearly statable. Indeed, as his 'Preface' to the English edition of The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis decrees, in Wildean fashion: 'There is no truth that, in passing through awareness, does not lie. But one runs after it all the same' (Lacan 1986: vii).

Lacan's whole mode of presentation - with all its paradoxes - defines his position in relation to this question of the One. His own style both promotes our desire to establish the gestalt of his meaning and at once undermines it: 'Lacan's language is not -it cannot be - simply "one"', as Ronald Schleifer[14] puts it (Schleifer 1983: 874). Lacan's scepticism is, however, twofold; he both illustrates his disbelief in the One - and, correspondingly, in any concept of a 'system' - and at the same time offers us a speech which threatens alarmingly to escape the Other on every hand. Where else, we may well ask, but into the One?

Indeed, in language, the complete truth is impossible, because language cannot contain it. But then, 'impossible' is precisely the definition of the Real (167)! And as Lacan plainly states in the same work, the Real is, indeed, real, in spite of its (linguistic) impossibility: 'There can be absolutely no doubt that there is a real' (1986: 186).

Since it lies outside speech, we can say nothing clearly about the Real. But there may still be enough evidence to persuade us that this One we have spoken of has another kind of existence in the Real. Indeed, in a paradoxical way, Lacan needles us into taking this route - while telling us all along that it is 'impossible', a cul-de-sac, washing his hands of us.

In Lacan's defence, it must be said that his terms encourage us to look beyond easy solutions to this problem of the origin of the One. We might for instance suppose that the idea of 'one' - any one - comes into being with the infant's perception of the separate existence of objects, which is only fully brought home to him when such things present themselves to be named: when they become part of language. His identification of himself as a 'one', one with his image, is really to adopt, to confer on himself, the apparent singleness of the signifier. And of course, this is only an imaginary unity.

Surprisingly, Lacan is categorical in denying us this avenue: 'the One of meaning is not to be confused with what makes the One of the signifier' (1982[b] [1975]: 164). The urge towards unity that encourages us to create form, to perceive the gestalt, is not, apparently, derived a posteriori from the unity of the signifier. Indeed, since the signifier is not, properly speaking, a 'one' at all, but something which depends for its very existence on a differential relation to a chain of other signifiers, 'there would never be any conjunction, any coupling, of One and a' (ibid.).

Nor can we reverse things and derive the origin of the idea of 'one' from the subject's sense of self, either, for that sense of self is in turn derivative; it does depend upon the illusory One of the signifier: 'The One of meaning hardly comes into it - it [the subject] is merely the effect of the One of the signifier, which in fact only works by being available to designate any signified' (165).

These statements were made in Lacan's Seminar of 21 January 1975[15], which makes them somewhat late. There is perhaps some change discernable here from Lacan's position eleven years earlier, where the concept of unity is related more closely to the arrival of the subject as a 'signifier' himself in the signifying system. However, we should not judge this matter too hastily; indeed, the ambivalence of Lacan's 1964 phraseology prohibits hurried judgments. We see that the subject distinguishes himself not as 'one' alone, but as one one, which is a different matter.

> The subject himself is marked off by the single stroke, and first he marks himself as ... the first of the signifiers. When this signifier, this one, is established - the reckoning is one one. It is at the level, not of the one, but of the one one, at the level of the reckoning, that the subject has to situate himself as such. In this respect, the two ones are already distinguished. Thus is marked the first split that makes the subject as such distinguish himself from the sign in relation to which, at first, he has been able to constitute himself as subject. (Lacan 1986: 141)

The two 'ones' referred to here are first of all the subject of the statement and the subject of enunciation: the Real-Ich who precedes language and the subject as caught up forever in the toils of language. But as soon as you have one one, it

implies another, and the Other; and, perhaps, at an earlier stage, a One from whom the initial one distinguishes himself as the one who counts - who can count, since he is really at least second to arrive.

This matter of the One is certainly not simple, just as Lacan predicted. In 1976 Lacan returned to the idea that the form of art and the unified world-view that the subject tries vainly to make out of his experience are both derived from his initial impression of his body as 'one'. Such vacillations render it dangerous to talk of any decisive change of viewpoint in this regard. The examples do however provide clear testimony of the incomplete nature of this kind of form:

> In order to give oneself an image of what is called the world, man conceives it as ... unity of pure form, which represents for him the body. It is from the surface of the body that man took the idea of a privileged form. And his first apprehension of the world was the apprehension of his 'semblable'. Then this body, he saw it, he abstracted it, made a sphere out of it: good form. (Lacan in Scilicet 6/7, 1976: 54; tr. by MacCannell 1986: 52)

And yet, at the same time, this body is not the source of the One. It can only provide the intermediate origin for One's stand-ins, its counterfeit equivalents.

I want to bring all the threads of my argument together by suggesting that the content of the One is actually given by a condition which is established in the womb itself. Behind the Real-Ich - and, ultimately, the subject of speech (as well as the subject's body) stands the undeniable unity of the subject and his world which was the experience of the foetus in the womb. This unity - I wish to assert - continues to work

at a structural level of the unconscious upon everything else the subject later encounters and assimilates - including his idea of himself.

It is only from the perspective of the symbolic that this primal One - for that is what it is - can be called 'imaginary'. There is another perspective - that of the embryo - which would make it the primary constituent of the Real.

What this means is that the 'imaginary' unifications of the subject with his/her external mother and later with the mirror-image which precede the onset of the 'symbolic' <u>are already an anamnesis</u>, a return of the forgotten ... though what was needed was not forgotten until the moment it was needed. In other words, 'forgetting' itself only begins to have meaning under pressure from the proximity of language. Before this, one needs to posit a certain continuity between the subject of the enunciation, the <u>Real-Ich</u>, and the One of the womb - a continuity which <u>enters into everything with which the primal being has to do</u>, both then and later.

If we imagine the proto-subject existing, initially, within the Real - and we acknowledge this as a psychological event through and through - then any subsequent 'information' the subject encounters must be transcribed by him as a division in this Real. At first the character of these transcriptions derives largely from himself: this is the 'Imaginary'. As Lacan specifies, it is at this stage that the major effort of division is accomplished: between subject and object, self and outside-self (earlier divisions, if they exist, are probably best expressed as good and bad self, <u>Lust-</u>

Ich and Unlust; and this seems to involve not a single split being but a split into two separate entities).

Later, family and society take a hand; hereafter, all symbolic values come from the Other. But the Other can only write on the subject's page by adding further divisions to that subject's own internalised settlement of the Real; and these proferred divisions, borderlines, are paramount: the subject only mimics them, accepts their domination. For this reason, the unconscious is more appropriately placed 'outside' (1986: 123) than within, as Lacan specifies. It operates upon the domain of the usurped Real, and under the influence of language; which is not primarily the subject's but is his cultural inheritance. This is to say he falls under the domination of the Name-of-the-Father, external authority, the 'law': the Other, which is what his real has become.

But each new signifier is found at a price: it introduces a 'lack' into the Real of which the subject once thought he had possession. The so-called 'reality principle' (society's reality, not the Real) demands this 'sacrifice': a demand which comes from the Other, invading and diminishing his primary narcissism. It is in this nexus that the castration complex takes on such meaning as it has, and is given structure by the Oedipus. The Mother whom the child gives up, sacrifices, is in one aspect the representative of his primal self, and all it now signifies. She is what is given up in favour of a social existence. As Lacan himself explains: the castration complex is

> the only indication of that jouissance which in its infinitude entails the mark of its prohibition, and which in order to constitute this mark, implies a sacrifice: that which is made in one and the same act with the choice of its symbol, the phallus. (1977: 319; incorporating Benvenuto and Kennedy's emendations [1986: 180]).

No wonder that we can say that the unconscious indicates its presence in the 'gap', the 'cut', the 'rim' between conceptual boundaries. It is at these edges of uncertainty that the forces of the unconscious - condensation, displacement, metamorphosis, the partial drives - make themselves felt, as remnants, ultimately, of the One: remnants whose complete subjugation is in question. This is one way in which we may justifiably believe that there is still 'something of One'.

One understands what influences Lacan to start with birth and to neglect the place of the womb - not only for its inherent difficulty, but also because it might tend to underpin the subject's claims to unity, identity - to be a One. In this regard, the developing subject can certainly appeal to precedent, at least - a precedent which is not entirely in the Imaginary, either. Unfortunately, this appeal gets him nowhere when it comes to his life in language: there his status remains split, as Lacan describes. Fundamentally, then, the structure Lacan articulates is not seriously threatened by inclusion of the embryonic consciousness.

His later meditations on this subject of the One do show, I think, how the problem becomes a kind of conceptual thorn, neither ejected nor entirely engulfed by his theory. Finally, the problem of the One is placed on the woman's side - which

is appropriate, since most of the experience of the infans is under her sign, under her direction: 'God knows where it leads you to believe there is One,' he expostulates: 'it can even lead you so far as to believe there is The [i.e. La], a belief that is fallacious' (1982[b]: 170). In other words, neither One, God, nor the Woman can be shown to exist (though they are related): an ironic statement we may take as we will.

In the following analysis we see how Lacan is anxious to situate what is still essentially the One as an unrecognised feature of the Other - as belonging to the same field. Except that now it is an Other specifically related to the Woman:

> By her being in the sexual relation radically Other, in relation to what can be said of the unconscious, the woman is that which relates to this Other .... The woman relates to the signifier of this Other, in so far as, being Other, it can only remain always Other. I can only presume here that you will think back to my statement that there is no Other of the Other. As the place where everything of the signifier which can be articulated comes to be signified, the Other is, in its very foundation, radically the Other .... How can we conceive that the Other might, somewhere, be that to which one half - since that is roughly the biological proportion - one half of speaking beings relates. (Lacan 1972-3; in Mitchell and Rose 1982: 151-2)

What Lacan is saying here is that Woman is to be seen as the supplement of the psychological Man, who in his phallic presumption believes (150) that he is 'all' (and in a sense he is: all of the symbolic). In some respects she shares the same phallic world as he does; but her psychic self has a 'doubled' character. Hence, in her character of 'not-all', she relates to the Ø̸ther directly - to the Other in its guise as All: i.e. to the signifier (the slashed O) of the undifferentiated all,

the all including the subject[2]. This capacity to repudiate the symbolic means that, in this aspect of her true nature, 'Nothing can be said of the woman' (152). Her sign is her feminine definite article, crossed through and hence expelled from language.

By this move - by relating the woman to the radical Other - the problem of the One is placed on the woman's side - which is appropriate enough. But it also allows Lacan to abandon the quest for the One; the 'radical Other' is as far as he is prepared to go in search of it, for it marks the outmost bounds of what still counts as language. Provided, then, that we remember that Lacan's formulation, too, is not-all, that there is more to be said, none of it need be discarded.

This more that needs to be said can be summed up in another neo-Lacanian slogan. Where Lacan pronounces that '<u>man's desire is the desire of the Other</u>' (1986: 158), we need to add 'and the desire of the Other is for the Real'.

So another way that the One appears is as the ground of the Other - for, after all, it is on the field of the Real that the Other is transcribed. Because of its origins, this Real must inevitably continue to be felt, to a degree, as one, whatever commonsense informs us. It continues to be one, since

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[2] Catherine Clément's definition of this particular signifier is vivid and simple. In her account, the barred O 'stands for the completely crazy idea that you might be able to get rid of the Other, cut the moorings, and do whatever you please. And to say whatever you please as well. But to think you can really do it is an illusion. The slashed O doesn't work: it's an unattainable limit. But all the same it would be some pleasure to be able to say and do everything all at the same time' (Clement 1983: 25).

its very nature, as a 'known', derives from its division. And it is to this Other in the guise of One, the radical Øther, that the feminine principle relates - as Lacan has it above.

This way of telling the story has certain advantages: it retains the notion of addition as division which is the essence of 'differential' semantics since Saussure. (In this sense a language is always complete, nomatter how many or how few words it contains [cf. Benveniste[16] 1971: 36-7, 48].)

This is, as I have said, in spite of it being an interpretation Lacan himself opposed:

> Discontinuity, then is the essential form in which the unconscious first appears to us as a phenomenon - discontinuity, in which something is manifested as a vacillation. Now, if this discontinuity has this absolute, inaugural character, in the development of Freud's discovery, must we place it - as was later the tendency with analysts - against the background of a totality?
>
> Is the one anterior to discontinuity? I do not think so, and everything that I have taught in recent years has tended to exclude this need for a closed one - a mirage to which is attached the reference to the enveloping psyche, a sort of double of the organism in which this false unity is thought to reside. You will grant me that the one that is introduced by the experience of the unconscious is the one of the split, of the stroke, of the rupture.
>
> (Lacan 1986 [1964]: 25-6)

My argument all along has been that we may willingly grant Lacan his conclusion, without admitting that it necessitates our accepting his supplementary inference about origins. Perhaps we could seize from the unaccustomed diffidence of these paragraphs the implication of a certain latitude in these regions. Indeed, if I believe - as I do - that the psychoanalytic model outlined here is justly and

fairly applicable to the mystics, such as Boehme - or, indeed, to Plotinus, who builds the first towering theoretical edifice of mysticism squarely upon the One - then I am virtually obliged to make the choices I have. I take it that Lacan's own interest in this very area in later life shows that my taking up this line of inquiry, at least, is not wildly far from the mark. What is centrally valuable about Lacan's testimony is that it indicates how the Reality of the mystics and the Real of psychoanalysis may find valuable common ground: a circumstance which confirms them both.

3

As Lacan's pupil Catherine Clément puts it: 'the mother is first of all the image of the All. The 'good' All, the perfect All, nostalgic, integrating: the circle rejoined, the Magdeburg sphere, the ball, the complete organism, the mandala ... the atom, the glass bubble, the earth ...' (Clement 1983: 84).

Yet, we say, only in relation to a 'prior' unity - a unity before the mother, does 'lack' have real force - which it must, to constitute the primal drive. It is not enough to locate this desire in the Imaginary alone; how then would it display such power? After all, man's totality is implicated there.

What we need to say is that ultimately, every object of man's desire is a placebo; what he truly craves is just one

thing: to be just one thing, himself and his world. What he desires, in other words, is his origin in the Real.

> And it is of this that all the forms of the objet a that can be enumerated are the representatives, the equivalents. The objets a are merely its representatives, its figures. The breast - as equivocal, as an element characteristic of the mammiferous organization, the placenta for example - certainly represents that part of himself that the individual loses at birth, and which may serve to symbolize the more profound lost object. I could make the same kind of reference for all the other objects. (Lacan 1986: 198)

Thus the Freudian picture begins, according to Lacan, 'by positing a universe of desire' (1978[17]: 260) for which there is no corresponding object, as there might be naturally in the classical perspective. For Freud, 'Desire is the relation of a being to a lack', no more. Hence the 'libido is the name of what animates the fundamental conflict at the heart of human action': precisely that - since he is a developmental being - man's desire is always for an object that is past: 'no object will ever again be it'. Thus man's tragedy and his comedy consists in the fact that 'Desire, a function central to the whole of human experience, is the desire of nothing namable' (Lacan 1978: 260-2; tr. Shoshana Felman[18] 1983: 1038).

However, what the subject most desires is also what he most fears. Lacan insists that 'the reader should recognize in the metaphor of the return to the inanimate (which Freud aplies to every living body)' a desire to return to 'that margin beyond life that language gives to the human being by virtue of the fact that he speaks' (1977: 301). The fact that this drive, taken to its ultimate conclusion, would demand the

death of his ego, thus taints it not only with fascination, but also with revulsion and awe - which is just as well perhaps for human reproduction and the maintenance of the ordinary processes of social life: luckily, we content ourselves with lesser goals.

If the true satisfaction of desire and immersion in the immortality of life can only be accomplished at the cost of his self, the ordinary man may settle, then, for the partial goals whose achievement can never bring ultimate contentment. Outside his knowledge, however, all his more immediate desires - the partial drives themselves - share the character of the total drive. His being a sexed being implies inevitably a loss of totality; but in desiring his completion he opens himself up to death: 'the drive, the partial drive, is profoundly a death drive and represents in itself the portion of death in the sexed living being' (205).

Even more so is it true that the language which 'fills in' for man's desire embodies death, for the 'symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing' (Lacan 1977: 104): 'so when we wish to attain in the subject what was before the serial articulations of speech, and what is primordial to the birth of symbols, we find it in death, from which his existence takes on all the meaning it has' (105).

We see how the picture Lacan offers humankind is in the end hardly optimistic. Man is faced with something of a Heideggerian choice: to lose himself in his inevitable role within the inauthentic world of words, events, and objects that constitutes social reality - or to face firmly the fact

that all roads lead to death (at least, of the ego), and that this personal Gotterdämmerung, this end in annihilation, is where his deepest desires are inescapably leading him.

That the situation in which humankind finds itself is fraught with such paradoxes is understood by the philospher and speculative novelist Olaf Stapledon - to take an example from minor literature[19]. The fact that Stapledon - writing in the 1930s - lived into the Freudian era may, of course, be thought to limit his independent evidentiary value. Nonetheless, his modern consciousness produces a plain statement on these tricky matters.

His narrator is a lofty Neptunian 'man' from the distant future who as a research project monitors the earthly mind of a selected twentieth-century ancestor from the moment of birth itself. As it turns out, the comparative clumsiness of this child's delivery

> caused no unusual damage to his mind, nothing but the common yearning toward a warmer, cosier, less noxious world, which, in so many of you, favours legends of a golden age in the past, or of a golden heaven in the future ... In after years ... he was ever to seek in the harshness of fate for the breath of a new life. Even though, in all his ages, he yearned to creep back into the warm close peace of the womb, he craved also to absorb into his blood the atmosphere of a wider world.
>
> (Stapledon 1978 [1932]: 68)

Stapledon's hero is thus a truly representative figure, representative of the exiled and divided fate of us all.

4

The implications of all this for literary art will have to wait, very largely, for their appearances in future chapters; where inevitably they will turn up differently according to each of my separate sets of subject-matter.

I have said already that I am certain that a psychoanalytically understood mysticism has a very large field of application in poetry; larger even than one might conclude from Julia Kristeva's pioneering work Desire in Poetry (Kristeva: 1980), where she aligns both the rhythmic effects of verse and the typographical and formal fragmentation of some modernist poetry with what is effectively a counter-surgence of form against the domination of sense and of the authoritarian phallic word. She sees this taking place in poems as an enactment of return: of return to a pre-verbal reality associated with the maternal body. All one would need to add to this analysis, as far as it goes, would be some comments on its mystical connections; for in Kristeva the subversive elements of poetic form are seen as primarily political in force.

However, since my first chapters will be devoted to poetry - and fiction, in consequence, will have to wait its turn - perhaps there is room here for a few preliminary notes on applications to narrative, to 'that very truthful fictitious structure' (Lacan 1966: 449; tr. in Felman 1983: 1044) which may be either that of the story or the analytic confession. The view of narrative which, according to

Elizabeth Wright, Lacan advances is one laden with opportunites for unheimlich returns, recurrences, and primal significances, as the patterns of fiction replace and submerge our everyday realities. What the form of such work must revisit again and again to make itself whole, a One, is the trauma of an origin which prevents it being so. As Joel Fineman[20] puts it: 'where there is a structure there is already piety and nostalgia for the lost origin through which structure is thought' (Fineman 1981: 44; quoted in Felman 1983: 875).

> For Lacan, narrative is the attempt to catch up retrospectively on this traumatic separation, to tell this happening again and again, to re-count it: the narrative of the subject caught in the net of signifiers, the story of The Purloined Letter, the story of the repetition compulsion.
> (Wright 1987: 113)

But what interests me most, and what I feel implicates the whole theoretical question of fiction and its status, is the kind of presence within itself which the text invites the reader to take up. In a sense (and for the novel perhaps in even greater degree than the short story) the call of the narrative to the reader is no less than to be 'born again' under the new terms it makes available to him. Earlier, with reference to Lacan's comments on one of Balint's cases, we encountered the truth that the child's word is not always his bond. Essentially, the fictional text extends the offer of this childish irresponsibility anew to the reader, who is enouraged to give up the burden of his ego in a way which formally parallels, and is not utterly unrelated in feeling

to, the spiritual immersion of the mystic. I am certain that this freedom, which is regressive in so far as it recalls an original time of freedom before the law, accounts for much of the fascination of reading as activity, however much the world of the work may fall short of a uterine paradise.

If the reality principle is represented there, as it certainly will be, we should not be deceived into believing its presence to be paramount and determining, but only necessary - as much a tactic as a source of truth. For it is an unavoidable legacy of language that the unattainable form can only be adumbrated, finally, through conflict. Other 'realities' - like those of fictional worlds - will inevitably obey the rules under which all realities, to be realities, must fall. So it is not in escaping reality - we only escape this reality, after all - but in the fact of a displacement of self that this moment of freedom is allowed us.

When Jane Eyre says 'Reader, I married him' it is - in so far as the fiction works - always the same reader to whom she speaks: a reader liberated by the fictional disposition from the responsiblilites of his or her daily personality. Liberation of self from language by a skilful uprooting of language is, I feel, more or less what literary imagination means.

In Virginia Woolf's last work Between the Acts[21] - where the title alone invites us to explore the intervening space 'between' the physical activities of life through the indulgences of art - part of the novel's text is that of Miss La Trobe's open-air village pageant: a play-within-a-novel. A

heterogeneous audience of local characters, overdressed ladies, town officials and the dutiful vicar sit receptively before La Trobe's eccentric and impossible verse-drama. Uncritical and aesthetically undeveloped as they are, they are all the more profoundly worked on by this less than exceptional play - because in these simplified circumstances it is Art alone which is doing the work. When they gather in the interval, the audience

> felt - how could one put it - a little not quite here or there. As if the play had jerked the ball out of the cup; as if what I call myself were still floating unattached, and didn't settle. Not quite themselves, they felt. (1965 [1941]: 175)

'Our part ... is to be the audience' one of the characters realises (73). But of course, in these circumstances, precise placing is uncertain. At last audience and artist confront each other, in the persons of Mrs Swithin and Miss La Trobe:

> Their eyes met in a common effort to bring a common meaning to birth. They failed; and Mrs Swithin, laying hold desperately of a fraction of her meaning, said: 'What a small part I've had to play! But you've made me feel I could have been ... Cleopatra!' ....
>
> 'I might have been - Cleopatra,' Miss La Trobe repeated. 'You've stirred in me my unacted part', she meant. (175)

As the play's text intones for us: 'protect and preserve us from words the defilers, from words the impure! What need have we of words to remind us? Must I be Thomas, you Jane?' (222). In this situation where there are only roles, and no lesser realities, the role of critic is effectively given to the

parson, who sums up at the end - inevitably, in terms of his own perceptions:

> To me at least it was indicated that we are members one of another. Each is part of the whole ... We act different parts; but are the same. That I leave to you. (37)

As the audience files away, they are accompanied by the noise of a gramophone, singing 'Dispersed are we'. Gradually, the clockwork turntable grinds to a halt. Symbolically speaking, what finally obstructs its progress is the problem of the One:

> The gramophone gurgled Unity - Dispersity. It gurgled Un ... dis ... and ceased. (235)

What the audience must return home to recover from is their exposure to the subtle anonymities of art.

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PART TWO: THE ROMANTIC SUBLIME

Chapter 2: Compulsive Repetition and the 'Ancient Mariner': Coleridge's Romantic 'Uncanny'.

> The mature writer, whether a failure or not (though perhaps never losing sight of the two alternatives), never stops harking back to symbolization mechanisms, within language itself, in order to find in a process of eternal return, and not in the object that it names or reproduces, the hollowing out of anguish in the face of nothing.
> (Kristeva[1] 1982: 43)

My main aim in the following three chapters is to examine the close connection between the Romantic 'sublime' and the mystical experience. In order to do so I shall be looking from a theoretical perspective at works and statements by Coleridge and Wordsworth, beginning with the 'Ancient Mariner'(PW: 186-209; hence AM)[2] and with Coleridge's idea of the 'supernatural'. Underlying my investigations is my wish to show that for these two men the central purpose of poetry was to induce an experience akin to the mystical in the reader. This they believed could be managed through the manipulation of functions of words that were commonly left latent or neglected in ordinary speech. Ultimately, evocation of feelings that drew close to the mystical experience really called for a progressive technique of undermining the verbal - certainly of undermining its merely utilitarian and everyday communicative role, which was all that language could mean for the majority of speakers.

Hence Coleridge's attack in Biographia Literaria[3] (BL: Ch. XVII) on Wordsworth's early views of poetic diction. For

Coleridge, the one thing the language of poetry could not resemble, by definition, was 'the real language of men'. It is not, however, that an elevated diction on eighteenth-century models was desired, either; though the Pre-Romantics often made sublime events and experiences the subject-matter of their verse, Coleridge and Wordsworth together managed to find or borrow poetic techniques and forms that blended with their subjects to make the poem itself a potentially sublime encounter. What they insisted on was the ideal of unity; of the subordination of the elements of the poem to the intensity of this central poetic aim. Both poets held to the belief that there was nothing super-refined or hyper-cultivated about sublimity; that it was in fact a recognition of the deepest and most fundamental laws of universal human nature. They were certain, then, that this mystical sublimity was profoundly 'simple', however much the fevered world's 'fretful stir unprofitable' or the obsession with 'getting and spending' caused it to be overlooked. Mankind's renewed authenticity depended on it making contact once again with this elemental source, where poetry had the means to lead it.

A great deal here depends on the opening stages of a poem, on the inital stanzas or verse-paragraphs. The task of the poem's beginning is to draw the reader into its separate world, where language works in a different way; and to heighten the reader's receptivity and force his/her concentration to a pitch where language and mood resonate together. I shall take the example of 'Frost at Midnight':

> The Frost performs its secret ministry
> Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry
> Came loud - and hark, again! loud as before.
> The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
> Have left me to that solitude, which suits
> Abstruser musings: save that at my side
> My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
> 'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
> And vexes meditation with its strange
> And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
> This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
> With all the numberless goings-on of life,
> Inaudible as dreams!

Appropriately, for what is at one level a meditation on the poetic value of childhood perceptions, the poet is isolated with his sleeping child. It is as if he must vocalise what the infant cannot: as an adult who must debase the unconscious baby's pre-verbal life by his articulations, he is hardly more than one of its inaudible dreams. The 'shock' of the final image issues from paradox: to declare dreams inaudible is actually to suggest they might, conceivably, be heard - an implicit hint of the impossible, that undermines the mere communicative value of the phrase.

Coleridge, who would later define the poetic essence as 'the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities' (BL: 174), builds this introductory segment upon paradoxes, statements which inherently undermine each other. This paradoxicality may work to intensify our sense of the opposite meaning to what is expressed; or, finally, to subvert verbal communication altogether. Increasingly, language as such is dissolved in mood, a mood specified by the key words: 'rest', 'solitude', 'slumber', 'calm', 'silentness', 'dreams'.

Hence, the tension between adult and infant is not the only opposition at work here. Details of the isolated setting

are one by one invoked only to eliminate their intrusion and to diminish their force; the 'external' is suppressed simply by naming it in such a context. That we have to listen hard to hear the 'owlet's' vulnerable repeated cry only increases our sense of the dominating silence, for example. This 'strange and extreme silentness' is such that its very calmness, seeking for invasion and finding none, disturbs itself by its own profundity.

Obviously enough, such quietude is both a physical situation and an inward state: what we encounter here are effectively 'minimal circumstances of being', which each tiny intrusion from outside only helps to establish. In such a quiescence of consciousness an invisible effect like the 'secret' working of the frost, itself subduing a world to unity, is raised to the status of sacred ritual, a serving 'ministry' - one which is, in reality, bringing the paradoxical balm of death and cold. Isolation is so pervasive here, the frost evades even the intangible importunities of the wind.

Outside realities are mentioned, even celebrated, only to be blurred in the process. The building up of successive lines to evoke 'the numberless goings-on of life' in line 12 is negated by the sentence's deferred conclusion, 'Inaudible as dreams!'. 'Sea, hill, and wood' are smoothed and unified into 'Sea, and hill, and wood' in line 11, losing the edges of their separate identities along the way. 'Numberless' is itself a paradox: to be 'without number' is to be both 'numerous' and 'unidentifiable' at once.

The pupose here is something like a 'melting-together' of the individual words, a chemical 'reduction' of plain sense. Most potent of all these poetic strategies is the use of verbal music, especially assonance and internal rhyme. The appeal to the raw energy of sound itself effects a kind of dissolution of the words into their primal elements, taking them closer to the pre-verbal, the pre-conceptual. The self-communion the poet indulges in this 'solitude, which suits Abstruser musings' is not yet a meditation that can be expressed in words. It is rather an inward listening, a special sub-verbal altertness to 'nature' within and without, but where we also see external nature gradually giving way before the nature within. What we are offered, in other words, is a preparation for mystic experience.

In the case of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' the reader's entry into the poem is abrupt, not gradual. Like the wedding-guest, the reader is accosted on the threshold of the narrative, by an act which happens prior to the opening line: 'It is an ancient Mariner ....' The almost literally hypnotic power of the lines of 'Frost at Midnight' finds its equivalent here in the compulsive spell the mariner's narrative exerts upon its listener within the poem. Coleridge can afford to direct this power upon the wedding-guest, rather than upon his own readers, because he is relying on the ancient and familiar appeal of the ballad-form to do his work for him. The ballad's own headlong narrative momentum carries the reader insistently along.

The technique may be different to that of 'Frost at Midnight', but it works towards similar ends. It is generally assumed that Coleridge uses the ballad-form because of its antiquity and its association with the anonymous voice of the common people down the generations. But this return to the oral origins of verse has a deeper motive, connected with what Julia Kristeva means when she defines poetic language as 'an attempt to symbolize the "beginning"' (1982: 61). It is also of a piece with a more personal and symbolic 'return to origins', which is another of the subjects of the poem. It is no accident, for example, that the scene of the launching of the mariner's vessel appeals to the child-like in us through its clockwork motions, its primitive perspective, and its bright primary colouring, as in a child's picture:

> The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared
> Merrily did we drop
> Below the kirk, below the hill,
> Below the lighthouse top.
>
> The Sun came up upon the left,
> Out of the sea came he!
> And he shone bright, and on the right
> Went down into the sea. (AM: ll. 21-8)

The double sense of 'cheer' informs this 'cheerful' picture of the voyage's beginning, in which all is miniaturized except the elements, and where the human presence, contained in the simple 'we', seems to have no control over events. All responsibility for the boat's progress seems to rest with the larger forces of wind and sea. But this happy irresponsibility is not to last.

2

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghostly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach. (AM: ll. 578-590)

The lines above are not offered as a description of the trials of those who compose theoretic essays on romantic poetry. They do, however, provide a point of entry to a fascinating task: the speculative re-composition - in our own terms, and from, inevitably, our later perspective - of some of the matter of a 'lost' essay by Coleridge: the promised but never-completed treatise on the supernatural which he alluded to several times in the course of his literary career. The most prominent notice he gave of it is especially strategically placed. It ends the first book of Biographia Literaria and follows immediately upon the most famous lines of prose he ever wrote: the culminating definitions of Fancy and Imagination which close chapter XIII. The context seems thus to link the 'supernatural' directly with the romantic vision of the creative Imagination.

> whatever more than this I shall think it fit to declare concerning the powers and privileges of the imagination in the

> present work will be found in the critical essay on the uses of the supernatural in poetry and the principles that regulate its introduction: which the reader will find prefixed to the poem of The Ancient Mariner. (BL: 167)

The project mentioned might consequently seem of the highest importance to the poet, equal in importance only to the separate metaphysical Biographia, for which it was intended to form a companion-piece. From both of these enterprises Coleridge was characteristically distracted, as we know, and they were never undertaken.

The real reasons for his dereliction of both tasks must have been something more than his legendary procrastination, a failing for which he constantly upbraided himself. No doubt he could visualise the final forms required with sufficient clarity to realize or at least half-realise that he could get little help in attaining them from the critical theory, philosophy, psychology and science of his own day. He would still be left with almost insurmountable problems of logical connection. These difficulties not even optimism, or a clear sense of the goal, or an intuitive feel that there was a path to be followed, would have been able to minimise.

As far as the projected metaphysical treatise was concerned, the alternative to abandoning it would have been to offer a slavish imitation of Schelling, the German philosopher to whose ideas the Biographia was already too heavily indebted. Such a course of (perhaps only partially acknowledged) imitation would have left Coleridge too exposed, in view of all the claims and promises he had made. It is easy

enough to see the way in which he may have been the victim of his own publicity: in Coleridge's complex mind, it seems, to create too strong an expectation of the fulfilment of some task was actually to encourage himself to defect from it.

In the case at least of the essay on the supernatural, we are perhaps in a slightly more favourable position than he was. For a start, we are the heirs of all those post-romantic thinkers who have elaborated the theory of symbolism since his time, often building on the efforts of Coleridge and his European contemporaries of two centuries ago.

As is sometimes acknowledged, the romantic interpretation of the symbol and of symbolism - of which Coleridge is at least the most articulate English exponent - gave rise to two developing traditions. The first led through the literary symbolistes of France to a modern conception of the functioning of the image in poetry, drama and the novel; the second produced the conception of the dream-symbol, and of the symbolic act as symptom, which underlies twentieth-century psychoanalytic practice. Our advantage is that some of the late fruits of these processes Coleridge helped to initiate may perhaps supply the necessary matter that he lacked, or, at least, may substitute for it in bolstering his theory.

Familiar as it is, Coleridge's remarkable new vision of the symbol deserves recapitulation here. Its best-known, though somewhat cryptic, definition runs

> a Symbol is characterised by a translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General. Above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality

> which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative. (Coleridge[4] 1972: 30)

This admittedly somewhat grandiose account of symbolism has in the last decades become newly controversial, in view of the exception taken to it by Paul de Man, among others, on the grounds that it posits a naive referentiality of meaning, by suggesting that the sign is inseparable from - in the sense of 'transparent to' - what it designates. This objection is in my opinion based on a misunderstanding, as I think both the context and practical applications of the passage reveal.

The symbol is inseparable from its meaning, in Coleridge's presentation of it, precisely because it does <u>not</u> 'stand for' something apart from itself and its function in its context, as would be the case in allegory. The image chosen - let us say an albatross - comes to represent far less its dictionary signification - a type of bird - than it does an almost inexpressible focus of energies, a complex of associations, meanings and feelings given to it by its function within the totality which encases it. The image becomes, in a sense, an adumbration and expression of the whole 'little universe' of the poem, and is only ever imperfectly divisible from it, if at all. It is able to operate in this supralinguistic way because the elements of the poem serve progressively to emancipate it from its mundane signifying role, from its normal purpose in the everyday 'time and space' of common discourse.

Thus, understanding of a particular poetic symbol, properly so-called, is not likely to be exhausted by any single thread of interpretation that may be, however appositely, drawn out from it. As a condensation of semantic energies, it may support a wide range of meanings, without being any of these exclusively. Such meanings may range from the most particular to the most abstract, from the most 'especial' to the most 'general', and still be entirely reflective of the poem. To conflate an antinomy set up by Roland Barthes, the poem may thus be both 'text' and 'work'; but it is restricted from being any text because it is a work.

This situation, where an apparently arbitrary image gains a new range of meanings through its relation to some hidden supportive complex, is just that found in psychoanalysis, where pictorial and verbal elements from dreams and fantasies furnish unexpected significances for the process of therapy. The totality in this case is the entire unconscious life of the dreamer, to whom the uninterpreted image may often appear to possess an almost occult or chthonic power, until its emotional sources are laid bare.

That Coleridge effectually anticipated this psychological use of his concept of symbolism is indicated by such comments as the following from a letter of 1816. What is notable is that he identifies this special potential of the 'symbol as sign' with its power of suspending reference, or of rendering reference uncertain: 'The truth is that images and thoughts possess a power in, and of themselves, independent of that act of the judgment or understanding by which we affirm or deny

the existence of a reality correspondent to them. Such is the ordinary state of the mind in dreams' (Raine[5] 1950: 216).

For an observer in certain special states of mind, sometimes even external things could seem to desert their usual functions and take on the strange quality that such dispossession of everyday meaning brings. But under such - very nearly mystical - circumstances they do not signify nothing, but begin to draw instead upon deep inner sources of signification, that defy precise transcription:

> In looking at objects of Nature while I am thinking, as of yonder moon dim-glimmering through the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking for, a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing something new. Even when that latter is the case, yet still I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phenomenon were the dim awakening of a forgotten or hidden truth of my inner nature. It is still interesting as a word - a symbol. It is logos the Creator, and the Evolver!
> (in E.H. Coleridge[6] 1895: 36)

Though the interpretation of the symbols of dream and fantasy in the psychoanalytic session could be considered a somewhat restricted instance of what Coleridge meant, there is interest in the fact that Freud, round about 1919, made a notable repayment of the debt psychoanalysis owed to literature. The current of his thoughts turned in the direction of literary and aesthetic concerns on this occasion to help explain just those powerful but elusive feelings of overwhelming strangeness that can accompany the re-emergence of unconscious matter in symbolic form.

His immediate object of interest in his essay on 'The Uncanny'[7] was the fantastic novella by E.T.A. Hoffmann called,

in translation, The Sandman. He wished to propose a psychoanalytic justification for the macabre visions of disembodied eyes and of the animated female doll, Coppelia, which the piece contains. But these incidental facts need concern us less than the general comments on the nature of the 'uncanny' or 'unheimlich' which make up the body of his essay. It can be no coincidence that Freud was deeply occupied with two other important concepts in this and other writings at the time; his thoughts on the uncanny seem a by-product of his elaboration jointly of the the repetition-compulsion and of the death-wish, both of which were made central in his Beyond the Pleasure Principle, also then in process of composition.

The connection between these three psychological entities, the 'uncanny' response, the repetition compulsion, and the death wish, helps to throw some not always oblique light on the romantic supernatural of Coleridge, and consequently upon The Ancient Mariner. But to explore this I shall have to begin by following Freud's initial steps through 'The Uncanny', in particular his efforts to define the rather difficult-to-translate German word unheimlich in a way which reveals the connection between the sense of eeriness, in literature and in life, and mental processes only partly within our conscious reach.

It is perhaps in itself significant that Freud begins with a long compilation of examples and quotations from German and other dictionaries, illustrating the wide variety of different usages attaching to the word unheimlich. His list runs to several pages of text; so uneasy and shifty is this

term, as if taking some taint of its own from the 'uncanny' world, that it turns finally into its opposite: the same sense, we learn, may in some contexts be conveyed by the term heimlich, its apparent contrary (XVII: 226). In this pervasive state of verbal unease, it seems hardly surprising that the psychologist E. Jentsch had in 1906 defined the 'essential factor' in uncanniness as 'intellectual uncertainty'. Freud, however, after considering this suggestion sets it aside as 'incomplete' (221), as staying somewhat too anxiously close to the merely etymological sense of 'unhomely' or 'unfamiliar'.

Before we follow Freud's example, it is worth mentioning that Jentsch's account has at least the merit of placing the emphasis not on the special subject-matter concerned, but on the subjective disorientation produced by it: on the abysmal sense of losing one's way amid failing certainties; and it would be wise not to abandon the suggestion entirely, but to allow it as a contribution in what follows.

Freud is clearly more impressed by the definition from Schelling (the very Schelling whose 'dynamical philosophy' lies so extensively behind the metaphysics of the Biographia) which appears among the lexicogaphical material: '"Unheimlich" is the name for everything that ought to have remained ... secret and hidden but has come to light' (XVII: 224).

Freud picks this idea out for special notice on the page following, indicating how amid the more humdrum and predictable instances, 'Schelling says something which throws quite a new light on the concept ... for which we were certainly not prepared' (XVII: 225). In fact, Schelling's

suggestion is the thread Freud follows. In the analysis of Hoffmann's stories he highlights the appearance of the 'double' or doppelgänger in many of them, and cites this typical 'doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self' (234) in the fantasy tale as no more than a special instance of that mysterious phenomenon of apparently unaccountable 'repetition', which begins now to be mentioned in the text. Yet such multiple repetitions themselves repeat the past; as a form of regression to the 'primary narcissism' of childhood, when self and other were imperfectly distinguished: 'when the ego had not yet marked itself off sharply from the external world and from other people' (236).

> When all is said and done, the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the 'double' being a creation dating back to a very early mental stange, long since surmounted - a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect. the 'double' has become a thing of terror, just as, after the collapse of their religion, the gods turned into demons.
>
> (XVII: 236)

Thus the primary, pre-linguistic world of earliest consciousness, unified to the point where distinctions even of self and other blur and disappear, may reappear for the adult mind in two utterly contradictory lights: as the epitome of all that is comforting and paradisal, as it perhaps once was; or, alternatively, as a source of horror and imminent self-collapse, and as a threat to the rational adult being. In its appealing aspect it is, according to Rosemary Jackson, a

> goal which lies behind all fantastic art, to a greater or lesser degree, the arrival at a point of absolute unity of self and other, subject and

> object, at a zero point of entropy. Jacques Lacan has identified the longing for this unity as the profoundest desire of the subject, referrring to it as 'an eternal and irreducible human desire ... an eternal desire for the nonrelationship of zero, where identity is meaningless'. (Jackson[8] 1981: 76-7)

Such was the condition of the prelinguistic world of common experience, as both Freud (cf. XXI: 64ff.) and Lacan would have it. There is an obvious connection between 'the double' and the sense of doubling that attends the Lacanian 'mirror stage', the phase of development which acts as a portal between 'that' world and the growth of our social, rational selves (cf. Jackson 1981: 114).

To Freud, however, it is the negative, not the paradisal, aspect of such 'recollections of early childhood' which stands uppermost. In the less relative world of the infant, too, the paradise of early existence may instantly change to hell, without bridge or intervention; so, according to Freud, an inexplicable state of repetition may tap us into the terrifying, not the holy, recollection of an earlier life. Thus repetition may in some circumstances of life itself 'arouse an uncanny feeling, which, further recalls the sense of helplessness experienced in some earlier states' (XVII: 237). He gives as example his own reminiscence of being lost in a strange town, and inadvertently returning time and again to the same street, from which he was intent on finding his way. Though Freud does not make it explicit, what is uncanny about this instance of repetition is its forcing of an <u>unwanted</u> unification upon its victim's disorientated mind: that the regressive state of unity comes unwarranted and

unbidden, giving rise to primal panic and the 'helpless' condition he describes, in which all effort of will and self-assertion seems annihilated by uncontrollable circumstance. The repetitious street begins, no doubt, to wear an air of almost deliberate malice, adding to our troubles the unwarranted dislocation of consciousness into external circumstances. That this last effect is the experience of Coleridge's mariner we need hardly be reminded.

In the case of the mariner, the inherent unity of the 'One Life' which governs the cosmos, with the innate interdependence of consciousness and world, of subject and object, are positive values he is eventually brought through experience to recognise, having initially disregarded them in the albatross's murder. However, Freud's personal attitude to the psychological equivalent of this primal unity is far from accepting, though he recognizes its important influence among the usual contents of uncanny experience:

> Our analysis of instances of the uncanny has led us back to the old, animistic conception of the universe. This was characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with the spirits of human beings; by the subject's narcissistic overvaluation of his own mental processes; by the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts and the technique of magic based on that belief; by the attribution to various outside persons and things of carefully graded magical powers, or '<u>mana</u>' ... It seems as if each one of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to this animistic stage in primitive man, that none of us has passed through it without preserving certain residues and traces of it which are still capable of manifesting themselves, and that everything that now strikes us as 'uncanny' fulfils the condition of touching those residues of animistic activity within us and bringing them to expression. (XVII: 240-1)

Although the anthropological value of Freud's insights would now be heavily questioned, the picture he paints of narcissism itself gains colour from these images. Freud's desire to equate the early stages of personal development with the primitive history of Man has a bearing on Coleridge's poem: it may be that the 'ancientness' of our mariner is partly emblematic of the poem's symbolic reference to the initial embarkation of the 'self' upon the waters of life. We perhaps begin to understand something about the Ancient Mariner's story which must have disquieted most readers in some degree: the lack of balance or justice in his fate as compared with what happens to his shipmates. Fickle they may be, but they are not after all responsible for the death of the bird, as he is; and yet he survives while they perish, and their bodies become the lifeless animated tools of 'angelic spirits'. They suffer, in other words, the reverse fate to that of Dr. Coppelius's doll; and such humiliation seems a retribution in excess of that exacted from the deed's real perpetrator. But the cause of the situation is that their whole condition, and that of the other characters, is entirely secondary to and dependent upon the mariner's welfare, even to life or death: it is his 'ego' and hence his fate which is of exclusive narcissistic dominance in the narrative. For this reason even the wedding-guest cannot evade him. So, for this almost overbearing centrality of the Mariner's own ego in his story, Freud's 'primary narcissism' does offer some explanation.

It does begin to seem as if the precise feeling of uncanniness as such is not to be located in the contents of our early awareness of things, which seem in themselves frequently either neutral or positive, or conceivably so. The eeriness and unease must rather reside elsewhere, and be projected onto those things, thus colouring them. If these early memories are not simply forgotten, but repressed by our 'grownup' consciousness, then it must have some vested interest in their non-appearance, which it may find threatening to the rational ordering of its daily life and sense of self-preservation. Hence it is not the memories, but their re-appearance, their repetition, which is the source of anxiety. So, in essence, runs Freud's explanation.

> if this is indeed the secret nature of the uncanny, we can understand why linguistic usage has extended das Heimliche ['homely'] into its opposite, das Unheimliche (cf. 226); for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression. (XVII: 241)

Hence the links with the 'hidden' and brought 'to light' of Schelling's definition. As Freud neatly points out, in unheimlich 'the prefix "un" is the token of repression'. Thus 'everything that is uncanny ... is something which is secretly familiar' and 'has undergone repression and then returned from it' (245).

It may be possible to put it differently and to locate the sense of supernatural eeriness in something more benign: a widening of consciousness to encompass new realities and new ways of seeing - which are really old ways of seeing which our

rational consciousness had by its very development foreclosed from us. The dizziness and strangeness of the experience are the natural response to this necessary re-orientation of all our familiar conceptions to accommodate the new realities. Furthermore, it is possible that the 'symbolic' mode of communication with ourselves (in Coleridge's sense) is not a more sophisticated, but a more primitive model of thought, the elements of which are imagisitic, shifting, metamorphosing, all-embracing, imprecise - like the ingredients of dreams. That the romantic use of symbolism may itself be enough to raise 'uncanny' feelings in the mind, Coleridge's somewhat grandiose account of it in the Lay Sermons seems to promise.

Freud, however, was never able to sympathise with those who saw a positive value in the condition of 'primary narcissism', with which 'symbolism' in Coleridge's sense appears to connect. Though he understood his friend Romain Rolland's account of the fundamental 'religious emotions' to refer to this earlier state of being, as 'a feeling of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole' (XXI[9]: 65), he sees in this fact even less reason for attraction to the condition. In this he is not at one with Rolland, whose memorable description of the feeling, as recounted by Freud, is markedly positive: the emotion concerned 'he may suppose is present in millions of people. It is a feeling which he would like to call a sensation of "eternity", a feeling of something limitless, unbounded - as it were, "oceanic"' (XXI: 64). We are reminded of the most important characteristic Coleridge attaches to the symbol:

'the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal.' If it is with language that the fine distinctions of time and place are enabled to enter our consciousness, there may still be uses of language which partially reflect a more holistic prior condition, a condition not entirely in space and time, as we later come to differentiate these terms. As Jacques Lacan puts it, 'what happens' in the unconscious 'is inaccessible to contradiction, to spatio-temporal location and also to the function of time' (Lacan[10] 1986: 31); and, insofar as the oceanic condition is an unconscious stratum still present within us, it has the same right to these descriptions. If 'indestructible desire escapes from time' (Lacan, 32), may this not also be the partial and relative effect of such a 'symbolic' form of words as contains its own death-wish, so to speak, and which seeks to reflect as closely as possible those 'unconscious desires' that spell its undoing?[1]

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[1] It should be noted that Lacan insists that 'Freud's unconscious is not at all the romantic unconsious of imaginative creation' (Lacan 1986: 24); we are partially justified in understanding as much of Lacan's own different 'unconscious'. For him (at least in 1986), as for Freud, the 'oceanic aspiration' is a 'phantasy', and 'illusion' (31); it gains reality only in terms of the 'split' or 'gap', the surprise, by which the unconscious opens up a hiatus in our speech and daily life, and so renders them contingent: 'What is ontic in the function of the unconscious is the split through which that something, whose adventure in our field seems so short, is for a moment brought into the light of day' (31). Thus Lacan's unconscious can only properly be located in terms of negatives: 'Ontically, then, the unconscious is the elusive' (32); it is what in our psychology challenges the ordinary assumptions we hold about Being (including its subordinate categories of Time and Space). The unconscious's further existence as any kind of unitary entity is problematic indeed.

In the case of the Ancient Mariner, his embarkation and sea-voyage into new realities are certainly clarified for us if we take account of their 'oceanic' dimension. Indeed, the Mariner's voyage could be interpreted as a parable of the ego's painful discovery of the reality principle, in that the cosmic results of his mistreatment of the albatross impress upon him his relative subordination to the universe's more powerful ego, where once he supposed his own omnipotent and omnipresent. In the albatross he thus comes to some awareness of the demands of 'other', an 'other' still partially conceived of as a division in, and hence a projection of, the self. Insofar then, as it imitates the formation of the super-ego the poem becomes a universal parable of the arrival of guilt.

Though reductive in the traditional 'Freudian-school' manner, it is tempting to suggest an identification between the albatross and the poet's father, whom, as a child of eight, he must have believed he had 'killed' through his own celebrated naughtiness. The exile to 'Christ's Hospital' must, as 'Frost at Midnight' hints, have seemed an imprisonment and penance for this self-convicted Oedipal deed. From here began, perhaps, a pattern of 'compulsive repetition' - of need, transgression, self-punishment and self-reproach - which was to last Coleridge throughout his life.[2] [11]

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[2] David Beres in 1952 suggested a link between the albatross and - perhaps more interestingly - the water-snakes, and Coleridge's recollection of a 'phallic mother'. His paper was called 'A dream, a vision, and a poem' and is referred to and discussed by D.W. Harding in 'The Theme of "The Ancient

But even if accepted this would be merely to scratch the surface of the range of meanings of the work, and would offer us only a little information about the functioning of the poem as an emotional event for the reader, which is our primary concern.

There is no doubt that the Mariner's world is 'oceanically' unified. Its 'One Life' shows itself not only in the Coppelia-like vivification of all its elements (sea, ship, winds, currents, and celestial objects all seem actively involved in the Mariner's fate) but also in the unifying poetic form of the ballad itself, and in the evidence of the poet's own mind which is everywhere present: the animation provided in the similes, other images and figures of speech contribute, even more than could be considered 'usual' in a poem, to a sense of a newly-living whole. 'O! the one Life within us and abroad,/ Which meets all motions and becomes its soul,/ A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,/ Rhythm in all thought ...' wrote Coleridge in 1828, six years before his death. The synaesthesia of these expressions reveals - still more than the union of poetic self with an equally created world of perception, or of subject and object in the poem - that malleable 'shiftiness' of language, and, correspondingly, of the supposedly real entities of experience, which prepares the way to make unification possible.

This controversial unity of the poem which both Coleridge and Wordsworth believed in is seen by them in a quasi-

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Mariner"'in Coburn (1967: 57-64).

metaphysical light. Uncomfortable as this may be to recognise in our more sceptical times, for both poets the unifications of the poem imitate in some dim, reflected way the absolute unity of the cosmos at large. This unity includes not only physical nature but mind, too, in their view. As Coleridge could happily assert in one of his letters: 'what the Globe is in Geography, miniaturing in order to manifest the Truth, such is a Poem to that Image of God, which we were created unto, and which still seeks that Unity, or Revelation of the One in and by the Many ....' (1956: 545)[12]. The child's mind was recognized as both emblem and origin of that vision which could perceive the unities upon which both revelation and poetic form and vision depend: 'Blest the Infant Babe,' writes Wordsworth[13] (Wordsworth 1954: Prelude II, ll. 229ff), indicating that his intention is not unlike that of Freud: '(For with my best conjecture I would trace/ Our Being's earthly progress ....).' In specifically Lacanian terms, we could say that the poem is invoved in a partial process of attempted approximation to the undifferentiated Real.

For Wordsworth the contentment and security of Childhood's primary narcisssism, where the infant does not yet distinguish him or herself from mother and hence world, is not only a vital determining experience; it is also a supremely positive and profound one, capable of 'irradiating and exalting' (cf. Prelude II, ll. 234-241) the external universe by imbuing it with one of humankind's deepest and most all-embracing emotions. Coleridge, in his Mariner, is far more acutely conscious than Wordsworth, and at an earlier stage in

their joint development than he, that the gates of Eden do close, and that the cost of being an outcast from this primal world may be considerable - all the more to the degree one is empowered to 'recollect' it.

And yet even for Coleridge the sublime, as a state of elevated consciousness which promises the reader (or listener or viewer) the absorption into a higher mode of being and feeling in which the trappings of self may be temporarily discarded, comes to stand as the primary achievement and purpose of the poetic text. As in his table talk Coleridge once placed this quality in poetry - in contrast to the mere 'majestic' or the 'picturesque' - as the ultimate but almost unachievable stage of response: 'Where neither whole nor parts, but unity, as boundless and endless allness - the sublime' (Coleridge[14] 1917: 443).

It is clear, then, that there must be a relation between the poetic sublime and the romantic uncanny, since the terms which most concern them appear so to overlap. Interestingly, Coleridge seems to put his main emphasis on the supernatural rather than the sublime. This may be because he is concerned with a wider range of possible responses emanating from the primal source - including primal teror and unease, as the mariner's fate attests.

Coleridge is certainly (perhaps even unfortunately) prophetic in The Ancient Mariner, with regard to the future course of romanticism. For this work touches not only on the sublime and the uncanny, but - as we shall see - incorporates the repetition compulsion, too; more ominously - in the dire

consequences for the mariner's comrades, and in the Death-in-Life the mariner himself undergoes - we may discern the lineaments of the death wish also.

> Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
> How fast she nears and nears!
> Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
> Like restless gossameres?
>
> Are those her ribs through which the Sun
> Did peer, as through a grate?
> And is that Woman all her crew?
> Is that a DEATH? and are there two?
> Is DEATH that woman's mate?
>
> Her lips were red, her looks were free,
> Her locks were yellow as gold:
> Her skin was as white as leprosy,
> The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
> Who thicks man's blood with cold.
>
> The naked hulk alongside came,
> And the twain were casting dice;
> 'The game is done! I've won! I've won!
> Quoth she, and whistles thrice. (AM: ll. 181-198)

The italics and capitalisations deserve attention here: what is fascinating is that the 'Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH' is presented as specifically and emphatically female. It is her triumph that the mariner is condemned not to extinction but to a 'living death', in which he suffers the compulsion to repeat the essence of his traumatic tale.

What this seems to imply for the mariner-as-poet is that he is never entirely free of the grasp of the pre-verbal maternal entity which incorporates in its meaning the 'death of the self'; in his mixed desire and dread of this red-lipped, golden-haired entity he is forever moved both to regret her passing and to fear her power: a state of irresolvable tension which dooms him forever to return to the

subject in his multiplied symptomatic narratives, but which he cannot finally exorcise.

For Wordsworth the mystical is never other than benevolent, or else salutary in the fear it inspires; Coleridge seems aware that there is something potentially darker and more genuinely terrifying in the engulfing sublimity the poem both hides and reveals.

The death wish is in any case an ambivalent entity: it may imply nothing more harmful than the paradoxical desire of self for 'dissolution into the organic' or into the primal unity. This is, it seems to me, where Lacan most recognizes its functioning: as an effect of the frustrated desire for the Other. But that it may have more sinister implications too is revealed by the second and later generations of romantics, where the death wish begins to dominate, and does, I think, initiate the romantic decline; for example, its Keatsian need to cease upon the midnight with no pain; its belles dames, who represent the masochistic submission to the mother (or at least to the feminine) who seeks to overwhelm and re-absorb the emergent self. The 'romantic agony' in all its manifestations begins to give increasing prominence to these destructive drives, to an extent which ordinary everyday rationality would eventually cease to tolerate.

The 'supernatural', then, is more comprehensive than the 'sublime' (at least as Wordsworth conceived it); it adds to the Wordsworthian sublime more extensive possibilities of terror and awe as well as exaltation (though, to be fair, Wordsworth has these, too). But all these are still by-

products of the process of alerting us to a 'different' world, one that surrounds and contains our own limited, familarized, post-linguistic consciousness, and thereby exposing us to the relativity of what we had thought all-inclusive. It tells us that a super-normal reality extends beyond our own - at least linguistically speaking; and that it is one of the functions of our metamorphic poetic devices to make that 'other' reality partly visible to us through the poem.

As Coleridge himself described the first effects upon him of his encounter with Wordsworth's poetry, before he had ever met the man, it is clear that what deeply impressed him was the poet's power to make vision new. He saw this especially in the poetry's dialectical mixture of accurate observation and 'the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere and with it the depth and height of the ideal world, around forms, incidents and situations of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dewdrops' (BL: 48-9).

We remember the joint plan of campaign for the Lyrical Ballads: the poets were inspired by the symbol of a moonlit or sunset landscape to the idea that the 'imaginative' and the 'actual' might be combined without sacrificing either. Hence two sorts of poems were planned, each sort to be the responsibility of one only of the two poets: 'it was agreed that my endeavours,' recalls Coleridge 'should be directed to characters or persons supernatural, or at least romantic' (BL: 168). We see how closely these two terms are linked in

Coleridge's mind: here the 'romantic' appears as merely a modified or more edifying version of the stronger alternative.

> Mr Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy and custom and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand. (BL: 169; my emphasis)

These are somewhat more moderate claims than those I want to make or have been making; or which Coleridge seemed to imply in his final words on the Imagination a chapter but also a volume ago. But what is recoverable from both contexts is the sense of a renewal of vision which Imagination may bring about, which may make the natural world appear to us as suddenly 'uncanny'. (We remember that Coleridge wished to distinguish between the supernatural proper and its close kin the preternatural, and planned to prefix an essay on this second form to 'Christabel' if and when it were separately published; it was possibly the uncanny in its more Wordsworthian variant, as the radically unexpected, that he had here most in mind.)

In the previous chapter Coleridge had claimed the following about the operations of the creative Imagination: 'It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to ideaalize and to unify. It is

essentialy vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead' (BL, 167).

Is there not sufficient here, then, to reveal to us the meaning of the romantic supernatural, as Coleridge intends it? It consists in, as Schelling suggested, a 'bringing to light' of that which is 'secret and hidden'. What is most characteristically hidden from our everyday vision is the innate unity and subjectivity of the world of apparently discrete things we suppose external to our perception. This revelation - which is as much an inward communing with something we know but have forgotten - we may be surprised into, by a poem, in two ways: by a dissolving and diffusing of our ordinary linguistic expectations; or, in contrast, by a more-than-expected unification of sound, connotation, emotion and image, to create the effect of a new composite entity. All this is largely managed by making words themselves function in new and renovating ways.

It may be objected that what has been suggested may still be applied as much to the sublime as to the uncanny, and yet in neither case characterizes them specifically. Terror may also be part of the sublime, as Burke had revealed long before Coleridge's time ('whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime' [Burke[15] 1969: 35]). Although the two are linked, it must in the last analysis be differences of content that reveal the precise distinction between them. In the case of the sublime, what seems most to impress us are extremes of dimensionality or

scale: of power, strength, height, depth, vastness, intensity, perfection or all-embracingness. To continue with Burke: 'In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it ... hardly anything can strike the mind with its greatness, which does not make some sort of approach towards infinity' (1969: 49, 54). What Burke describes is the overwhelming of the reason and its capacities by the employment of some means which, even on early interpretations, are seen as suggesting extreme 'dimensions of the mind': human qualities of nobility, profundity or awesomeness, perhaps.

The supernatural or uncanny emerges thus as a subdepartment of the sublime, where our sense of awe and veneration is actually overtaken by the elements of fear, unease, and half-pleasurable terror, all leading towards the temporary 'death of self'. It is then only a question of a different emphasis that distinguishes supernatural from sublime: as Freud reveals, what is at stake in the supernatural or uncanny are not mountains or chasms but the overawingly <u>personal</u> abysses into which we stare, when we recognise the alien at heart of the human. It is that utterly elusive sense of self-recognition that is most awful, that inexplicable conviction of our own deep implication in what he means that the spectre brings with him, like a reflection in a mirror that is also not our own. In a wider but no less potent way the spectral includes the return of common yet forgotten

psychological matter, which the features of the tale or poem - or perhaps the whole poem - serve to evoke.

Julia Kristeva seems close to these matters when she finds the origin of all poetic activity in human emotions of fear: fear of the deep preverbal nothingness that underlies our language, about which we must compulsively keep talking:

> any practice of speech, inasmuch as it involves writing, is a language of fear. I mean a language of want as such, the want that positions sign, subject, and object ... a language of want, of the fear that edges up to it and runs along its edges. The one who tries to utter this 'not yet a place', this no-grounds, can obviously only do so backwards, starting from an over-mastery of the linguistic and rhetorical code. But in the last analysis he refers to fear - a terrifying, abject referent ... the writer is permanently confronted with such a language. The writer is a phobic who succeeds in metaphorizing in order to keep from being frightened to death; instead he comes to life again in signs.
> (Kristeva 1982: 38)

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Which brings us to the repetition compulsion. Here Freud is surely right in placing less emphasis upon the specific contents of the experience than upon the force of disturbance itself, and upon the particular character of the disorientation it compels upon our everyday perceptions and presuppositions.

Neil Hertz[16] puts it this way: 'The feeling of the uncanny would seem to be generated by being-reminded-of-the-repetition compulsion, not by being-reminded-of-whatever-it-is-that-is-repeated. It is the becoming aware of the process that is felt

as eerie' (Hertz 1979: 301). In other words, it is being tumbled willy-nilly into a situation of unexpected return - with its implications of timelessness in the very fact of recurrence, a parallel return on both behavioural and psychological levels - that is particularly vertiginous for the everyday rational and linguistic ordering of our lives.

Freud puts the matter perhaps most directly in Beyond the Pleasure Principle:

> It may be presumed that when people unfamiliar with analysis feel an obscure fear - a dread of rousing something that, so they feel, is better left sleeping - what they are afraid of is the emergence of this compulsion with its hint of possession by some daemonic power. (XVII: 36).

Though the work mentioned above provides the central occasion upon which Freud links - still perhaps somewhat loosely - the death wish and the compulsion to repeat, it is in 'The Uncanny' that this further element of uncanniness is drawn into the ambit of the other two:

> For it is possible to recognize the dominance in the unconscious mind of a 'compulsion to repeat' proceeding from the instinctual impulses and probably inherent in the very nature of the instincts - a compulsion powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle, lending to certain aspects of the mind their daemonic character, and still very clearly expresed in the impulses of small children; a compulsion, too, which is responsible for a part of the course taken by the analyses of neurotic patients. All these considerations prepare us for the discovery that whatever reminds us of this inner 'compulsion to repeat' is perceived as uncanny. (XVII: 238)

Though Freud clearly wishes us to link the compulsion which produces the repetition of the neurotic symptom with the

sense of irrational 'uncanniness' which so frequently attends its 'inexplicable' return, we may feel some dissatisfaction at not being offered a clear account of the mechanism concerned. Why repeat? We still do not seem to possess an explanation for the particular character of the process itself. His comment to the effect that the instincts - of whatever character - involve the repetition of behaviour, is only a sally in this direction. There is a world of difference between innate genetic behaviour patterns and neurotic symptoms.

However, the descriptions[17] he offers of such recurrent gestures or actions are vivid enough:

> There are people in whose lives the same reactions are perpetually being repeated uncorrected, to their own detriment, or others who seem to be pursued by a relentless fate, though a closer investigation teaches us that they are unwittingly bringing this fate on themselves. In such cases we attribute a 'daemonic' character to the compulsion to repeat.
> (Freud 1973: 140)

That this offers us an adequate account, not only of the situation of the Mariner subsequent to his voyage and return, but applies too to the addictive personality of his guilt-tormented creator, is evident enough. Yet the Mariner's tale is sufficiently early in Coleridge's career to have been 'uncannily' prophetic, as the poet himself seems to have recognized for the first time upon his trip to Malta in 1804.

In a special way here, the 'timeless' character of the symbol might seem to have been vindicated. Coleridge once spoke of the way dreams may be thought 'supernatural visitations', seeming by their prophetic power to possess a 'character of divination. For ... who shall determine, to what

extent this reproductive imagination, unsophisticated by the will, and undistracted by intrusions from the senses, may or may not be concentred and sublimed into foresight and presentiment?' (LS: 80-1). Foresight or insight, the dream-like fantasy of the mariner seems to have had emblematic status for Coleridge's life, as has often been noted.

With regard to the mechanism of the repetition compulsion, we are obliged, I think, to adopt the Lacanian recourse of seeing in it a special relation to absence; it thus becomes a type of signifier, created out of presence and absence at once, as is so much else in our linguistic and symbolic world, if in a less overt way. Signifier or symbol, the repetitive gesture is surely an attempt to staunch a gap, to foreclose upon an absence, through a device the futility of which must be evident even to the luckless obsessive himself. Yet he is helpless, compelled by powers that are larger than his sense of self or of reality, for the origin of the 'gap', the trauma, is frequently to be found in an area of his past which precedes the full formation of these senses.

One is probably not far from the mark in seeing the entire power of the Other - as object of desire - temporarily dislocated into the neurotic symptom, the vain attempt to re-unify a fundamental level of experience divided by the traumatic or the repressed ... as the unitary consciousness of primary narcissism is split into self and other, wounded by the need to speak. The Mariner must speak and continue speaking, like the poet, but such speech will not bring the

promised surcease from the 'uncanny' source that prompts it, as even he knows.

Such an account may seem inflated until we consider examples within the experience of us all, for the 'compulsion to repeat' afflicts most of us through the regressive obsessionality of what is popularly called being 'in love'. The excruciating incapacity for being deterred from her object which afflicts the besotted Helena in A Midsummer Night's Dream is an example of this compulsion which has an 'uncanny' hold on her will; or the point when Lear, in a moment of dire black comedy, can see in the pitiful blind Gloucester only a 'Goneril with a white beard'. Both are evidences of the compulsion to make whole by speech or act what resolutely refuses to be healed.

The idea that neurotic repetition is a kind of speech might prompt us to certain insights about the nature and function of repetition as a figurative device or rhetorical trope - at least, perhaps, in some romantic verse. Neil Hertz raises the question in the reverse direction when he asks whether the symptomatic gestures or 'visible signs of desire are "like" figures of speech?' (Hertz: 300). What we, in turn, wish to enquire is whether repetition and other figures may not sometimes function as 'symbols' in Coleridge's sense, or as apparently contentless and hence simply formal equivalents of such symbols. His mention of the 'referenceless' character of the symbols of dreams, quoted earlier in this essay, could perhaps open the way for such an understanding.

Repetition may, of course, appear in many forms. It is customarily understood as a device for emphasis, and often is - but perhaps not always or exclusively. Here we may include not only the repetition of words, phrases, lines, refrains and choral stanzas, and the same symbol appearing in different guises, but the formal inward repetitions that constitute rhyme and rhythm. What we mostly see is a complex play with our expectations: a texture of real presences and of presences implied or accentuated by absence, operating both on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes. It begins, indeed, to look as if verse is built up largely as a structure of repetitions and their absences. Consider

> Water, water, every where,
> And all the boards did shrink;
> Water, water, every where,
> Nor any drop to drink. (AM: ll. 119-122)

or

> Alone, alone, all, all alone,
> Alone on a wide wide sea!
> And never a saint took pity on
> My soul in agony. (AM: ll. 232-235)

in contrast with

> O happy living things! no tongue
> Their beauty might declare:
> A spring of love gushed from my heart,
> And I blessed them unaware:
> Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
> And I blessed them unaware. (AM: ll. 282-287)

In the following case the repetitions not only dramatise the unalleviated endless agony and then the jabbering excitement of mariner and crew, they also enact the vain stabbing

attempts to pin down an elusive - ultimately uncanny - reality with words:

> There passed a weary time. Each throat
> Was parched, and glazed each eye.
> A weary time! a weary time!
> How glazed each weary eye,
> When looking westward, I beheld
> A something in the sky.
>
> At first it seemed a little speck
> And then it seemed a mist;
> It moved and moved, and took at last
> A certain shape, I wist.
>
> A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
> And still it neared and neared:
> As if it dodged a water-sprite,
> It plunged and tacked and veered. (AM: ll. 143-156)

The Coleridgean explanation of all this would surely be its linking of 'sameness with difference' in the poem; of 'a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order'; as part of the way a poet 'diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination' (BL: 174; my emphasis). Coleridge of course traces metre originally to 'the balance in the mind ... which strives to hold in check the workings of passion' (BL: 206). And, 'as intimately connected with this, if not the same argument in a more general form, I adduce the high spiritual instinct of the human being impelling us to seek unity by harmonious adjustment, and thus establishing the principle that all the parts of an organized whole must be assimilated to the more important and essential parts' (BL: 211).

What this amounts to is that language, figures of speech, and metre all share the same function - precisely that of distinguishing the poem from the language of 'real men'. The ultimate and essential fact is: 'I write in metre because I am about to use a language different from that of prose' (209); 'in every import of the word essential which would not here involve a mere truism, there may be, is and ought to be, an essential difference between the language of prose and of metrical composition' (212).

The difference between the figure of speech or trope and the customary patterns of ordinary unaccentuated prose is in itself one of its most important rhetorical effects. That difference acts as a challenge to our adult, rational, prose-centred existence, in Coleridge's view. The fact that the forms of poetry involve the recurrent more than the forms of prose, by itself constitutes a device to open up semantic uncertainty, to disspel stuffiness, to alert us to what is threadbare about our ways of seeing.

It is thus rhetorical in a special sense somewhat like that outlined by Paul de Man in his 'Semiology and Rhetoric'[18]. De Man sees, for example, the ordinary question become rhetorical

> not when we have, on the one hand, a literal meaning and, on the other hand, a figural meaning, but when it is impossible to decide by grammatical or other linguistic devices which of the two meanings (that can be entirely contradictory) prevails. Rhetoric radically suspends logic and opens up vertiginous possibilites of referential aberration. And although it would perhaps be somewhat remote from common usage, I would not hesitate to equate the rhetorical, figural potentiality of language with literature itself. (De Man 1979: 129-30)

As is well-known, as a definition of literature this formula becomes problematic when confronted with the essay, the biography, the treatise, and even the novel. But it may have something to say about the common, formal aspect of Romantic poetry.

5

The semantic splitting de Man talks of need not be followed as far as direct contradiction. Yet, as we have already seen, a poem like The Ancient Mariner cannot be made to signify in the way we suppose normal with our ordinary prose or speech communications. We and many others have teased out from the poem already a mumber of readings, all of which have equal right to our attention; there is no reason to believe they are exhaustive. Such polysemy extends to the very frame of the mariner's tale, which seems designed to spread the possibilities of its signification. As Frances Ferguson[19] notes, both the epigraph and the prose gloss actually serve to divide the ground from which we approach the work, for their separate registers and frames of reference frequently disagree: 'while the persona of the Gloss is that of a seventeenth-century editor who lays claim to sorting out the medieval tale, the author of the epigraph, his contemporary, merely provides us with a record of his lack of certainty' (Ferguson 1987: 258). In the course of the narrative, as has often been noted, the gloss and the verses sometimes actually

exchange functions: the gloss becomes more metaphorical or 'supernatural', the corresponding verses more literal and prosaic. The effect of the supernatural tale so presented is constantly to undermine our reading certainties to special and particular ends; and such - or so I have been arguing - is what the term 'supernatural' in this context should lead us to expect.

By way of illustration, let us list some of those 'readings' we have had cause to suggest or allude to or imply in the course of this study. There is the poem as emblem and prophecy of the poet's personal life, with his constant murder of his 'better self' within and consequent self-punishment; there is the parable of his own problematic early psychic experience; there is the universal myth of early consciousness and selfhood afloat on the sea of life and encountering reality, with the interplay of conscious and unconscious forces that govern our world unbeknown to us, conditioning our lives; there is the unresolved conflict or conflation of the Mariner's hope for Christian solace and an animistically-conceived universe, itself with powers of life and retribution. Never to be disregarded, there is Robert Penn Warren's metaphysical 'One Life'[20] interpretation of the nineteen-forties, seeing a cosmic interdependence of living things which the mariner disturbs by one thoughtless act of circumscribed desecration, akin to the independent operations of irresponsible rationality. Most important for our purposes, there is the 'allegory' of poetic creativity and the poet's relation to his own unconscious sources of inspiration, which

he must learn to accept and bless, even though they may be apparently alien, the equivalent of water-snakes and a 'thousand thousand slimy things' that 'crawl with legs/ Upon the slimy sea' (AM: ll. 125-6). Only by such acceptance of what is within himself may he hope to turn his avenging demons into 'angelic spirits'. Even so, he is a forever tainted being, who - although (in the words of 'Kubla Khan') he has fed on 'honey-dew ... And drunk the milk of Paradise' - is compelled by that knowledge which is within him to the endless varied repetitions of its inward matter in poetic form, each variation of which offers only temporary surcease of his desire for the Real he is denied, by the fact of his adulthood.

The 'holy dread' the wedding-guest feels for the uncanny mariner may be accounted for by his own self-recognition in the figure: after all, he becomes a 'sadder and a wiser man' through this inevitable acquaintance. There can be little doubt that the mariner and the wedding-guest are projections of one and the same consciousness, as is customary in dreams. It is the wedding-guest, as 'hostage' to the everyday world of the wedding-feast (upon which he ultimately turns his back) who is constrained to listen to this compulsive repetition of the voice of his own deepest being, 'like a three years' child' (AM: ll. 15). The wedding-feast awaits him, its festivity and gaiety echo as a sounding backdrop almost within his reach: but this expression of adult procreative sexuality and future parental reponsibility would mean, by his accepting a more everyday form of 'fertility', a final closing of the

doors upon the child within - whose torments, terrors, and transcendent vision are the source of the uncanny power which animates his creative will ... or, at least, that of the mariner, or else the poet.

What the Mariner repeats, of course, is the poem we hear for the first time, yet which is repeated each time a reader reads it. After which the repetition compulsion, it appears, gives rise to the interpretation compulsion: that attempt to domesticate a text or trauma by repeating it over in one's own voice; just as the poem is an effort to 'repeat' its source of inward meaning in its own colours (we see signs of this, for example, in the mariner's 'Christianizing' of his own text). That neither compulsion can, in the nature of things, be successful in its initial purpose, will not bring the process to an end; for we are compelled to continue, to fill the widening gaps in being. It is perhaps only that we inevitably introduce our own particular brand of 'sameness with difference', and so produce what we did not think to, which gives independent value to our efforts.

I have left out of my list of interpretations, of course, the wild notion that the Ancient Mariner is a literary ballad, in imitation of common and archaic oral forms, about a sea-dog who endures an inconveniently disturbed voyage. But I think I have said enough to illustrate the capacity of the 'symbol' (whether linguistic feature or complete work) to confound our ordinary semantic expectations. Our interpretations range from the Especial to the General to the Universal, yet the end is not in sight, simply because - as is

not the case with allegory - our references cannot be what the symbol is. It is its capacity for interpreting us which is the most uncanny thing about it. Yet the romantics were not inclined to savour vertiginous linguistic abysses for their own sake. For them the defeat by poetry of our ordinary referential language was no more than a prelude to a wider and more inclusive vision. Poetry, by its simple existence, was also that form best equipped to provide the most comprehensive vision possible to linguistic man, yet still remain within the fold of language: hence its 'uncanny' irreducibility, its range of potential reference. As Coleridge 'repeated' in his epigraph from Burnet: 'I can easily believe that there are more invisible than visible Beings in the Universe.' The same is true of meanings.

I close with a translation of the epigraph itself, in this case only slightly abridged to highlight a meaning or range of meanings which, it may be, were not as apparent to the reader before this essay. As I have already confessed, there is no reason to suppose they are exhaustive.

> I believe easily that there are more invisible than visible beings in the universe ... The human mind has always circled about the knowledge of these things but has never reached it. Still it is undeniably desirable to contemplate in the mind, as it were in a picture, the image of a greater and better world: lest the mind, accustomed to the small details of daily life, becomes contracted and sinks entirely into trivial thoughts ....
> (Scheider[21] 1972: 634-5).

This 'invisible' and more extensive world, paradisal and horrific, is that which lies beyond the compass of our words.

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Chapter 3: LACAN AT THE LAKES: WORDSWORTH BEYOND THE EGOTISTICAL SUBLIME.

That there is an affinity between Romantic studies and Deconstruction is a commonplace of the smalltalk of contemporary criticism: it has been much noticed that many of the most famous American Deconstructionists are or were also Romantic scholars. However,there seems no very great clarity on exactly what that affinity consists in. For example, in his book Deconstruction: Theory and Practice[1] Christopher Norris appears to suggest that the relation is primarily a negative one: it is distinguished, so to speak, by the contrast it provides.

> Romanticism holds out the utopian idea of a merging between mind and object, a state of awareness so finely attuned to experience that all such distinctions drop away and the knower is at one with the known. Wordsworth's poetry was a constant search for these privileged moments or 'spots of time', while Coleridge pursued a similar theme through the toils of idealist metaphysics. The inherent pathos of this attempt - the fact that the mind can never achieve such perfect communion - is often manifest in Hartman's more chastened [i.e. later, Deconstructionist] style ... For Hartman this is the impasse encountered by all Romantic and post-Romantic thought. The 'unmediated vision' lies beyond reach of language, because language brings along with it a mediating structure of awareness which can never coincide with its object in a pure, self-authenticating knowledge. This was the burden of Hartman's criticism long before he met with its powerful formulation in the texts of Derrida.
>
> (Norris 1982: 94-5)

Norris has the gift of being lucid in areas where lucidity is not always taken as a virtue; nonetheless, perhaps certain sacrifices of sense have been made for the sake of such clarity. The problem here is a problem of language: a question of what meanings different speakers attach to words in common use when they appear in a slightly uncommon context.

The problem words in this case are 'subject' and 'object'. I believe a misunderstanding is risked - or, perhaps, an ambiguity is left unclarified - in the extract above, over the senses such words had for the Romantics whom Norris mentions. Norris attributes the same misunderstanding to Geoffrey Hartman. We will have to investigate a little to decide if the association of Hartman with the spirit of the Norris paragraph is indeed entirely valid.

For the moment, I wish to make three assertions which contradict the broad sense of what Norris is saying. Firstly, I intend to show that Wordsworth and Coleridge were themselves fully aware - just as aware as Hartman - of the 'mediating structure of awareness' implicit in language; secondly, that they were in no way deceived into supposing that 'perfect communion' with external objects in nature - the sort of objects language might be supposed, naively, to designate - was at all possible; and thirdly, I would go so far as to find in scepticism about the 'self-authenticating' correspondence of general concepts or percepts with real external entities a major (perhaps <u>the</u> major) defining characteristic of Romanticism itself. In other words, it is possible to see Romantics like Wordsworth and Coleridge not as the polar

opposites of Deconstruction, but in many ways its forerunners. This essay, then, argues for the considerable modernity of these poets' theoretical discourse, at least in this regard.

The real problem with the terminology of 'subject' and 'object' comes, I believe, in the form of a confusion between two different philosophical uses of these terms. (Lacan recognises something like these differences in his distinction between 'object small a' and le grand Autre ['object large A', we might usefully term it]). Modern commentators sometimes fail to appreciate that the Subject and Object Romantic poets and philosophers were concerned with were not generally to be identified, in a straightforward fashion, with one particular historic observer in the contemplation of one isolated individual object. In the case of the 'subject', the Romantics accepted that any individual consciousness bore a synecdoche-like relation to the universal Subject of perception: the individual was always the representative of such a Subject, but was not for all purposes identical with it. This correspondence of subject with Subject is implicit in the German idealists Fichte, Schelling and Hegel (cf. Eagleton[2] 1990: Chs 4 and 5). Since it asserted an irreducible equivalence at the deepest level of one subject with another, it seemed for the Romantics at the same time both one of the major mysteries, and yet also a near-unquestionable inference from the needs of both reason and experience. All the contemporary discourse on 'human rights', for example, depends upon its recognition.

However, Romantics were under no illusions that the same sort of identification with the general was possible for any particular object that might come within an observer's field of notice. On the whole, they saw the link between actual objects and the idea of Object itself as formal and conceptual only, not hiding an essential reality.

Admittedly, Romantic assertions were sometimes ambiguous enough to excuse our confusion on the matter; nonetheless, when Romantics spoke of the identification of subject and object in such privileged moments as Wordsworth's 'spots of time', what they had in mind was the absorption of the observer into the total field of consciousness, not the union of one poet with one peak.

When Wordsworth gives instances of what has appropriately been dubbed by others 'cosmic consciousness', the experience is usually in practice admittedly only partial, a 'leading' rather than a full admission into oneness with totality. Again, undoubtedly, the mystic experience is habitually occasioned by some particular occurrence in the natural world - the looming of a mountain, a roaring wind - but is not to be identified with the occurrence. Indeed, there is a kind of paradox in the fact that such contingent things may have such momentous results. Individual objects may thus stimulate a 'spot of time' but they have only incidental relation to the happening in itself: that happening lies beyond the province of particular perceptions, and, by a similar token, beyond the province of what language might be thought to refer to. In

fact, the very essence of the event lies in the defeat of all perceptual or conceptual systems.

This argument will have to wait for its further elaboration and substantiation later in this essay. For the moment, I wish to return to the question of whether it is against Norris, or against Norris and Hartman, that the argument is directed; of whether or not Geoffrey Hartman would subscribe, in the unequivocal way Norris's tone suggests, to the interpretation of Romantic attitudes he offers us above.

I am able to decide this matter, if at all, only in terms of particular instances. Consequently I have chosen as specimen cases two widely separated writings by Hartman, both on Wordsworth. The first, published in 1964 - before his encounter with Derrida and Deconstruction - is his seminal work Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814[3]. The other, for the purpose of comparison, is his essay 'Words, Wish, Worth: Wordsworth', which appeared in the collection Deconstruction and Criticism[4] in 1979.

In Wordsworth's Poetry Hartman defines Imagination as 'consciousness of self raised to apocalyptic pitch' (his emphasis). In the original context, he arrives at this definition through a consideration of 'The Solitary Reaper' and the paean on Imagination from the crossing of the Alps episode (1850 Prelude VI: ll. 592 ff.).

In the Preface to the same volume, he glosses 'apocalyptic' variously. Of the senses offered, that which

most concerns us here is 'any strong desire to cast out nature and to achieve an unmediated contact with the principle of things' (1964: xxii).

On the face of it, this formulation sounds supportive of Norris's view of matters; but we should treat it carefully. Not only does it speak - surprisingly, it may be, in a Wordsworthian context - of 'casting out nature': an uncapitalised nature which can only mean the collective appearances of objects, not the reality they represent. Secondly, it invokes 'the principle of things', not the essence of things. Wordsworth certainly in his visionary moments seeks contact with what could be called the principle behind nature (if these metaphors of 'behindness' serve at all); but that is not remotely the same as saying that he desired direct contact with the entities normally designated in speech, while by-passing the linguistic process.

Hartman's inclusion of the word 'unmediated' does, it is true, hint at the second sense as well as the first. However, in the context in Hartman's work the first sense is the stronger. On the other hand Norris - if this is one of his sources - could well suppose the second sense to be meant.

Hartman himself should be left the last word, when it comes to interpreting the earlier Hartman in the light of the later, or attempting to judge if a later sense was lurking in the earlier formulation. In his 1971 'Retrospect' to the volume, he himself attempts to restate his themes 'in terms which reflect what has interested me since the completion of this study' (xiii).

Despite the updating of terms, Hartman still emphasizes that Wordsworth takes particular natural things as a point of departure for direct visionary contact with what they represent - Nature as a generalized, not a particular entity. The poet's sense of place, for example, can lead him onwards to what is placeless; as, we might add, the designating word can, at least in poetry, lead to what is undesignated. But there is no claim that Wordsworth believed in privileged contact of a direct kind with either place or object.

To this vision, as Hartman presents it, the place - or thing - made sacred by 'second sight' appears as an omphalos, a world-centre. It communicates with that which is all but itself. And it is that mysterious 'all' which is, we might add, the real object of the poet's visionary interest.

Hartman has an subsidiary thesis to add to this. He sees Wordsworth as experiencing conflicting pulls - towards the visionary totality, Nature, on the one hand, and towards natural objects of sense on the other - and holds that it was the 'humanized' Wordsworth who won out in the end. To transpose this into Lacanian and linguistic terms: Wordsworth eventually abandons the Real for the Symbolic; he gives up the search for an extralinguisitic dimension and resigns himself to language.

On the face of it, this programme is close enough to orthodox interpretations; it can be well supported from the poetry. Though in presenting such 'self-humanizing' as an aim - as a motive in dialectical conflict with its opposite, the supernaturalizing death-wish - some liberties are taken

with the evidence, to my mind. In fact, in the poetry Wordsworth presents the 'humanizing' as forced upon him; not consciously or even unconsciously sought. As we all know, the 'Immortality Ode' laments a loss of vision imposed by age and 'forgetting'; in the 'Elegiac Stanzas' it is a 'deep distress' (his brother's death) that 'hath humanized my Soul'.

(No doubt one might maintain that this multiplication of responsibility for the change argues, if not some disingenuousness, at least a lack of self-knowledge on Wordsworth's part. But it in no way establishes that he actively sought the extinction of his powers. Insofar as the evidence is consistent, it is consistent for the opposite view.)

While resting on the antithetical nature of Wordsworth's supposed internal conflict (which a lingering 'Coleridgean metaphysical hangover' [xvii] helped to prolong) Hartman admits that 'what I saw mainly was the solipsism inherent in a great imagination, the despair tracking apocalyptic hope' (ibid.). This certainly seems to suggest a pessimistic attitude on Hartman's part towards the poet's apocalyptic ambitions, towards his desire to overcome the limitations of the Cartesian subject.

It will be part of the argument of this essay that sympathy with this supposed predicament of Wordsworth's is misplaced. Antithesis is not necessarily conflict; and I believe that Wordsworth felt the force of antithesis, but not what could be called conflict ... at least until late, until concern over the loss of his powers. As with the leech-

gatherer of 'Resolution and Independence', who is both homely and 'supernatural', Wordsworth was prepared to contemplate a combination of extremes without conflict - a 'balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities' (BL: 174) - precisely because Coleridge in his own theories of perception (and, by inference, of language) had provided in advance a theoretical framework which gave them an exact and approved place. Then again, even the 'Elegiac Stanzas', where the 'humanization' is at last declared, is redolent with thoroughly metaphysical influence, Coleridgean or otherwise: which means that unfortunate 'metaphysical hangovers' cannot be entirely blamed.

This subsidiary issue aside, it will be evident that Hartman's statements about things and places - especially the doctrine of the omphalos - could readily be interpreted in linguistic terms, revealing Wordsworth's conflict with debased words as much as things. In his 1971 re-consideration of Wordsworth's Poetry Hartman allows that he often did come close there 'to a theory linking verbal figures and structures of consciousness', but managed 'to evade my own insight' (vii). He feels now that the poems which display an intensive centering on the omphalos really subtly reveal that what the chosen locus hides is a decentred reality: 'The center they converge on is an absence; the darkness they illumine has no heart' (xviii). Such statements, while again pessimistic in tone, nonetheless do not support the precise interpretation of matters Norris offers us. It is Wordsworth's mystical pretensions as such that Hartman seems to see as endangering;

in so far as the last quotation is a comment on the deficiencies of a linguistically-centred approach to reality, Wordsworth would entirely agree with Hartman - but his tone would, for good reasons, be different.

These terms, or the sense in which Hartman then used such terms ('omphalos', 'unmediated'), having been a little clarified, we can move some fifteen years on from Wordsworth's Poetry to the essay published in Deconstruction and Criticism, with an eye to noting how far the linguistic adaptation has progressed: to what degree the basic concepts of the earlier work have survived their translation to a Deconstructionist setting. (Though I think we should bear in mind Hartman's important avowal, in his own Preface to the later collection,that he and Bloom are only 'barely deconstructionists'. He there distinguishes these 'barely deconstructionists' from the 'boa-deconstructors' featured elsewhere in the volume: Derrida, de Man, Hillis Miller [Hartman 1979: ix].)

His own essay takes a poem of 1816, 'A little onward ...' (Wordsworth[5] 1947: 92-94), as its point of departure. We see that the older terminology is still current: 'What is "a little further on"' Hartman asks, if not an 'omphalos' or other 'sacred place' (Hartman 1979: 179)? Again, Wordsworth's use of an opening quotation from Milton, and his preparedness to draw upon the Classics (but from a source which integrates them, in some apparently primal way, with Christianity), are taken to 'represent the felt though repressed power of pre-

Christian literature: a power which, like Imagination, points to the possibility of unmediated vision' (181).

While giving full weight to the elegance and power of Hartman's argument here, I must confess that in the poem quoted, which offers so many almost uncomfortable reminiscences of the 'great decade', the appeal to nuns and Holy Writ in its coda sounds to me more disappointingly bathetic than 're-integrative'. It is as if the poet has taken pains to shrive himself with a dab of holy water for the pagan and pantheistic enthusiasms he all but tempts daughter Dora a little onward to enjoy[1].

Hartman sees Wordsworth as fusing the various literary sources in an attempt to 'reach beyond religious or temporal mediation' to 'a point of origin essentially unmediated' (183). It is clear that Hartman's concept of 'mediation' still conveys no less than it did in 1964, even if it now being used for different, pancretist, ends.

As anticipated, the concept of mediation is elaborated to include verbal text as well as natural object. That is why Wordsworth's prefatory Milton quotation so fascinates Hartman. Immediate and mediate are now analogous to raw primal sound

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[1] Indeed, in the 1840 comment on 'Ode to Lycoris' which Hartman includes to substantiate his interpretation, Wordsworth to me actually sounds peevish and defensive, rather than the architect of a Grand Unified Theory, as Hartman would, I think, have it: 'Surely one who has written so much in verse as I have done may be allowed to retrace his steps in the regions of fancy which delighted him in his boyhood, when he first became acquainted with the Greek and Roman poets ... Classical literature affected me by its own beauty. But the truths of scripture having been entrusted to the dead languages ... an importance and a sanctity were at that [i.e. Milton's] period attached to classical literature ... that can never be revived' (1979: 182).

and articulate meaning, respectively; like phone and antiphonal response, it is suggested. Indeed nature itself now becomes text: 'The visitings of imaginative [visionary] power in Wordsworth put quotation marks even around nature' (185). Nature (small 'n') and words are identifiable, and these together are part of what Wordsworth wishes to step beyond, 'as a Jonah evading the divine Word'. What is at issue in this attempt to speak the speechless is 'Wordsworth's knowledge that the imagination may not be on the side of nature' (185).

Thus, as anticipated, 'Words, Wish, Worth ...' takes shape as a modernisation - post-semiotic, peri-Derridean - of the thesis of Wordsworth's Poetry. Though the occasion chosen, the poem 'A little onward ...', may also be a little unserviceable, its provisional title is at least symbolic of the new steps it represents. And yet it was only a little onward that Hartman needed to go to see his original exercise as part of a new critical enterprise.

What I think we have now ascertained is that in neither critical text we have considered, for all his expected pessimism about referentiality, does Hartman suppose that the visionary moment in Wordsworth is an attempt to overcome the proper separation between sign and signifier, to attain direct communication with the objects of language, seen as somehow existing independently of language. On the contrary, Hartman argues, I think correctly, that such moments should be seen as an attempt to defeat language altogether. But the objects or object then sought are not the objects of language.

We still have an important objective to attain: if Wordsworth and Coleridge did not entertain naive notions of the functions of language, then what notion of the relations between word and world did they hold, and how is it free of that naivety? How is it possible to show that Norris's picture of the Romantics as the arch-representatives of those who espouse a deludedly referential view of language, and, still more, of those who believe that the constraints of language may be overcome and its objects 'really' grasped, is in fact the absolute contrary of the truth about them?

Although we have exonerated Geoffrey Hartman of complicity with Norris's opinions, Norris may well be right about other Deconstructionists: this possibility will be pursued further in the next chapter. For the present, I wish merely to adopt another suggestion of Hartman's from the 'Words, Wish, Worth: Wordsworth' essay , where he points to the existence of a theological and a countertheological wing in post-structuralist thought and criticism (1979: 206). The difference between these two wings is approximately analogous to the differences in approach between Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida. What I hope to show in the course of this essay is that, by reason of a whole range of internal affinities, the theological approach to Wordsworth and his work - with Lacan as the principal luminary - is the most appropriate and productive one. It is as if Lacan's psychology permits a complete further level of excavation: an eleventh Troy hidden under the archaeologist's rubble, supportive of all the rest.

2

That the unconscious is structured like a language is, perhaps, Lacan's most famous insight. There are, however, diverse interpretations of this pronouncement. To my mind, Lacan states that the kinds of relationship that differentiate and unite the elements of language are structurally the same as the relations that unite and define the unconscious contents of our minds. Images, 'objects', symbols, words: all these, whether consciously or unconsciously active, contrive to make sense or nonsense together by the same sorts of rules of connection and association. It is the tendency to unite, to forge linkages and contrasts, which is the important thing: and this operates by similar processes in both cases. In the case of the unconscious however, we may suppose, the restraints are looser and the possibilities less limited and predictable.

If we will, we could see Lacan's picture of the unconscious as a constantly ramifying network, a vastly proliferating system of links and differences, bringing into relationship whatever will be so conjoined. Yet all this is not precisely separable from our ordinary discourse, and intrudes into it. This webwork of useen affiliations, this complex of links and associations - the 'unconscious' of our language itself - is brought into play to some extent in every sentence we employ.

Small wonder that our unconscious makes use of regulated and unregulated connections at need in such circumstances as dreams, forging sometimes convoluted symbolisms in response to our psychological promptings and demands. In these circumstances, Lacan would say, we especially witness the shifting of the signified beneath the signifier (always for him, in any case, an unstable conjunction). This reference to dreams is not without its relevance to the poet, who, in casting his metaphors and similes, is also making use of unregulated or at least unexpected conjunctions between words and hence 'things'.

Wordsworth, for one, was fully aware that language has its own unconscious:

> Visionary power
> Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
> Embodied in the mystery of words:
> There, darkness makes abode, and all the host
> Of shadowy things work endless changes ....
> (1850 Prelude VI: ll. 595-599)

What Wordsworth means, the legitimate semantic 'catch' his words draw in, includes the following. Nature, blind and apparently bereft of consciousness as she may appear, becomes something more than herself when embodied in words, when names are ceremoniously or unceremoniously given to her parts. This is because a word, as a human construct applied to reality, joins in one, so to speak, the human subject and the thing described: subject and object, speaker and nature, meet in the spoken or written symbol.

If this is indeed what Wordsworth is claiming, then such a claim would seem to justify Norris's worst apprehensions. But as I shall bring evidence to show later, and as is in any case more or less apparent from the extended passage, this claim does not really involve a belief that something external to language is being 'captured' by the linguistic symbol. Indeed, Wordsworth is actually saying precisely the opposite: that the word is <u>not</u> the 'thing' itself; that it is thoroughly imbued with a human dimension, being a human construct. Though it seems to - in a sense, does - draw upon a part of nature for its reference, 'wind' as a named thing is itself a human creation. So the investiture of the physical with the human is only approximate truth: there never was, strictly speaking, any independently existing physical 'thing' before it was picked out, later recognized, and so in some sense 'named' by human agency.

Thus the so-called physical object, in this case the wind, in its verbal guise becomes part of a complex webwork of memory and association: it is at once linked with the subconscious of the language, 'darkness' and all its host of 'shadowy things'. (The subconscious of the language becomes in practice the linguistic subconscious of the utterer or hearer, of the poet or reader; but who is to say where public or private begins or ends? We are all, in a sense, 'situated' in a language which speaks through us.)

Again, the supposed natural things are further transformed by their relocation into a creative linguistic structure. They become more than themselves when rehoused in

the different mansion of the poem. This is partly because, once isolated within the poem, they become enmeshed in its complex of verbal interactions - or, at the very least, in those interactions which are particularly highlighted within the frame; it is also partly because in this new context, with their human element exposed, they become symbolic of the sort of union of the human subject and Nature 'at large', Nature as a perceptual totality, that characterizes the moment of mystic or visionary union. Though this likeness between words in a poem and the unifications of cosmic consciousness is in itself no more than a kind of analogy, it may contribute to making the effect of the whole poem something closer to the mystical experience as such; or so Wordsworth believes.

This potentiality is owing to the way in which the organic unity of the poem (pace Coleridge; more, later, about this as a controversial term) is very like a small alternative Nature: a microcosmic reflection in essence of the unbroken, undivided whole that is these things' original home - as it appears, at any rate, to the state of cosmic consciousness. The universe itself, to this view, taken as one, is repeated in little in the poem.

The universe, to these poets' minds, can legitimately be taken as 'One' because human conceptual boundaries alone impose divisions upon it: the intellect which 'murders to dissect' appropriates the world by its insistence upon its links and differences, as if these were realities. If the mental processes of analysis, classification, and subsequent reassociation are quintessentially human in character, then we

are entitled to suspect that Reality repudiates such distinctions. If our linguistic signs seem to presuppose a world of independent particulars, then reflection on the arbitrary character of signs suggests that there is no correspondingly discontinuous reality beneath, but - in all likelihood - a single plenum. Schelling's philosophy supports such a view: for Schelling, too, subject and object are aspects of a pre-existent unified ground of which we are usually unconscious; only in the work of art can we gain some intuitive intimation of what that ultimate reality might be like (cf. Eagleton 1990: 133-6). Schelling was, of course, a primary influence upon Coleridge.

Such affirmations naturally go beyond even the most sympathetic of Deconstructionist positions. For Deconstruction, only dreadful abysm and aporia follow upon our realisation of the failure of signs: a sense of vertigo and loss, and abrupt and sorry return to the prison-house of language. For Romanticism, on the other hand, the collapse of signification can bring the revelation of a strange, alien, and yet more unified mode of being beyond our own. The full consequences of this for my argument will have to wait, though, for my following chapter.

Wordsworth's Prelude passage continues as follows:

> ... - there,
> As in a mansion like their proper home,
> Even forms and substances are circumfused
> By that transparent veil with light divine,
> And, through the turnings intricate of verse,
> Present themselves as objects recognised,
> In flashes, and with glory not their own.
> (VI: ll. 599-605)

The 'transparent veil' is that woven from 'the mystery of words': but 'light divine' shines in and around it. This paradoxical light both preserves differences and melts them together. What the veil is transparent to is not (as Norris supposes) the reality of discrete entities our language leads us to expect, but an increasingly undifferentiated and harmonious experience of cosmic wholeness. The panoply of hidden unconscious connections works alchemically upon the language, reinforced by the poem's special unifying devices such as rhyme, rhythm, assonance and alliteration. What the poem echoes in its own admittedly limited way is the primal unity in which man and his total world were not separated.

The poem, then, offers us a different kind of vision to the everyday. In it, we no longer see the physical world as science once preferred, as if inanimate and independent of us; through the poem we experience it anew, as sentient and animate, imbued with human essence. But this is something which, if it can be apprehended through particulars at all, can only be reflected down upon them from the whole.

The Romantic poem thus employs a set of propadeutic devices for the cultivation of superior vision. By shifting the conventional ground of our perceptions, by disturbing our habits of seeing, we become aware, as a direct experience, of what is 'mystical' in and behind the very fact of language; we are exposed to the embodied 'mystery of words' (l. 597). The signifiers of poetry, by attracting our attention inwards upon themselves, take us back to the roots of things: they alert us to the mystical that subtends the act of verbalisation itself.

3

It is this last element perhaps, that accounts for the unfamiliarity of tone, even when we find a coincidence of thought, between Wordsworth and recent literary theorists. Not for Wordsworth the 'pathos' and pessimism awakened by our imprisonment in human-created language. Indeed, especially when it is the reverential product of a 'wise passiveness', the mutual impress of man's mind on his environment is to be welcomed - as a sign of his belonging, not his alienation. And yet Wordsworth is as aware as Derrida or Hartman that human beings create the world they live in through their words.

There clearly is a 'something more' in Wordsworth's world-picture, something not shared with his Deconstructionist successors, though he goes much of the way with them. Discussion of this additional element will have to wait until my next chapter: I am unable to press further with my main argument concerning affinities between Romantic and post-Structuralist attitudes, or to deal adequately with the two problems so far 'shelved' for later examination (Wordsworth's paradoxically 'optimistic' tone, and the controversay attending Coleridge's organicism) without returning here to one or two of the best-known and most primary statements of English Romanticism, to show that what I have said is not incidental but basic to matters Romantic as these poets conceived them.

Wordsworth's comparison of the 'mansion' of the poem to the 'proper home' that is Nature directs us onward in time to the text of Coleridge's famous definition of creative imagination[6]. It, too, sees in human creativity the microcosm of an act of universal proportions.

> The imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in its kind and agency, and differing only in the degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially <u>vital</u>, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead. (BL: 167)

For all its fame, this passage still gives rise to confusion, as any teacher will have found. Everyone accords in seeing it as a grand, near-religious laudation of the almost superhuman powers of artistic imagination - appealingly hubristic in the expected Romantic fashion. The deeper problem, especially for new readers - though not only for them - seems to lie in the connotations of the words 'primary' and 'secondary', as has on notable occasions been pointed out (cf. Willey[7] 1964 [1949]: 22). 'Secondary' imagination somehow seems to imply a 'lesser' imagination. How, then, can <u>this</u> be the creative faculty that is so euphorically commended? Why is it not this faculty, human artistic creativity, which is in first place and so reflecting the creativity of the Supreme Being?

Especially difficult to accept is that what is being saluted in the primary position in the paragraph is not artistic power but simple perception, as its author plainly says (the 'prime agent of all human perception'). It is the familiar act of seeing and recognising that reflects 'the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM', not creativity as we ordinarily understand it. Such familiar creativity, then, is an essentially human activity, though as Coleridge carefully points out, it has many links with the first type: it 'echoes' it; it is identical with it in 'kind and agency', but differs from it in 'degree' and 'mode'. Coleridge's many quite vague qualifications to this effect show simply how reluctant he is to appear to diminish the 'divine' status of the secondary imagination, however much such diminishment might seem to be demanded by his logic.

What is happening is that Coleridge is obliged to give place to the important insight he had from Schelling and Kant: that in its experience of the world, the mind is no mere passive tablet receiving impressions from without; it takes an active part in determining precisely what it manages to see or hear. That in perception subject determines object, and is determined by it, is in summary the lesson Schelling had for Coleridge. A tree is only seen as such through an act of co-operation between the original brute sensory stimulus, and the full remembered portfolio of related experience in the observer's brain. Eventually, that is no more than common sense; though common sense is sometimes different from 'what is obvious'.

Though the fact itself is obscured by the mysterious letter - from Porlock, no doubt - that interrupts Chapter XIII, Coleridge has actually been arguing towards this end through all the preceding course of Biographia Literaria, and through all ten theses of the foregoing chapters. That perceiver and world are not independent Cartesian opposites, but are engaged in a process of mutual modification - that subject and object are, in the last analysis, aspects of each other - this is the fundamental insight of Coleridge's philosophical idealism, and the basic tenet of his faith since his abandonment of Hartley years before. Biographia Literaria, in a way which resembles the Prelude, is a self-consciously biographical account of his personal journey towards - and thus his personal right to - this truth.

We see how modern notions of the 'arbitrariness of the sign' would contain no surprises for Coleridge, who was perfectly well aware of the way our universe of objects is human-created: that is what primary imagination means. However, what needs to be added here is that in consequence the 'world of objects' cannot be identified with ultimate reality, any more than it can in Schelling: its reality is contingent, dependent on the Subject who perceives it. If 'all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead' (BL: 167), this is another way of saying that there are no such things as objects. They are inventions of the scientific temper.

There is still the question of why perception is like God's original act of creation. Here we need to recall that

subject and object are really one, but undergo an apparent cleavage in the act of perception: but it is 'object large A' from which the observer separates himself, in order the better to create 'object little a' from its materials by his contemplation. In a sense, every act of perception re-enacts the original distancing between the observer and his world: in order to be conscious of his objects, the subject must interpose difference between himself and them. By the same gesture, he becomes aware of himself as separate entity, a subject, and may even go on to make himself an object to himself.

Correspondingly, to Coleridge out of Schelling, the first act of creation was precisely God's saying to himself 'I AM'. When God became conscious of himself, he became an object for his own awareness. What was once a unified, undifferentiated totality was now cloven in two - into perceiver and perceived (however much those two were in essence still the same being).

Only after that giant act could consciousness and a universe of things be possible. We might, of course, for our part feel that the sacrifice of totality involved was probably worth it: God also had his fall, though no-one mentions it. But we may now also see how this divine self-cognition could stand for Coleridge as a 'type' for human perception. Structurally, the equivalent processes are involved.

To move on to the second of these powers: the crucial point of distinction regarding the human creative imagination seems to me to lie in a phrase almost tossed aside in the piece. Coleridge talks of secondary Imagination 'co-existing

with the conscious will'. By this we are apprised, obliquely enough, that creative imagination, in contrast with the will, draws powerfully on the unconscious for its materials and inspiration. This it does differently from perception, whose relations with the unconscious are more of the instinctual kind. Whereas the contents of the unconscious that Imagination draws upon have close affinities with the objects and impressions of our conscious world: it is not so much in its contents as in their linkages and re-ordering that this unconscious betrays its presence.

The element of the unconscious distinguishes Imagination from mere Fancy, or fantasy, since Fancy as an artistic tool involves artistic juxtapositions made through conscious choice. Its appeal is to the intellect, not to the whole network of hidden associations that lie just out of sight, yet root down into our being. So interpenetrative and far-ranging may these interconnections be, they resemble the unified co-operative activity that sustains a cellular creature. This is why their employment in the poem provides it a special vitality, in likeness to an organism.

And yet Coleridge's account of the Imagination remains incomplete unless we supplement it by pointing out that the secondary Imagination relates to the primary in this respect: in its urge to unify it is attempting - but in a token and allegorical sense only - to re-integrate the subject and object that drew apart in the bare act of perception; and the harmony and unity it attempts to impose is really in microcosm, as we have already stated, a partial imitation and

attempt at symbolic retrieval of the original unity of the living cosmos - a unity lost by its division into subject and object through, in this mythology, God's first verbal act. It can inevitably be only a pale shadow, a synecdoche, an imitation of that whole - not the thing itself. But by imaginatively substituting for that unified world while the poem lasts, it may 'lead on' to some apprehension of the state of wholeness, if it is particularly succesful with its aims.

Coleridge gives perhaps too little actual prominence to this particular feature of creative Imagination: its impulse to knit back together the elements of the universe, the observer with the things observed, in imitation of the primal - and Real - unity of the cosmos, which is the true source of its pre-eminence. Nevertheless, such an outcome is a clear implication of his argument. 'Fancy' works, by contrast, with illusory elements - with the so-called 'objects', the illusory objects, of perception. Thus it is not Romanticism, but the poetry of Fancy and wit, that gives credence to the 'referential' interpretation of language: its province is the seeming 'fixities and definites' of the intellect, of the 'objective' world. In its re-arrangement of them into a pleasing or clever pattern it merely imitates art of the Coleridgean kind. The strength of Imagination, on the other hand, is to do more than it seems to do - to draw powerfully on our own unconscious as readers; and by all that it unifies (or, at least, links in a coherent pattern), both within and without us, to put us - not just in mind of but, finally, in touch with - the original unity of all. As we see, these

claims are in line with those Wordsworth makes for the language of the poem in the extract from the Prelude.

Having come so far, we are able to understand better the mysterious properties of the Imagination that Coleridge outlines in Bk II, Ch. I (Ch. XIV in some editions). When he there alludes to the reconciling of subject and object, we must remember that it is the whole subject Coleridge is concerned with: sensory, intelligent, imaginative, emotional. The ideal poet, we recall, 'brings the whole soul of man into activity' (BL: 173).

The little world of the poem attempts, then, to imitate the cosmic unity, the primary world without divisions. In Lacan's different but closely parallel cosmology, this last would be the Real world, experience of which is duplicated for us in our earliest consciousness, before the 'mirror stage' and the intrusions of language. What Lacan's psychology adds is a concrete dimension to these Romantic speculations, by informing us that we actually once had direct knowledge of such a condition as Coleridge alludes to; for at the earliest period of our psychological growth, we knew no difference between ourselves and the rest of existence; nor did we divide ourselves off as subjects from the totality our mothers mediated to us. It is the arrival of language which most notably confirms the alienating intrusion of differences into our unified awareness. The realisation of his distinctness from the mother is only the most traumatic of the differences that the child is obliged eventually to accommodate.

Nonetheless, some recollection of his pre-linguistic state forms the groundwork for his later consciousness: such a supposition seems an inescapable consequence of Lacan's position.

To stay for a moment close to Lacan's universe of discourse, it would be in this reflected Real world that the 'binary oppositions' that so plague our intellectual life (including the opposition of subject and object) are ontologically reconciled: these binaries, too, are a product of our acquisition of speech. Small surprise that Coleridge sees these contraries as inviting reconciliation within the poem's more primal microcosm. Through the 'synthetical and magical' Imagination, the poet 'diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends and (as it were) fuses, each into each'; this power

> reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry. (BL: 174)

There is another phrase in Coleridge's famous account of Imagination which deserves a separate comment. Coleridge speaks of Imagination struggling 'to idealize' as well as to unify. The activity and state of mind this refers to have, I think, often caused embarrassment for modern readers, but they

are axial to Romanticism. I wish to go back, for a moment, to Coleridge's account in Ch. IV of his first impressions of Wordsworth's poems, to the precise words he uses in praising their qualities:

> It was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying, the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew drops.
> (BL: 48-9; Coleridge's emphasis)

The way this begins is now familiar: it involves the apt conjunction in the poem of the poet's subjectivity and the objects language identifies in nature. In addition we must remember that Imagination is, paradoxically, the agent of truth; in imaginative work, properly speaking, we do not meet chimaeras. Yet there is a relativity implied: even if not truth absolute, the compounding of poetic sensibility and the so-called objects of nature is at least 'truer' - more unifying - than an account which leaves them separate.

The second part is more unexpected than the earlier, and, at first glance, somewhat incompatible with it. After the praise of 'truth in observing' we see commended the impression of 'the depth and height of the ideal world.'

In one way, 'ideal' means to Coleridge ideal in a philosophic sense. In this usage it is not far, paradoxically, from 'humanised', its apparent opposite. As with idealist philosophy, which sees the world always in terms of mind, the ideal is simply that aspect of his own being the poet adds to

the natural world in his account of it. The 'ideal', then, is no more than what opposes the bare illusory world of objects. Coleridge would argue - as I have done above - that an observation which includes the observer, his feelings and impressions, is a truer observation than one which pretends to objectivity.

In this sense, as in others, the ideal is the super-natural: the humanized account of the natural. And both Coleridge and Wordsworth seem at times to have thought of the supernatural in a way that is little more exalted than this. For example, we recall once again Coleridge's account of their joint plans for the Lyrical Ballads collection:

> it was argued that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and wonders of the world before us .... (BL: 169)

Wordsworth's part in this was to present the ordinary world anew to his readers, and by the heightening power of his vision give them a sense of the supernatural in the real - something which is really there for those who have the eyes to see it. But it appears, of course, only as part of the interaction of an individual and his world; particularly, it goes without saying, of an individual like Wordsworth.

It is informative how close the two terms come in the statement above: 'supernatural, or at least romantic'. This reflects, I am sure, an equally close link between them in Coleridge's thought, as our explorations of Chapter 2 suggested. Again, we have an echo of the previous extract quoted - of, indeed, the 'sparkle and dewdrops' bedimmed by custom - in the last lines of the passage above. This time we are redirected from the 'lethargy of custom' to the 'loveliness and wonders of the world before us'.

As before, the similarity should indicate to us that Coleridge is really discussing the same subject in both extracts. The 'ideal world' of the first passage is in practice interchangeable with the 'supernatural' of the second, this supernatural vision which Wordsworth is to bring to his descriptions of rustic scenes and folk.

It is clear, though, from the allusion to The Ancient Mariner in the second extract, that the intended sense of the 'ideal' now goes beyond the plainly philosophical, though it continues to include it. The concept of the ideal now includes the notion of a heightened, amplified reality; but one no less true because heightened: it is a reality which bears about it traces of the fundamental ontological and psychological roots from which it springs. The 'loveliness and wonders of the world before us' appear from behind the screen of ordinary language and custom only when, through a conviction of cosmic unity, we see the world and its people with eyes newly conditioned to the fundamental and the essential. We see it, partially and in glimpses, as a mystic might.

We shall have to explore the nature of this second ideal, the ideal as a 'lesser form' of the mystical, more precisely later. For the moment, I would like to advance the idea that we have in these notions of the ideal one of the most essential attributes of Romanticism, and an important contributory element towards its definition.

Though the 'ideal' figures in both Romanticism and Neo-Classicism, there is a change and a progression between the super-natural and the Neo-Classical ideal. The latter was at once a formal, proportional, and supposedly communal ideal; whereas the appeal of the supernatural, like the appeal of the Gothic novel, is to our private and asocial instincts. It is the power of the ghost to undo our normative conceptions of reality that is the root of what is at once subversive and seductive about it; in that power we take a secret and privately anarchic delight.

In its application to Romanticism, the supernatural has to be interpreted rather more widely, however. What is 'supernatural' about Romanticism is its preoccupation with the hyper-normal, with reality viewed not with our plain, conventional vision, but with all the excitement and mystery that comes from emotional and imaginative heightening by an <u>individual</u> sensibility. From the soulful landscapes of Friedrich and the tempestuous, impassioned momumentality of Beethoven to the super-heroes of Wagnerian epic: whatever else Romanticism may have come to be, it was surely primarily a stage for imaginings and emotions larger, <u>truer</u>, more fundamental, than everyday life usually affords. Perhaps the

best definitions of Romanticism are negative: for it was first and foremost a denial that our everyday language and our habitual conceptions can adequately reflect reality; and in this it not only opposes realism but is at one with some more recent movements, Deconstruction included (however little the 'ideal' is part of Deconstruction's list of priorities).

One must emphasise, then, the importance of the individualistic element, the source of Romanticism's most salient departures from neo-classicism. The single, solitary figures that look absorbedly away from us in the centre of so many Friedrich canvases are properly the emblem of the Romantic man or woman of the age. Even their self-centredness was larger than life. Part of this mythology of the individual, expressed or not, part of the melancholia of these Faustian figures, lies in the unspoken responsibility that rests upon the shoulders of such isolated men and women: they are each aware of having to recreate the world in their own image, and - as if asking for external recognition of their burden - invite us to identify with their gaze.

For Deconstruction and Lacanianism, in contrast, the individual is as much an illusion as the objects he or she prizes; what confronts the world is no more than a de-centred and divided subject. But such iconclastic individualism as the Romantics professed is not by itself the whole story: it co-existed with a belief that at the depths of the entirely personal, idiosyncratic and individual psyche the communal re-asserts itself - that though the means may be private, the end is not. Hence, at the most fundamental and hence most personal

limits of our separate identities, what we discover is once again in common.

Although Eagleton can claim that 'One does not give the slip to the subject simply by collectivizing or universalizing it' (Eagleton 1990: 170), to see subjecthood against a more universal framework implies a considerable modification of its meaning: it makes a difference from which tangible moral effects may follow. Hence Wordsworth could claim that his experiments with simple poetic diction in the Lyrical Ballads were intended to expose the primary laws of human nature in action, and that this was sufficient justification for his undertaking them.

Such 'universality' is not entirely at odds with Freudian and Lacanian models. We sometimes overlook the way that the generality of the Freudian or Lacanian hypothesis is one of its most important psychological facts. After all, Oedipus is everybody's. If Lacan is right, the same kind of common right of access must pertain to the mystical dimension, too. Perhaps like sex, which is always, psychologically, our own (never our parents'), the innate sense of cosmic oneness is capable of being both universal, and unique to us.

It is not surprising that such poets emphasized, then, the element of emotion in verse: for emotion is more primitive than and fundamental to language and abstraction; and it is, among the many emotions of the poem, the emotional state appropriate to the Ideal that the craft of the Romantic artist seeks to induce in us.

The Lacanian connection lets us know what this means. The ultimate ideal state, behind all its variations, is just that absorption of the subject into the cosmic oneness; and the ideal images of the Romantic poet owe a large part of their power to the way they hint at that state. For if it is a real one, a real memory in us, and it is prior to language, then it must be unlike all other memories; since it circumvents the mediation of language, it must be capable of returning to us in much its original form, as the experience itself. And so mystics of all ages would have it.

This is why Romantic poetry, in seeking to describe situations that image the Sublime, often have the power to induce something of its emotional condition. Shelley courting a total, self-annihilating absorption into the unbounded power and freedom of the West Wind, or Keats slipping Lethe-wards, half in love with easeful death, despite his nightingale's song: these two salient Romantic moments are only superficially opposed. The loss of self into force or timelessness is, in either case, an aspect of nostalgia for the cosmic unity, beyond the troublesome accidents of personal existence. But these situations are built upon, and gain force from, their dramatisation of intrinsic paradox: the nightingale's living song is as enticing and mysterious as death itself. We remember the Grecian urn's domestic status: 'bride of quietness ... foster child of silence and slow time'. We remember, too, that 'Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/ Are sweeter'. In all these cases we are presented with a tension between individual and

undifferentiated existence, between being as entity and Being as totality.

Together with its desire for constructions of words to overpass the functions of words, we have here one of the principal paradoxes of Romanticism: that in no other literary movement has the life been so related to the work; and yet one of its ultimate longings is for the shedding of self and its work into some larger whole.

It is only with some such account of the Romantic ideal as that offered above that we are enabled to see the close link that exists between apparently diverse elements in Wordsworth's outlook: for example, his mysticism is shown to be related to his concern with the natural, the simple, and the real language of men. We have to bear in mind the importance of the 'return to roots' which Wordsworth, wearied with rationalism and the excesses of the French Revolution, sought after his return from France. We should not be surprised that in this search for roots, for what is basic and most true in us, it is to our childhood world of unbounded emotions and free-ranging imagination that Wordsworth turns. And, as we have discovered, in that place, too, we encounter the psychological sources of the Ideal.

It is obvious enough that the Romantic world of awe, spectacle and mystery has its affinities with that of the child's untainted vision, where what is seen is seen larger for want of diminishing comparisons. (It is strange, as many must have noticed, how the history of the universe we inhabit

imitates our psychological development: on the borders of our vision, furthest in the visible past, lie the monumental entities, the quasars; and beyond them, a melding of all in the fires of the big bang, the cosmic origins.)

Jacques Lacan teaches us that the Romantic concern with the Ideal is no mere fanciful aberration of literary history, but has a real grounding in our deepest psychological selves. Through Lacan's account of the psychological processes of infancy we see the connection between the Romantic search for 'truer' vision, and a response to the world which has its origins in the monsters and good giants of childhood.

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Long ago Rene Wellek, among other voices, said that the 'great endeavour' of Romantic poetry is 'to overcome the split between subject and object, the self and the world' (Welleck[8] 1963: 132). As we have seen, we need to be careful to understand this correctly: we are talking of Subject and Object, not of individual self and particular thing.

Lacan, too, explores the interdependence of 'subject' and 'object' in his psychological thought. Characteristically, his locus is language:

> What I seek in speech is the response of the other. What constitutes me as subject is my question. In order to be recognized by the other, I utter what was only in view of what will be. In order to find him, I call him by a name that he must assume or refuse in order to reply to me. (Lacan[9] 1977: 85)

Barbara Johnson brings out some of the implications of Lacan's position vis-a-vis the object or, alternatively, the 'other', in her discusssion of his famous treatment of a literary text, Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Purloined Letter'; she is discussing, too, Derrida's riposte to Lacan.

> 'The sender,' writes Lacan, 'receives from the receiver his own message in reverse form. Thus it is ... that a letter always arrives at its destination'. What the reversibility of the direction of the letter's movement between sender and receiver has now come to stand for is precisely the fact, underlined by Derrida as if it were an objection to Lacan, that there is no position from which the letter's message can be read as an object: 'no neutralisation is possible, no general point of view'. This is also precisely the 'discovery' of psychoanalysis - that the analyst is involved (through transference) in the very 'object' of his analysis. (Johnson[10] 1978: 169)

We note that by offering it a name the observer situates the object in his field. Names, speech - and language, generally - are of the symbolic order in Lacan's epistemology. Since accession to the symbolic order is precisely what severs one's attachment to the Real, words and the Real will never meet; no matter how much the individual is driven by desire to use language for its re-appropriation.

Admittedly, this is different in Wordsworth. In Wordsworth, words are employed as a means to cosmic consciousness. But this is because the word, in the poem, is not in the world. It is in 'a mansion like its proper home': and the proper home of whatever real ontological referents our words attempt to designate is not the discrete world language portrays, but the unified cosmos to which mystics alone claim

access. Although the poem cannot equate with the original, undivided world, it offers a 'home' much more unified, much more like the original than our ordinary speech.

It is thus that the words of a Romantic poem may serve as an omphalos, in Hartman's sense: to represent precisely all they are not. Wordsworth recognises how the mediate 'object' can, to an extent and in certain circumstances, enable where it once frustrated. The 'strange fits' of a Wordsworthian poem - displacements of logic, grammar, and expected usage, paronomasia, paradox and oxymoron - are there to surprise us into seeing the word for what it is: a compound of subject and subject-determined 'object'. And in that very recognition of our linguistic restrictions for what they are, we may actually be filled with a paradoxical sense of our own fundamental freedom from them. In this the poem shares the same hope as psychoanalysis: to liberate through confrontation with the transfigured linguistic fact.

Coleridge's statements about language have been widely quoted - I will have cause to refer to some of them in the next chapter - but he is often dealing with similar issues when he discusses perception; in their time and with their intellectual traditions, Wordsworth and Coleridge were inclined to think about such matters in these perceptual terms. Were he alive now, I suspect that Coleridge would have written of the same problems in a more decisively linguistic context.

Not that he and Wordsworth were, as poets, in any way blind to the implications of their thought for language. True, they saw it as part of a wider problem, and probably so should we. But in order to demonstrate that Wordsworth had little that is essential to learn from Derrida or from notions of the arbitrariness of the sign, let me quote a passage that bears on this subject. It comes from a deleted manuscript entry: a large part of this was discovered and presented by Helen Darbishire[11] in her notes to the first edition (1950) of The Poet Wordsworth; it is too germane to our topic not to refer to here.

There are two versions. Though words are not directly mentioned in either instance, words and what they convey are clearly in the forefront of the poet's mind. He is comparing, however, two modes of being: the first, one might say, is living in Fancy - our everyday, differentiating mode of thought, in which we take the objects of our verbal thought and experience for real entities; the second is living in Imagination, in which we recognise these entities as our own creations. With regard to moments of the first kind

> Such consciousness I deem but accidents,
> Relapses from the one interior life
> That lives in all things, sacred from the touch
> Of that false secondary power by which
> In weakness we create distinctions, then
> Believe that all our puny Boundaries are things
> Which we perceive and not which we have made, -
> In which all beings live with God, themselves
> Are God, existing in one mighty whole,
> As indistinguishable as is the cloudless East
> At noon is from the cloudless West, when all
> the hemisphere is one cerulean blue. [my italics]

Miss Darbishire's slightly awed comment is 'There is no escape from the meaning of this ... we <u>are God</u>' (Darbishire 1966: 129). (Note that the lines describing the 'false secondary power' are incorporated into the <u>Prelude</u> [1850; II: ll. 215-221] in slightly modified form, as a direct tribute to Coleridge, to whom 'The unity of all hath been revealed' [221].)

But Wordsworth intends much more by his lines than this Spinozan claim. His point is deeply psychological as well as metaphysical. The powers he describes are in the mind, first and foremost: the distinction is between the utilitarian mode of interaction with things, 'getting and spending', and that mode which as far as is allowed seeks Reality as it is, beyond our human conceptualizations of it.

In the version Miss Darbishire quotes in her main text the points are made in a different order, the debt to Coleridge a little disguised:

> ... I was early taught
> That what we see of forms and images
> Which float along our minds, and what we feel
> of active or recognizeable thought,
> Prospectiveness, intelligence or will,
> Not only is not worthy to be deemed
> Our being, to be prized as what we are
> But is the very littleness of life.
> Such consciousness seemed but accidents,
> Relapses from the one interior life
> Which is in all things, from that unity
> In which all beings live with God, are lost
> In God and Nature, in one mighty whole
> As indistinguishable as the cloudless east
> At noon is from the cloudless west, when all
> The hemisphere is one cerulean blue.
> (Darbishire 1966: 99)

It is clear that in this version Wordsworth has suppressed the phrase Miss Darbishire remarked on. The passage is still, perhaps, too radical for inclusion in the later Prelude. Does it not, after all, say that the 'forms and images' of our minds, what constitutes 'recognizeable thought', even 'intelligence' itself, far from being our main distinguishing glory, are indeed 'the very littleness of life'? The contrast here is between the 'puny' conceptual 'Boundaries', the 'distinctions' which in our human weakness we impose upon reality (and then almost at once suppose them to be 'things which we perceive and not which we have made'), and the pre-linguistic unity of all, present with us in non-verbal memory among our 'recollections of early childhood'. We retain deep unrecognised impressions of our immersion in the One Life which our linguistic consciousness has terminated by its introduction of divisions and differences.

For the Mariner who shot the albatross with his bolt of isolating and hence negligent rationality - he saw no magic there, or wider range of connection - the 'oceanic consciousness' that brings retribution takes the appropriate form of the sea. In contrast, Wordsworth's passages symbolise pre-linguistic consciousness by the sky, higher soeur-miroire of the earth, an undivided hemisphere of 'one cerulean blue'.

Such a moment has the whole world trembling before its glassy reflection in a primordial and yet 'higher' medium; a world threatened with return beyond a mirror-stage of a cosmic order ... not unlike the child Alice about to pass through, back to a pre-logical freedom from utilitarian adult

rationality. Such a return is even conceivable for the universe because in its familiar differentiated form its only existence is in the mind of man - the haunt and main region of Wordsworth's song.

We may pause here to question Hartman's notion that Wordsworth was suffering a metaphysical hangover, to his own detriment, induced by Coleridge. Such statements underestimate the centrality of a shared perspective, which lasted Wordsworth at least through all his 'great decade'. By contrast with Hartman, H.D. Garrod's[12] epigram comes down the years: 'Coleridge's greatest work is Wordsworth - and, like all his other work, Coleridge left it unfinished' (Garrod 1927: 29-30). This is as witty and as oblique to the truth as are all epigrams. It needs to be corrected by the recollection that Coleridge in the early days characterized Wordsworth as the only man he had ever met whom he acknowledged as his superior in every field. The very least we can say is that Wordsworth seems to have understood Coleridge better than perfectly, in everything that was central to his art.

We began this chapter by exonerating Hartman of complicity in Norris's statements about Romantic attitudes to language. It may be harder for us to do the same for some of Hartman's Deconstructionist colleagues. It seems likely that Paul de Man, for example, should be associated more closely with Norris's statements, in ways we shall have, in this essay's sequel, to examine. If we are right in this, then de Man fails to see that Wordsworth's conception of a union

between subject and object is a defensible notion precisely because it is underwritten by the deeper recognition that in Real terms, the object does not exist as such. Wordsworth knows just as well as de Man - and the Darbishire passages establish this - that the object is a human, all-too-human construct.

On the other hand, such a view as Wordsworth's is saved from solipsism by the acknowledgement that an indefinable something does exist outside our perceptions, and is the ground of them; but that something is not identifiable with the entities described in our dictionaries and encyclopaedias.

If he is more at one with de Man on some issues than de Man perhaps recognizes, then in his belief in a partially attainable metaphysical and psychological 'beyond' of language the affinity between Wordsworth and Deconstruction clearly ceases. Though de Man would agree that the subject creates his world through language, the further idea that some influence could come from that beyond to shape our responses would be anathema to him. Yet this is undoubtedly Wordsworth's and Coleridge's considered viewpoint. What I believe should be recognised, however, is that these poets do not by holding such views simply declare their conceptual naivety and philosophic unfitness in such Deconstructive company. Rather we should see them as engaging in the same debates but coming, for their own good reasons, to different final conclusions. That these Romantics ultimately diverge from their Deconstructive successors, despite sharing similar first principles, does not mean they were blithely unaware of the

possibilities of pessimism and nihilism that might easily follow. Their reasons for rejecting these alternatives I will pursue in a second essay, 'Wordsworth and Lacan: Strange Fits and Concourse Wild!' which follows upon this one.

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Chapter 4: WORDSWORTH AND LACAN: STRANGE FITS AND CONCOURSE WILD.

In my essay 'Lacan at the Lakes: Wordsworth Beyond the Egotistical Sublime' I investigated some of the theoretical roots that Deconstructive theory may be shown to share with Romanticism; common roots which practitioners of the former criticism do not always proclaim, despite their own clear critical attraction to that period and its poets. I took, for convenient summary of this stance of ambivalent opposition, some passages from a popular work by the critic Christopher Norris, Deconstruction: Theory and Practice (Norris: 1982).

In his book Norris presents Deconstructionists as in conscious reaction against what for him typifies the Romantic attitude to language: the supposition of an exact coincidence between linguistic constructions and the objects or states of affairs in the 'external world' which they are meant to designate. In other words the Romantics are, according to Norris, guilty of a naive faith in language as a reliable guide to what is 'really there'.

Whatever the truth about the relations of words and reality, my earlier chapter took issue with some of Norris's claims about the Romantics and language, and even, occasionally, about Deconstructionists themselves. Examination of statements by Geoffrey Hartman showed that he does not always fit Norris's picture, nor underwrite his interpretation of Romantic ideas upon language.

In my essay I presented evidence to suggest that far from espousing a naive referentiality, the Romantics' implicit denial of the ability of ordinary language to represent the Real is an axiomatic - even a defining - element of their Romanticism. Certainly, for Wordsworth and Coleridge, the realisation that the object is subject-created is a cornerstone of their poetic faith and practice.

Consideration of the further part of their Schellingesque equation - their belief that the subject and his perceptions are in turn determined by the object - I have until now postponed, maintaining that it did not materially affect the force of the initial proposition. However, there is distortion in leaving it out of account; and its implications will have to be dealt with here.

Having thus argued that the Romantic view of language is not in contrast with, but is in fact complementary to, many linguistic assumptions on which Deconstruction is grounded, I went on to adopt a suggestion of Hartman's, and to isolate a theological and a countertheological strain in post-structuralist critical thinking. I ventured to affirm that the former mode, taking Jacques Lacan as its mentor, was the more appropriate and fruitful to apply within the world of Romantic letters; and that the application of a Lacanian model could be justified in the event by the inherent interest of its results, especially when applied to Romantic notions of the sublime and the ideal.

It may be that many of Paul de Man's statements accord better with Norris's rejections of a linked history with

Romanticism. If so, then de Man makes something of an exception of Shelley, at least. In his discussion of Shelley's poem 'The Triumph of Life' de Man[1] is prepared to concede that one interpretation of Shelley's poem - the interpretation he prefers - would make of 'romanticism a fragment, or a moment, in a process that now includes us within its horizon' (de Man 1979[b]: 40). However, Wordsworth and Coleridge are somehow incidental to that process, one is to judge. In his dismissal of Wordsworth's fictive role in the poem, de Man seems to share all Shelley's Oedipal impatience (53). But this joint impatience perhaps has a deeper source: it is possible that de Man is suspicious of precisely that extended theological dimension in Wordsworth that Shelley, superficially at any rate, seems to stand against.

To illustrate the point of my argument, let me quote Norris on de Man. I take this oblique approach not only for economy, but also since I find de Man, like Hartman, harder to pin down than Norris does. (It may be that it is Norris's picture of de Man, rather than de Man himself, that is my exact protagonist here.) At any rate, what is in question in the passage is Coleridge's vastly influential interpretation of the symbol and of symbolism.

> The rhetoric of Symbolism is that which seeks a transcendent unifying vision atop all the hateful antinomies of subject and object, time and eternity, word and idea. It deludedly hopes that such distinctions may simply fall away in the moment of unmediated, purified perception towards which poetry strives. De Man quotes Coleridge, among others: the Symbol is characterized by 'the translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the special, or of the universal in the general; above

> all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal' (cf. de Man[2] 1983: 192).
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> It is this last claim especially that vexes de Man, and which opens up the gap between logic and rhetoric that his essay proceeds to exploit. Romanticism achieves its moments of delusory transcendence only by ignoring or suppressing the textual operations that underwrite its will-to-truth. Refusing to distinguish between experience and the representation of experience, Romanticism seeks to collapse all those awkward distinctions that force an awareness of the secondary, mediating character of language. The ethos of the Symbol is precisely this belief that language can attain to a pure ideality where subject and object, mind and nature would at last coincide without the interposition of mere arbitrary signs. And this would also mean - as suggested in the passage from Coleridge - that thought might be momentarily redeemed from its enslavement to the temporal condition of language. (Norris[3] 1984: 200)

To the extent that scepticism is all that is at issue here - de Man's insistence on first putting his fingers in the textual wounds - there is little more to be said, apart from noting de Man's personal position. But insofar as it is a comment on Romanticism, its claims ought, I feel, to be examined further. I take as read, in doing so, the results of my earlier argument: that the product of the collapse of the force of the signifier in cases of Coleridgean symbolism, in so far as it imitates the reported union of subject and object in the moment of cosmic consciousness, has to do not with the union of an individual mind with a particular object, but with the fusion of some more primary subject with the entire field of consciousness - with object large 'A' crossed through (the barred Øther) in Lacanian terms: an attempt which is admittedly impossible in language, but for which language may sometimes provide the means, as we have seen.

I must admit to my own unease about the ladder of translucence Coleridge climbs in the given quotation. It has always suggested to me a rather uncomfortable attempt to unite different critical traditions in one formula. It is probably only in application to a particular example - say, the Mariner's albatross - that one can begin to see what it means. Coleridge is certainly not expecting us to believe that all cases of what is ordinarily called symbolism forcibly display such qualities: that is the whole point of the distinction between symbolism and allegory, which lies behind the passage. What de Man apparently does not acknowledge is that Coleridge, however successfully or otherwise, is attempting to find a formulation specifically enabling the multiple shiftings of the signified beneath the signifier, not denying them.

Perhaps some of the discomfort one feels with Coleridge's words could be the return of the repressed, in the form of a creeping Neo-classicism which is to my view increasingly detectable in his writings and table pronouncements, in company with his mounting conservatism, as he grows older. Though the terminology is largely the same, the emphasis tends to be placed on the universal rather than the particular; instances are visualized in the static rather than kinetic mode[1]. In the present case, it is perhaps Plato in his

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[1] The formalists and New Critics seized upon this - to my view - maverick element, which permitted them to take Coleridge so incongruously for their ally. Much misunderstanding has since followed. In the end, these unwanted bedfellows have damned Coleridge by association; Norman Fruman's classic demystification of Coleridge's own personal pretensions - necessary as the exercise probably was - was partly occasioned by his own desire to undermine New Criticism through an attack on its supposedly most venerable authority (cf. Coleridge, the Damaged Archangel

classical, timeless aspect who shines out of sight behind the frame. Opium-inspired transcendental quietism was not the main characteristic of the more vigorous, more flexible Coleridge (whatever the dating) who, reinspired by his sources, discusses the form of the poem in 'On Poesy or Art':

> Now the fulness of nature is without character, as water is purest when without taste, smell or colour; but this is the highest, the apex only - it is not the whole. The object of art is to give the whole ad hominem; hence each step of nature hath its ideal, and hence the possibility of a climax up to the perfect form of a harmonized chaos.
> (Coleridge[4] 1937: 263)

The terms given here are meant to self-destruct around themselves, as they do. A 'fulness' which is 'not the whole'; a whole that is given ad hominem; where 'each step' of 'the possibility of a climax up to ... chaos' confronts and limits the 'ideal' of a 'perfect form ... harmonized'. Art retains the idea of itself as a process, in other words; it does not exist only as a finished, polished, unblemished final product ... certainly, not as a self-existent verbal icon[2]. Only in such a spirit could Coleridge say, for example, that a poem of

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[1971]).

[2] Who doubts that Coleridge would see The Waste Land, the chosen exemplum of I.A. Richards's Principles - with its mantle of tarot, anthropology and Wagner, and its neo-classical citations from Dante and the dead Symbolists - as an impressive but gargantuan metaphysical conceit; Fancy incarnate, rather than a product of the living, inwrought entelechy of the organic Imagination?

any length 'neither can be, nor ought to be, all poetry' (BL[3]: 173).

Indeed, apart from its added tone of scepticism, what does de Man's own famous description of form add to that of Coleridge given above: 'form is never anything but a process on the way to its completion' (Norris 1984: 202)? Of the two definitions, it is Coleridge's that auto-deconstructs the more fruitfully and extensively about itself.

There is still this question of the timeless that so annoys de Man in Coleridge's account of the symbol. Do we really have a case of 'logic' (de Man's) confronting 'rhetoric' (Coleridge's), as Norris would have it? Let us look at the question this way: if what is other than language and beyond human conceptualisings - the Real, in Lacan's terms - is indeed without division, then it must, of necessity, be 'without' time, at least as human beings conceptualise time: as a matter of hours, minutes, seconds.

The point is this: time - time at least as we humans understand it - is unintelligible without the concept of division. At the very least, we are obliged to divide our temporal being into present and past; and these are only the most elementary of time's many possible compartments and sub-divisions. The conclusion is unavoidable: if the Real is undivided, it cannot be temporal in our ordinary meaning of this term.

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[3] Unless otherwise specified, subsequent references will be to the edition by John Shawcross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909), for reasons which will become apparent. Shawcross's edition will be represented as BiogL in the references.

In the absence of an unambiguous account from Lacan himself[4] of the temporal relations of the Real[5], consideration of this topic inevitably moves us in the direction of philosophers who have worked within a recognisably related framework of concepts, and who have given thought to the matter of time: Bradley, for example, in his account of the Absolute. ('Immediate experience' in Bradley is in a great many respects a prevision of Lacan's psychological 'Real'; the term 'Absolute' is used by Bradley for the supra-personal metaphysical entity that corresponds to it. His philosophy hence offers one solution to the difficult question of the precise relation between such parallel 'psychological' and 'metaphysical' accounts of 'Reality'; though any final answer to the question of which of the two should have priority is a complex matter, in many ways beyond the scope of this thesis). In Appearance and Reality[6] Bradley offers a multitude of complex arguments to demonstrate that the Absolute is uncontained by any of our categories of the temporal (Bradley 1969: 33-6).

If it is possible in any limited way to use language to defeat the strategies of language - and innumerable artists and some philosophers persist in believing that it is (Keats

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[4] The same is not true of the relation of time and the unconscious, which may provide some guide. See Jacques Lacan, 1986: 31-2: 'It is apparent that (sic) the very level of the definition of the unconscious ... that what happens there is inaccessible to contradiction, to spatio-temporal location and also to the function of time ... Ontically, then the unconscious is the elusive ....' See also the discussion of Lacanian concepts of time in Ronald Schleifer, 'The Space and Dialogue of Desire: Lacan, Greimas, and Narrative Temporality', MLN Vol. 98 No. 5, Dec. 1983, 871-890, esp. 877 ('The Real ... is, as Lacan says of perversion ... "outside of time"'), and 883.

is near enough one of these: for him, too, the 'silent form' of the Grecian Urn 'dost tease us out of thought/As does eternity') - then there is nothing that is inconsistent per se in a vocabulary of timelessness, such as that Coleridge employs. We should rather apply the term 'rhetoric' to intellectual standpoints that fail to follow through the implications of their own paradoxes or see that, without at least the idea of the timeless, the prison-house of language is no prison.

We may gain some closer idea of how Coleridge pictured this 'timeless' zone in the following statement, a defence of Wordsworth's use of the Platonic myth of pre-existence in the 'Immortality Ode'. Since, evidently, he saw it as an inner, psychological phenomenon (as far as it was experiencable at all), our comparisons with Lacan's pre-linguistic Real or Bradley's (and Hegel's) 'Immediate Experience' may not be entirely beyond the mark:

> the ode was intended for such readers only as had been accustomed to watch the flux and reflux of their inmost nature, to venture at times into the twilight realms of consciousness, and to feel a deep interest in modes of inmost being, to which they know that the attributes of time and space are inapplicable and alien, but which yet cannot be conveyed save in symbols of time and space. For such readers the sense is sufficiently plain, and they will be as little disposed to charge Mr. Wordsworth with believing the Platonic pre-existence in the ordinary interpretation of the words, as I am to believe, that Plato himself ever meant or taught it. (BiogL, II: 120-121)

Wordsworth certainly thought that the latent capacities of words in general to function as symbols in Coleridge's sense could be activated and augmented within the special

circumstances of the poem. In doing so, such symbols bring into prominence their usually overlooked limitations: they appear as what they are, mediative signifiers; but released from their primary utilitarian function of conveying information, they are open to new and special interactions. Among these is the possibility of referring our attention beyond themselves. But, in these special circumstances, they refer us not to the external objects they are meant to designate, according to a naive view of language. Instead, by drawing attention to their own contingency, their own ontological limitations, they may bring us instead to the brink of the Real itself, to the effective borders of the timeless.

At first, this overturning of our habitual perceptions in language may well strike us as no comfortable experience. Indeed, it may work most readily as a 'jarring' among our comfortable and over-confident categories. This effect of jarring away from centre that the Coleridgean symbol in its own way produces has many analogies among the stylistic devices and the portrayed events of Wordsworth's poetry. Prominent instances of the latter are those which dramatise the awe and fear that often herald the onset of a mystical experience in the Prelude.

For example, this 'jarring' into the mystical is experienced by the child Wordsworth on the occasion when, having sneaked out onto the lake in a stolen boat, he is suddenly menaced by an alarmingly animated peak, rising above him (Prelude 1805: ll. 373-427). What really occurs, we

assume, is a trick of perspective produced by the motion of the boat, not the mountain; but in this moment of forced co-operation between the child's mind and his setting the mere facts become irrelevant. For him, the unaccustomed in nature strips the illusion from nature; to the boy's imagination the shock of 'seeing through' the natural landscape is later domesticated into a myth of 'dim presences' controlling everything behind the drops and flats of this newly questionable scenic presentation; but before this stage

> for many days, my brain
> Work'd with a dim and undetermin'd sense
> Of unknown modes of being; in my thoughts
> There was a darkness, call it solitude,
> Or blank desertion, no familiar shapes
> Of hourly objects, images of trees,
> Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
> But huge and mighty Forms that do not live
> Like living men mov'd slowly through my mind
> By day and were the trouble of my dreams.
> (1805, I: ll. 418-427)

Though he retains the myth of the 'thing', the particular signified, as an element in the sublime moment, Thomas Weiskel[7] appropriately indicates the sense of surprise and discomfiture that may initiate that moment in his discussion of bathos, which, he says, 'is at the heart of the Wordsworthian revision of the sublime', and is a response 'to the fission of word and thing, or signifier and signified' (Weiskel 1976: 20).

Terry Eagleton[8] praises the Deconstructive vision of the sublime seen as the 'mind-shaking' recognition of the failure of all linguistic and conceptual systems. One particular advantage of this formulation, in his view, is that it allows

us to distinguish clearly between the beautiful and the sublime:

> In the presence of beauty, we experience an exquisite sense of adaptation of the mind to reality; but in the turbulent presence of the sublime we are forcibly reminded of the limits of our dwarfish imaginations and admonished that the world as infinite totality is not ours to know. It is as though in the sublime the 'real' itself - the eternal, ungraspable totality of things - inscribes itself as the cautionary limit of all mere ideology, of all complacent subject-centredness, causing us to feel the pain of incompletion and unassuaged desire.
> (Eagleton 1990: 89)

I have given reasons why I think this Deconstructive interpetation gives an adequate account of the beginnings, only, of the sublime moment. What the sense of displacement and the subversion of linguistic reality may result in, in my view, is something beyond these effects. It can usher in not merely a sense of our own diminishment but a corresponding and immediate openness to the psychological or cosmic Real - according to whichever understanding we prefer. Certainly, it was Wordsworth's opinion that this 'beyond' effect was implicated by the sublime.

The intriguing thing is that many of Wordswoth's poetic devices are intended to work in just the same way as did his sudden and alarming view of the advancing peak. One very subtle kind of poetic 'jarring' is provided by the Hartmanesque 'strange fits' of logic and grammar in, for example, the Lucy poems: the half-disguised inappropriatenesses of vocabulary, syntax, expression or circumstance, that all but constitute the principal technique of these works. How surprising, for example, that the mere

disappearance of the moon behind a cottage-roof should count as a 'strange fit of passion', one that can be confided to the 'lover's ear alone'. Then there are the odd, near oxymoronic juxtapositions of 'She dwelt among untrodden ways'. What, exactly, are 'untrodden ways'? How, if there are 'none to praise' Lucy, can there be 'very few to love' her; which of the two is more, 'none' or 'few'? Do those who love her not praise her; why then does the poet praise her? Similarly, if Lucy 'lived unknown', how can it be that 'few could know' when she died? Clearly, it is language itself which is under stress in such lines: our customary responses to conventional phrases and expressions are made the means of these words' own mutual undoing, when they are presented in incongruous company together.

The same broad impulse accounts for queasy image transformations like that of the leech-gatherer first into a boulder and then, from that combination, into a sea-monster ('Resolution and Independence'; stanza IX): significantly, Wordsworth offered this example as a special demonstration of Imagination at work, in his 1815 Preface[9]. This curious compound merging of identities which ends in attaching to each stage of the transformation all the main qualities of the other stages, succeeds in undermining our fixed bearings and subverting language.

But it is also an example of an alternative technique to disruption and surprise, emblematic, perhaps, of Wordsworth's conviction of the existence of a further dimension 'beyond' linguistic or perceptual collapse. The dissolving of verbal

boundaries may be only a first stage, prefatory to a mutual merging. Indeed, Wordsworth's most characteristic poetic method is that of 'excessive' unification, especially at moments of strategic emotional heightening. This is not merely a matter of choosing words with compatible expressive associations; it is also managed by means of sound, through extensive but judicious use of assonance and alliteration. (One may attempt, as others have, to count the number of internal aural echoes in such memorable Wordsworthian phrases as 'the still, sad music of humanity': to my count, 16 out of 24 sounds have musical partners here; again, a poem like 'Elegiac Stanzas' is structured upon repeated long 'e' sounds, which cease, appropriately, only at the point of the poet's transfiguration back into an ordinary mortal.) It was not Wordsworth's fault if his revival of this easily-imitable stylistic feature was practiced to excess, and with perhaps less theoretical understanding, by his Romantic successors.

If it was Schopenhauer who said that to aspire to the condition of music was a necessity of art, then Wordsworth, a poet with his own highly responsive ear, was the first to understand the reason for this drive. In Wordsworth, music works to undermine the individuating tendency of the words and to merge sense back into experience. If sound is used by him against the tyranny of the verbal concept, then the compensating aim is not to draw attention to the medium, as it would be for the later formalists and Symbolists. In the end, the motivation of Romantic art is, in contrast, all towards

experience; even if what it uniquely hoped to invoke through its artistry was the ultimate experience itself.

The view of art I have been describing supposes that all metaphor, all figuration, all that is compositional, can hint at a more extensive unity that underlies these functions. To this perspective then, a poem must be, as has always been suspected, only a more appropriate way of speaking of Reality: 'Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty', as Keats declared it.

However, it is Reality we are speaking of here, not reality small 'r'. Mimesis in Romantic poetry does not imply any special attachment to the world of discrete and independent objects; in a way this world is actually inimical to the poet's task. Blake[10] saw it this way, too:

> 'What,' it will be Question'd, 'When the Sun rises, do you not see a round disk of fire somewhat "like a Guinea?" O no, no, I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty."' (Blake 1966: 617)

Indeed, the supposed actual world is recognized by Blake as, in certain senses, implicitly fictional. Certainly some similar concern to overturn the usual order of priorities is behind Coleridge's advice in his letter to Godwin 'to destroy the old antithesis of Words and Things ... elevating, as it were, words into Things, & living Things too' (Coleridge[11] 1956-71, I: 625-6). We should note carefully where the priorities fall here: Coleridge is not advocating, naively, the subsumption of things into words, but the elevation in ontological status of the words themselves!

Though Thomas Weiskel's subtle Deconstructionist account of the sublime, referred to above, is not identical in all respects to mine given here, he too does not see the sublime moment simply coming to an end in a state of aporia and linguistic bafflement. Indeed, for him the collapse of signification is followed by a further phase in which 'the mind recovers the balance of outer and inner by constituting a fresh relation between itself and the object ... symbolizing the mind's relation to a transcendent order' (1976: 24).

An especially valuable insight of Weiskel's is that the physical location and circumstances of the sublime moment may themselves actually function as a kind of 'text'. However, this text is elusive, ungraspable, never more than on the verge of utterance. Indeed, its very undecipherability is what principally characterizes the experience: paradoxically, 'the absence of determinate meaning becomes significant':

> The absence of a signified itself assumes the status of a signifier, disposing us to feel that behind this newly significant absence lurks a newly discovered presence, the latent referent, as it were, mediated by the new sign. We recall Kant's terms: 'unattainability' (Unerreichbarkeit) is regarded as a 'presentation' (Darstellung): indeterminacy signifies. (Weiskel 1976: 28)

Weiskel's view thus seems to be that the impression of a 'beyond' is illusory, though it may nonetheless impinge with all the force of a meaning - even if a meaning that cannot be articulated.

Be this as it may, Weiskel's mention of Kant is salutory, here. We discover that even for Kant[12] the sublime can be

located in or identified with no individual object in the actual world:

> For the sublime, in the strict sense of the word, cannot be contained in any sensuous form, but rather concerns ideas of reason, which, although no adequate presentation is possible, may be excited and called into mind by that very inadequacy itself which does admit of sensuous presentation.
> (Kant 1952, I: 92)

2

Kant's revolutionary picture of man's position in the world lies behind many of the Romantic developments we have been looking at. In particular, his announcement of a radical and unbridgeable distinction between the human mental world and the real unseen nature of the universe was a major watershed for contemporary thought. As such, it has its affinities with, and historically underlies, Deconstructionist pessimism.

It has been a central standpoint of these two chapters on Wordsworth that the Romantics, having assimilated the Kantian position, came to believe that it <u>was</u> possible, at least through art (but also through mystical experience) partially to penetrate the barriers between the human world and the <u>ding-an-sich</u>, particularly where this 'thing in itself' was thought of as naming a totality, not a particular. That they could sustain such a modification of Kantian thought was partly owing to the influence upon them of Kant's disciples and successors in Germany, in particular Friedrich Schelling.

Though this was not always and exclusively the case, Coleridge and Wordsworth tended to view this problem as first

and foremost metaphysical in nature, as the German philosophers did. Part of my argument in these chapters is that, for readers of our own day, the problem may more usefully be approached from a psychological and psychoanalytic perspective, owing to the greater immediacy these concepts have for us at the present time (although this is to some extent to shelve the problematic question of the ultimate relation, if any, between the psychological and metaphysical world-pictures).

When he is discussing Kantian matters, Coleridge's statements do, admittedly, sometimes sound somewhat at variance with my main claims in this thesis. For example, he is capable of such comments as the following, concerning a reinterpretation of Kant he felt to be necessary:

> In spite therefore of his own declarations, I could never believe, that it was possible for him to have meant no more by his Noumenon, or THING IN ITSELF, than his mere words express; or that in his own conception he confined the whole plastic power to the forms of intellect, leaving for the external cause, for the materials of our sensations, a matter without form, which is doubtless inconceivable.
> (BiogL I: 100)

On the face of it, this passage seems unfavourable to the view of the Real I have so far advanced: that it corresponds to the undifferentiated totality, in which subject and object large 'A' are merged ... the equivalent of which may be experienced, on the Lacanian model, in earliest childhood. To Coleridge the metaphysical counterpart of this psychological 'Real' cannot be absolutely undifferentiated and featureless; if it were, it could not be the ground of our physical

sensations: there would be nothing particular there to serve as such a ground. (But, analogously, there is nothing to suggest that the Lacanian Real is featureless, either. All it lacks are our human conversion of its primordial marks into human concepts and separable 'things'.)

What Coleridge sensed was that if Reality contained difference and variety, then its features must impinge upon us in some recognisable way, and modify our responses. In any case, it is evident that Coleridge's contemplation of such matters led at a certain point to disillusionment with the exclusively Kantian approach. Unwilling to remain within the Fichtean linguistic solipsism which seemed to threaten, Coleridge moved on beyond his Kantian point of origin, and embraced instead Schelling's development of that Kantian theme; this in response to a desire to see man in dialogue with the nature of things, rather than conducting a monologue in the face of nothingness.

In the same movement, Coleridge departs from any exact sympathy with his Deconstructive successors. Surely, then, in his Schellingesque phase he does become vulnerable to the sort of attacks which Norris mounts? Certainly, even some of Coleridge's most sympathetic supporters have assumed an interpretation of his position which admits this.

At this point, one must concede that the intellectual development sketched above may be overly schematic; no doubt, with his early interest in nature and its effect on individual psychology, Coleridge would have been looking from the very first for some accommodation between the powerful Kantian

position and a recognition of the rights of the non-human world. He would have been hoping, from German idealism, for a reinforcement of his sense of the importance of Nature equivalent to that once provided by Hartley's Associationist psychology, now necessarily discarded. That this would have been true, too, of Wordsworth goes without saying.

Other qualifications are in order here, too. Kantian scepticism, for example, is not so monolithic as Coleridge's summary might suggest. In the Critique of Judgement so praised by Coleridge on his first acquaintance with it, Kant is far from dismissive of the idea that the intellect is capable of real knowledge of the external world. What he does insist on, however, is that no ultimate guarantees are offered or available as to the validity of any individual item of such knowledge. As John Kemp[13] summarizes the matter, in his account of the Critique:

> Natural science requires us to be able to judge that this object belongs to a certain species, and that this is in its turn a species of a certain genus; and judging of this kind would be impossible if nature were not in a sense adapted to our powers of judging. This adaptation of nature to our mental faculties is not an objective principle - we have no direct knowledge that nature is, in itself, adapted in this purposive way - but a subjective principle which we have to use in order to direct our inquiries into nature. In technical terms, the principle belongs to reflective, not to determinant, judgment and is a regulative, not a constitutive principle of reason, in the wide sense of this last word. We have to regard nature as if it were the product of art. (Kemp 1968: 99)

It was to an even more thoroughly art-centred philosophy that Coleridge was to turn in his quest for a clearer and more

positive account of the standing of nature. Schelling offered a restored sense that nature was indeed the canvas on which the artist of the mind imposed his creations, and - even more importantly - that the grain and fibre of the canvas played a necessary part in regulating the imaginative impressions he could place upon it. In Schelling's view, Subject determines Object, and is determined by it, in one and the same act.

We are here, I believe, at the crux of our difficulty. This Schellingesque development in Coleridge's thinking has caused many commentators to assume that he returned from a Kantian excursus to a re-acceptance of dualism, to an acceptance of two primary principles - the equivalents of Consciousness and Matter - not one. And such dualism, with its supposed faith in the real existence of transcendental objects, is of course unacceptable to our contemporary sceptical vision of language, governed as it is by notions of the arbitrariness of the sign.

As Paul Hamilton[14] puts it in his book, Coleridge's Poetics:

> If Coleridge were solely a Kantian, or exclusively a follower of Schelling, then things would be much simpler for his commentators. In fact he displays both influences. He thinks it possible to detect in nature the expression of the power which produces natural objects: the 'living words' which describe nature are not only a mode of how we interpret nature, but express the character of nature as it exists in itself - a view completely unacceptable to Kant. (Hamilton 1983: 88-9)

If this last view were indeed Coleridge's, then Hamilton would be correct, and Coleridge could be indicted for

attempting to be at one and the same time on both sides of a philosophical divide. He would also, of course, again be vulnerable to the criticisms of Norris and de Man; particularly if it were from such a dualisitic position that he attempted to reconcile subject and object in the symbol and poetic work.

The belief that such a position is indeed his has been common to his supporters and detractors alike; despite the difficulty that then arises in accounting for his many pronouncements about the inherent arbitrariness and independence of language. These statements have simply to be put down, in Hamilton's manner, to divided and unresolved philosophical sympathies on Coleridge's part.

As evidence for this dualistic position, Hamilton cites such examples as the following, from the 'theses' (Ch. XII) which precede the definition of Imagination at the end of the first volume of Biographia:

> even as natural philosphers we must arrive at the same principle from which as transcendental philosphers we set out; that is, in a self-consciousness in which the principium essendi does not stand to the principium cognoscendi in the relation of cause to effect, but both one and the other are coinherent and identical. (BiogL, I: 187)

We have to read such statements with care, for the point they are making is a subtle one. In effect Coleridge is here re-stating Schelling's primary formula, which I have summarised earlier as 'in perception, subject determines object, and is determined by it.' The problem for commentators like Hamilton is that they are unable to reconcile their

knowledge that idealism requires one principle, not two, with a position that seems to accredit equal reality to the mind and to the material world. Since dualism is incompatible with idealism, this cannot be idealism: such seems to be their conclusion - a too hasty conclusion, as I maintain.

The alternative possibility, that it is not dualism - at least, not what is ordinarily meant by dualism - is left unconsidered; and yet this latter is, in my opinion, the correct assumption. Part of the problem is that one is so used to meeting the term 'idealism' as a form of abuse in critical texts, that the fact that there is not one form of idealism but many has been obscured. Solipsism, it should be recognised, is only one very extreme variant of this position.

In Schelling's system, as the developing argument of Coleridge's set of 'theses' in Chapter XII reflects, Subject and Object, mind and world, are not absolutes, but derive their reality from another prior condition, which subsumes both of them in one entity. This even more 'Real' entity is identifiable with the original state of things in, if we like, the mind of God; before he became self-aware, before he initiated creation by making himself an object to himself. We ourselves, individual subjects with our world of things, are only more derivative entities - though evolved in distinction from each other on the same pattern, out of one single, originating Being or Mind/World.

Such a picture may seem to some unnecessarily mythical. Myth it is; yet perhaps we can appreciate how it came to be needed to express a situation where words or plain rational

concepts fail. Schelling's ontological sequence - a descent into difference - admittedly a little resembles a kind of Gnostic derivation of God the Son and God the Spirit, in their turn, out of God the father. Perhaps the mythical dimensions of this picture can be contained, and its conceptual content rendered more acceptable in principle, by translating it into psychological or psychoanalytic terms. It is, after all, exactly the process by which Lacan presents us as coming to rational consciousness out of the Real. To Lacan, we each of us appear as individuals out of just such a primary, undifferentiated state of being - from which we did not originally distinguish ourselves, our mother, or the world - by a similar process of internal psychic self-division; by, in fact, our differentiation in the 'imaginary' into subject and object, self and Other.

Perhaps some of the blame for the confusion - which arises from such passages as Hamilton quotes above - is Coleridge's own. In constructing his Schellingesque theses, he is so much at pains to investigate the nature and potential of spirit that his terminology becomes loose in dealing with the claims of the material: we are unsure when, by the term 'object', we are to understand the whole project of consciousness apart from itself, and when we are to imagine instead the mere thing, single and discrete.

Yet frequently there <u>are</u> pointers, which critics choose to ignore. (Note that in the Hamilton passage Coleridge talks of <u>principles</u> - the 'principium essendi' and the 'principium cognoscendi' - not of individual entities; and this choice of

terms is not a mere concession to ornateness.) Another case in point is the following quotation from chapter XII of the Biographia, which is sometimes evinced as contrary evidence in this particular argument:

> All knowledge rests on the coincidence of an object with a subject .... For we can know that only which is true; and the truth is universally placed in the coincidence of the thought with the thing, of the representation with the object represented.
> (BL: 144)

This quotation - and the last part in particular - is sometimes offered as if it represented the sum and totality of Coleridge's views on truth; and more, as if it once again proved Coleridge to have subscribed to a naive referential theory of meaning, understood as a coincidence of word and referent. Of course, if it could be so taken, it would prove catastrophic to the picture I have been presenting of his opinions on language.

Significantly, Coleridge begins the chapter from which this extract comes by insisting that future critics treat that chapter as a whole, for distortions will result from any other procedure: 'The fairest part of the most beautiful body will appear deformed and monstrous if dissevered from its place in the organic whole' (135). As it happens, the separating-out of the quotation in question is an instance of precisely the kind of distortion which Coleridge anticipates.

We see how appropriate his warning is if we consider the context from which the extract comes. Almost all of what precedes and follows it runs counter to the conclusions which are so readily drawn from it in isolation.

When it appears, we have just encountered the extended Coleridgean image of knowledge as an inhabited vale, surrounded by a range of peaks that the mists obscure. Rivers enter this vale, we are told, but their source remains unknown to common perceptions of things. Philosophy, on this view, is precisely what explores <u>beyond</u> the protective range (in both senses) of familiar understanding and everyday knowledge. Its realities, Coleridge says, are <u>not</u> those of the common world. Philosophy's objects, we are to understand, are not ordinary ones.

Secondly, we have just (140-142) had a list of philosophic schools whose apparently contending doctrines may actually turn out to be reconcilable, in Coleridge's opinion. Superior knowledge, we are promised, would harmonise together the following sufficiently 'true', yet nonetheless mutually opposed theories:

> The want of substantial reality in the objects of the senses, according to the sceptics; the harmonies or numbers, the prototypes and ideas, to which the Pythagoreans and Platonists reduced all things; the <u>one</u> and <u>all</u> of Parmenides and Plotinus, without Spinozism; the necessary connnection of all things, according to the Stoics, reconcilable with the spontaneity of the the other schools; the vital philosophy of the Cabalists and Hermetists, who assume the universality of sensation; the substantial forms and entelechies of Aristotle and the schoolmen, together with the mechanical solution of all particular phenomena according to Democritus and the recent philosophies - all these we shall find united in one perspective central point, which shows regularity and coincidence of all the parts in the very object which from every other point of view must appear confused and distorted. (BL: 141-2)

Coleridge's rambling style makes it notoriously difficlut to distinguish what is central from what is mere digression. I

do, however, think the importance of the above passage should not be underestimated. We are being given - however obliquely - a general groundplan of how Coleridge believes his ultimate metaphysics (the same metaphysics which the chapter's later Schellingesque theses are supposed to prepare us for, but which are deflected thereafter by the inevitable 'letter from Porlock') will emerge. It will evidently, for example, stress the inherent unity and oneness of all things in a living transcendent totality which, while not abolishing objects, would render their reality a question of perspective merely.

They would become both real (as for the Atomists and Aristotelians) and unreal (as for the Sceptics) at once: real as an element in the everyday consciousness of particular human persons, but of only contingent reality in the vital all-comprehensive organic absolute. From the vantage of this superior setting they would emerge anew, but as inseparable elements in a synthesis of the conscious and the material, the subjective and the objective. Coleridge clearly proposes as part of his plan to supply us with the structural laws governing all physical and metaphysical processes: as 'centrifugal' and 'centripetal' tendencies these all reduce into complexes involving not only combination into, but also separation from, the whole. As we know, neither his own powers nor the natural philosophy of the time were equal to this mighty project, in the event.

His brief 'prospectus' is nevertheless useful to us, or at least to our argument. It is clearly only in the context of

this vast perspective he has proposed that we are to understand the particular inflections of Coleridge's statements about 'truth by correspondence', previously quoted. Indeed, these are separated from the passage discussed above only by a digression on the a priori objective nature of mathematics; again, a topic involving the mixed or ambivalent inward- or outward-ness of objects of perception and thought.

Thus if 'truth' is 'universally placed' in 'the coicidence of the thought with the thing' this implies not that Coleridge is wholeheartedly assenting to the description, but simply saying that it represents the general estimate of what truth as such amounts to. Coleridge is of course assenting to the description, which is invoked since it at least represents common ground on which most parties might concur. The definition is after all very nearly tautologous: it the thought exactly corresponds with what it its intended to reflect, then it must be true. That is no more than the meaning of the word 'true'. Such a concession does not, however, commit Coleridge to understanding all that others do by the word 'object' or the word 'truth'. Indeed, if from a different perspective we see that such 'coincidence' results from the way thought partially creates the 'objects' it designates, then the whole situation suddenly appears in very altered light.

In the immediate passage from which the central sentence has been 'untimely ripp'd' by critics, Coleridge has in fact taken considerable pains to illustrate that the philosophical sense of 'object' he wishes to work with, is not the meaning

of the term in everyday usage - any more than the term 'subject' is meant to designate one paradigm individual. Already - even before the 'theses' begin - both 'subject' and 'object' are being dissoved into more general, more comprehensive entities: '(My readers have been warned in a former chapter that for their convenience as well as the writer's the term subject is used by me in the scholastic sense, as equivalent to mind or sentient being, and as the necessary correlative of object, or quicquid objicitur menti)' (BL: 144).

This parenthesis is, in fact, all that separates the sentence elements divided by ellipsis dots in the controversial quotation, as I (in imitation of others) earlier presented it. No minor accident that it is usually so omitted by interested critics, or by impatient critics who blur over its tangled but essential complexities. Lest the inference be lost in the Latin, I must ratify that Coleridge is insisting that by 'object' he intends simply that which is an object of thought, not necessarily or absolutely at all a physical fact in the external world.

If further confirmation were necessary, we see this same trend in the paragraph that follows. There Coleridge is refining his technical vocabulary in preparation for the coming analyses, not only by redefining our homely 'subject' and 'object', but by specifying special senses for certain words that are to be associated with them. He gives warning that he will sometimes wish to refer not to the respective essences of what is subjective and what is objective, but to

the sum of all that can be either. Though this is a very subtle distinction, and the two senses are in usual practice hardly to be differentiated from each other, he goes to the lengths of appropriating the new terms intelligence and nature for those occasions when he intends the second sense alone. It will be evident that if nature may be the equivalent of object, then this word cannot be understood as referring to particular things in the way a superficial reading might suppose.

> Now the sum of all that is merely objective we will henceforth call nature, confining the term to its passive and material sense, as comprising all the phenomena by which its existence is made known to us. On the other hand, the sum of all that is subjective we may comprehend in the name of the self or intelligence. Both conceptions are in necessary antithesis. (145)

It is a 'necessary' antithesis precisely because a real state of synthesis lies behind it, although obscured in everyday experience: 'in all acts of positive knowledge there is required a reciprocal concurrence of both, namely of the conscious being and of that which is in itself unconscious .... During the act of knowledge itself, the objective and subjective are so instantly united that we cannot determine to which of the two the priority belongs. There is no first and second; both are coinstantaneous and one' (145).

It would be foolish to deny that Coleridge's words are clearly assuming that there is something external to us which has a bearing on our visions and perceptions. But that something is, I still insist, not at all unproblematically identical with the entities we usually assume to be 'out

there'. Althought the term we might give to this true antithetical 'opposite' is nature, even here, self and nature are only properly to be explained by reference to an underlying unity of which they are individually only the partial reflection. And nature, though a totality, is not a bland or featureless plenum, but supplies, here and there, some grounds for our suppositions.

The arguments that follow in Coleridge's text lead, from this foundation, on to the definitions of Imagination and Fancy in chapter XIII. These definitions are well nigh invariably presented by critics as being discontinuous, logically, with what has preceded them. I hope I have said enough to show that this is not the case, that they simply spell out some literary implications of what has so far been posited in the Biographia. It is the metaphysics which are deferred as a result of the intrusive letter; not the literary theory.

It is a pity that John Shawcross's classic introduction to the 1909 Oxford edition of Biographia is not assumed as common ground in all discussion of this kind, so wise and informed is this work. Those critics who have since called its conclusions into question seldom seem to have anything more convincing of their own to offer. Shawcross gives due weight to Schelling's influence and demonstrates how the primary and secondary Imagination are in fact derived from Schelling's assumptions about perception. But what is especially significant in this context is the particular relations of the

various relevant mental faculties to truth. Far better than the much-quoted extract discussed above, we gain some idea of how Coleridge thought of truth as above all a specifically poetic preserve - even if poetry's 'immediate object' is 'pleasure, not truth' (BL: 172; Coleridge's emphasis). This is because of the special relations of 'pleasure' with fictional detachment from the world's utilitarian aims and goals, and from its concern with limited factual 'truths'. In the 'imaginative' circumstances of the artistic work subject 'coincides' with imaginary object in a superior way: superior, firstly, because the 'personal' element is not purged away in the process; and secondly, because such unifications better echo the primal unity that underlies our linguistic reality.

As we have seen, primary Imagination is the grand designation for plain perception, precisely because this reflex is in some sense a creative act: in figuring the world, in dividing ourselves from it as from the original plenum which includes it and ourselves, we make the world around us; we position, define, categorize, place and relate. In other words, the nature and particularity of each object we encounter depends on us; it is only what it is for us.

We might say that secondary Imagination and Fancy both have a relation to different attitudes to this scheme of reality. Fancy corresponds to the solipsist's dream of the real: it is an attempt on the part of false consciousness to disconnect and free, one which - paradoxically - accredits the 'fixities and definites' of the logocentric in the process. Yet it is also a false attempt on consciousness's part to take

absolute reponsibility for things, to see itself as utterly the architect of all, to acknowledge no higher power. Secondary Imagination recognizes no less the creative power of mind, yet willingly subjects itself not to surfaces but to the Reality underlying apparent objects; it seeks to deploy the contingent images and emblems of experience in service of a deeper and truer revelation of the unity on which they are built.

As Shawcross puts it: 'In the first case our excercise of the power [of the primary Imagination] is unconscious; in the second the will directs' - though truth, not itself, determines - the activity of the secondary Imagination (cf. BiogL: lxvii). This is the final stage of a process which began, then, in 'The fact that the poet, in impressing his conscious self upon the world of objects, seemed to penetrate to the core of their being' (p. lix). However, this core of being is not absolutely outside us, nor is it particular. As Schelling's own account has it: 'through the objective world as a whole, but never through a single object in it, an infinite is represented: whereas every single work of art represents Infinity' (Schelling, Werke, i, 627; cf. BiogL: lxvii).

The important point about objects, as Coleridge says, is this: 'the spirit, in all the objects which it views, views only itself' (BiogL: 274). But to his Schellingesque perspective, this is a far less solipsistic statement than it might at first appear. Spirit (not just 'the observer', note) looking at the world, views such a vision of itself because

that vision is 'out' there to be had. In the first place, there are all the possible varieties of valid human interaction with the world to explore, all of which, in a sense, are contained in Reality's 'unconscious'. And yet, this apparent profligacy and range of possibility is validated and grounded in the fact that both the viewing intelligence and the products of its attention are abstracted from one and the same source - as they are, too, in the Lacanian interpretation of our psychic progress ... and an attentive and responsible act of observation will always seek to keep this potentially reconstituting component in mind along with itself. In other words, the world is so constituted that it co-operates with the creative process of perception; which suggests that mind is an aspect of world, just as world is of mind. 'Mind' is, after all, not invented by itself.

One may readily turn the focus of the argument round upon the sceptic who originates it. We soon see that those who deny any significant influence from external reality upon our mental and linguistic life are in an invidious position. We are assumed, on their view, to be acculturated beings, whose language determines our perceptions. Yet the mind must be capable of making correct assumptions about some of the sensuous, perceptual and cultural information which comes to it, or the idea of an 'acculturated' vision would make no sense, for our culture could not reach us. The sceptical argument, in its purest form, is thus inherently self-defeating.

Do Coleridge and Wordsworth really embrace an unjustifiably sanguine notion of the interdependence between linguistic man, as observer and reporter, and his world? If we admit the co-operation of the universe in the creation of the 'things' of language, does this not inevitably establish them as 'real' entities once again?

The point is that the recognition that individual objects as separate and self-existent entities are in themselves man-made creations, convenient fictions merely, is not incompatible with an acknowledgement that nature provides 'independently' the variety, the grain and texture, around which we weave our fictions. Nature cannot, as Coleridge noted, be understood as merely a featureless plenum, 'a matter without form, which is doubtless inconceivable'. Variety is only incompatible with unity, with indivisibility, to precisely that fallible all-too-human mindset which is fixated on the existence of separate 'things', in the first place.

3

Thus the proposition that every act in the world is always also an act of interpretation is not abandoned by Coleridge in his phase of indebtedness to Schelling; far from it. And it is as well for his posterity that he did not do so: for in our day, even advanced science accepts such a view[5].

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[5] What, indeed, is modern quantum theory but a re-statement in its own terms of Schelling's formula: 'In perception, subject determines object and is determined by it'? According to the uncertainty relation, it is the nature of the physicist's experimental intervention which determines whether

Nonetheless, it is the second part of the formula that would be the point of contention for many Deconstructionists: an insistence that the universe contributes its own ell of input to the interpretative act. It is Coleridge's and Wordsworth's tone, too, when they talk of such issues that is troublesome for the thoroughgoing sceptic. At the prospect of the subject-created object, we find neither Schelling nor Wordsworth sorrowing.

Wordsworth himself both states and exemplifies the issue in the well-known words of his prospectus to The Recluse:

> by words
> Which speak of nothing more than what we are,
> Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep
> Of Death, and win the vacant and the vain
> To noble raptures, while my voice proclaims
> How exquisitely the individual Mind
> (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
> Of the whole species) to the external World
> Is fitted: - and how exquisitely, too -
> Theme this but little heard of among men -
> The external World is fitted to the Mind;
> And the creation (by no lower name
> Can it be called) which they with blended might
> Accomplish: - this is our high argument.
> (Part I, Bk. 1: ll. 822-835. My emphasis.)

Paradoxically, for those who wish to think of him as a nature poet, this is also the passage in which he declares his subject to be 'the mind of Man - /My haunt, and the main region of my song' (ll. 804-5). Despite its 'problematic' optimism, we must I think understand that the poet's exclamation upon the 'exquisiteness' of the mind's mutual

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reality takes form as a wave or a particle in his apparatus, for example. Relativity, too, as its name suggests, is an exploration of the transforming effects of observers and their powers of observation upon the world, dependent in this case on their individual time-frames and states of motion.

fitment to reality is the product of his discovery that it is fitted at all: that it is fitted far more than we have a right to expect. It is only when set against its proper - and sceptical - philosophical context that the passage makes its intended sense.

This qualification once made, it will be evident enough that the intellectual substance of the passage above is but another re-statement of Schelling's formula: the emphasis is this time, however, upon its second member. The parting of the ways between Norris, de Man and Wordsworth would presumably come in the double emphasis on 'external' and in that theme 'but little heard of among men': how remarkably the world fits the mind. It is but little heard of among Deconstructionists, certainly; but, as I have tried to argue, that by itself does not mean it will not bear consideration.

No doubt it is after some such plain process of reasoning and observation, and after having taken account of all necessary reservations, that Wordsworth feels justified in advancing with caution to the higher tier of Schelling's argument, to its claims that the human imagination at work can find its echo in the operations of the cosmos.

We see how for Wordsworth, in the scene upon Snowdon which climaxes The Prelude, the sense of unity and serenity which pervades the moonlit scene (the sense of unity, note, not the moon or the abyss) suggests 'the type /Of a majestic intellect' (1850, XIV: ll. 66-7), or 'the emblem of a mind /That feeds upon infinity' (XIV: ll. 70-71). The ambiguities of expression leave us undecided as to whether this mind is

simply the totality of scene and Wordsworth's involvement in it, or whether it is a self-existent entity of which Wordsworth and his mind are merely part, and as it happens the present focus: a microcosmic reflection of the whole.

What is clear is that the decorative homogeneity shed by the light and mist upon this inspiring spectacle propels his own being into a lived apprehension of the true unity that underlies the textual divisions of the world. A seeming demonstration of nature's own artistry in the moonlight has the paradoxical effect of declaring the fictionality of the world, and revealing that the poet is at once both reader of and character in this fiction; and, in a certain sense, its co-author. The resultant sense of unity - an adumbrated healing of the primary breach of being into two parts, intelligence and nature - equates, as the separate elements of the scene converge before his eyes, with the primal unity organic imagination might uncover behind the elements of the poem: nell piu in uno, as Coleridge would put it.

I shall quote Wordsworth's commentary on this moment upon Snowdon in the 1805 version, which, though missing the powerful diction and poetic compression - as well as some necessary integration of the thought - nonetheless has the merit of being a little plainer than the 1850. The impressive scene, unified by moonlight, now resembles not an 'emblem' (1850) but the 'perfect image of a mighty Mind' (1805: ll. 69), one 'that feeds upon infinity,/That is exalted by an underpresence' (ll. 70-71), or, moved by 'whatsoe'er is dim/Or vast in its own being' (ll. 72-3), succeeds in impressing its

domination 'upon the outward face of things' (l. 78); this is the 'One function of such mind' that 'Nature there /Exhibited' (l. 74-5): the power of subduing the ordinary separable elements of the scene into accord with a single dominant impression. Here the plainly cosmological giant-mind and that of the poet are hardly to be distinguished. Wordsworth makes the artistic ground of their connection explicit by explaining that such special scenes in nature resemble the work of human Imagination upon its materials; which

> So moulds them, and endues, abstracts, combines,
> Or by abrupt and unhabitual influence
> Doth make one object so impress itself
> Upon all others, and pervade them so,
> (1805, XIII: ll. 79-82)

that its force is made manifest even to 'the grossest minds' (l. 83);

> The Power which these
> Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
> Thrusts forth upon the senses, is the express
> Resemblance, in the fulness of its strength
> Made visible, a genuine Counterpart
> And Brother of the glorious faculty
> Which higher minds bear with them as their own.
> (1805, XIII: ll. 84-90)

As I have said, it may seem as if Wordworth is unsure whether the unification is wrought by Nature or by the observer's mind. The point is that it is both: it is a clairvoyant recognition on the poet's part of the small piece of cosmic unity in which he presently exists. The unifying Imagination is in reality an organ of clearer-than-human vision; its operations bring closer the invisible but Real world. It is 'a genuine Counterpart/And Brother' of that

world, says Wordsworth. Minds that are accustomed and attuned by the excercise of imagination are thus 'more prompt/To hold fit converse with the spiritual world' (1850, XIV: ll. 107-8) ('... more fit/ To hold communion with the invisible world' [1805, XIII: ll. 104-5]).

Close attention to this celebrated passage shows it to be making only the most guarded of transcendental claims. The effect of the scene is indeed similar to that of the crossing of the Alps in Book VI, where Wordsworth is thrown forcibly back on the mind's own powers, rather than being compelled to celebrate the sublime appearances of nature. However, the transcendental claims are inescapably there.

As Hartman notes (Hartman 1971: 61ff.), the Snowdon episode and the Crossing of the Aps passage are linked with regard to their circumstances of composition; but they are curious mirror-images of each other in other ways. On Snowdon, we look outward to nature and discover the cosmic unity; on the Alps, we look inward and discover the same thing. For they are indeed the same thing, to Wordsworth's view.

Curiously enough, Wordsworth's cosmological passages are often his least ambiguous, least paradoxical, however much they might attempt to incorporate a universal paradoxicality. To illustrate the spiritual affinity he sees between de Man and Empson, Christopher Norris quotes the latter's negative critique of just such a passage, one from 'Tintern Abbey'. In the lines concerned, Wordsworth speaks of having felt

> a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,

> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.
> (ll. 96-100)

In Seven Types of Ambiguity, William Empson[15] plays havoc with the internal logic of these lines, mainly on the grounds of the ambivalent location of the 'motion and spirit' referred to (Empson 1961: 153). For Empson, this locational vagueness discloses that the passage is only strategic 'rhetoric', as de Man would later call it, rather than rigorous thought. As Norris puts it: 'Empson shares with de Man a principled mistrust of any totalizing rhetoric which would simply gloss over the elements of strain and contradiction in Wordsworth's inspirational language' (Norris 1984: 205).

I think I have said enough already to demonstrate why 'rhetoric' is hardly a just term; why 'interfused' is precisely the right verb; why Wordsworth believes he is being exact when he speaks of 'the living air', in which the rounded oceanic vision could well confront its metaphorical mirror image in the 'blue sky'. Still more, why 'external' vision and 'the mind of man' could be seen as hiding one Reality.

4

I return to the distinction between a countertheological and a theological movement in post-structuralist literary studies, the luminary of the first branch being Jacques Derrida, that of the second Jacques Lacan. (In this revolutionary ambience, one may be reminded of Dickens's radical society of interchangeable 'Jacqueses' in Tale of Two Cities.)

Part of the suitability of Lacan's theories to Wordsworth is a result of their being themselves an account of the growth of the child's mind: a topic which of course had especial interest for the poet. Although in their derivation from Freud they provide a very practical account of the way that 'the Child is Father of the Man', Lacan's ideas are far closer to Wordsworth's interests than Freud's might be: they too are founded on a concern with language.

One need not over-state, for example, the way that Lacan's psychoanalytic theories at once provide the imagery of Platonic pre-existence in the 'Immortality Ode' with a precise and concrete source: the Real of pre-linguistic consciousness. (Indeed, Lacanian notions give a new dimension to all such 'golden age' myths.)

In turn, Wordsworth's meditations on the close relation of childhood to the poetic impulse offer a considerable extension of Lacanian ideas as they bear on the realm of poetic theory; on some of this I have already touched. But in particular, the application of French psychoanalytic theory to Wordsworth reveals the full radicalism of his idea that there is a 'poetic consciousness', different from and indeed in certain ways superior to, our ordinary rational discourse with reality. Such 'poetic consciousness' is not bound by the mood and atmosphere of individual poems, but is rather a mode of being with which we may at any time, in principle, make contact.

Although it is possible that all of us have had experience of this mode in infancy, if Wordsworth is to be

believed, labelling it 'infantile' would be merely to succumb to one of the many strategies of a no doubt necessary, but in some ways misguided, socialization.

The child, for Lacan and for Wordsworth, is closer to the undifferentiated totality, which his identification with his mother represents. The presence of the father, forbidding incest, forbidding return, adds the stamp of legality to the divisions of reality the word enables, in Lacan's interpretation. Yet language, according to both poet and psychoanalyst, is rebellious at its incorporation in this act of limitation and repression. Unable to sever entirely its umbilical connection with its origins, it is capable of betraying our hold on it, of forging new connections, of escaping us into shiftiness and paronomasia.

These 'unregulated' caprices of language may be exploited by the poet; the purpose of this in Wordsworth, as I have suggested, is to draw us back towards a more child-like vision, a vision from which the idea of origins and of totality are not entirely divested.

In passages like the following, one may easily discover the points of affinity between Lacan's views of the child's psychological development and that of the poet:

> Blest the infant Babe,
> (For with my best conjecture I would trace
> Our Being's earthly progress,) blest the Babe,
> Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep
> Rocked on his Mother's breast, who with his soul
> Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!
> For him, in one dear Presence, there exists
> A virtue which irradiates and exalts
> Objects through widest intercourse of sense,
> No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:
> Along his infant veins are interfused

> The gravitation and the filial bond
> Of nature that connect him with the world.
> (Prelude 1850, II: ll. 233-244)

As the passage continues, Wordsworth identifies the infant's sense of union with nature - mediated through the Mother's presence - as the true poetic spirit, as the original manifestation of Imagination itself.

> Emphatically such a Being lives,
> Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail,
> An inmate of this active universe:
> For, feeling has to him imparted power
> That through the growing faculties of sense
> Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
> Create, creator and receiver both,
> Working but in alliance with the works
> Which it beholds - Such, verily, is the first
> Poetic spirit of our human life,
> By uniform control of after years,
> In most, abated or suppressed, in some,
> Through every change of growth and of decay,
> Pre-eminent till death. (ll. 252-265)

No need to emphasize how close Wordsworth's 'best conjecture' comes to Lacan's. But there is significant additional matter: the passage contains, for example, a theory of feeling; feeling as a power that fuels creation. Emotion here is not distinct from thought, but rather a more 'primal', more immediate (in every sense), sample of the same essence.

Wordsworth clearly enough identifies with the group mentioned in these latest lines: the 'some' who have retained poetic spirit into adulthood. The insecurities of the 'Immortality Ode' have not yet, officially, touched him. He is endeavouring in The Prelude, he says, 'to display the means /Whereby this infant sensibility,/Great birthright of our being, was in me/Augmented and sustained ...' (II: ll. 269-

272). In part, this was aided by the visionary moments, when, inspired by some particularly symbolic individual appearance of nature,

> the soul,
> Remembering how whe felt, but what she felt
> Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
> Of possible sublimity, whereto
> With growing faculties she doth aspire,
> With faculties still growing, feeling still
> That whatsoever point they gain, they yet
> Have something to pursue.
> (II: ll. 315-322)

Linguistic man, as in Lacan's reading, once having tasted of the tree of knowledge, is irreparably fallen ... which impels him upon an unending and vain quest for what he has lost, usually projected onto unsatisfactory, intermediate goals in life, and into a futile search through the unending metonymic chains of language. To Wordsworth that everlasting quest for the ultimate is not perhaps quite so pitiful: the fact of our perpetual transcendence towards a 'something' that always eludes our grasp is itself an experience to be savoured, a potential hint of the imperfect quality of man's entrapment within the toils of linguistic being.

Nonetheless, the unities poetic Imagination rediscovers among the fallen elements of reality, behind the division into subject and object, must always and inevitably be half-projection and half-recognition:

> I still retained
> My first creative sensibility;
> That by the regular action of the world
> My soul was unsubdued. A plastic power
> Abode with me; a forming hand, at times
> Rebellious, acting in a devious mood;
> A local spirit of his own, at war

> With general tendency, but for the most,
> Subservient strictly to external things
> With which it communed. An auxiliar light
> Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
> Bestowed new splendour; the melodious birds,
> The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
> Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
> A like dominion, and the midnight storm
> Grew darker in the presence of my eye:
> Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,
> And hence my transport.
> (II: ll. 359-376)

Although this was not exactly literary exercise as such, Wordsworth nonetheless felt it to be a toil 'more poetic as resembling more/Creative agency. That song would speak/Of that interminable building reared/By observation of affinities/In objects where no brotherhood exists/To passive minds' (ll. 381-386). Although this was, in one sense, 'Coercing all things into sympathy' (390), it was, at one and the same time, 'converse/With things that really are' (393-4).

Wordsworth here is discovering in the all but wilful conjunctions that Imagination actively inflicts upon experience some vestigial sense of that ultimate unification that underlies all individual things, and is their true Reality. It is on the one hand a deliberate, almost perverse, imposition of unity by the poet's own subjectivity, a fierce infliction of feeling. But on the other it is a recognition of a partial kind of the more total unity that pre-exists its own actions. Subject begins by determining, ends by being determined.

It is in the same spirit that we should read Coleridge's advice to poets in the opening chapters of Biogaphia Literaria: that a poet's heart and mind should be intimately

unified with the great appearances of nature. Such advice has, once again, sometimes been quoted as evidence for Coleridge's belief in the possibility of unification with particular objects, but this is a misreading. Coleridge is not here offering an ultimate principle, but a prudential and practical manner of working. Such presented unification is merely better than what cerebral poets in the past have offered in its stead; it is not by itself an equivalent of ultimate Reality, even if its dramatic presentation may lead us a little closer to that state.

In the same way, Wordsworth's method of perceiving affinities among objects where such brotherhood is conventionally invisible, is undertaken with the express aim of inveigling the reader as far towards a sense of primal wholeness as the materials will allow. The final state at which such method aims is in fact one where particular objects, as such, have ceased to matter; and such is Wordsworth's own youthful state of mind at the culmination of the proud trials of imaginative strength that he has been detailing to us:

> I felt the sentiment of Being spread
> O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
> O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
> And human knowledge, to the human eye
> Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
> (II, 401-405)

We are reminded how F.R. Leavis[16], commenting on lines 315-322 quoted earlier, impatiently admitted that he could find nothing more elusive than the 'something' that the poet was driven to pursue. Dismissively, he goes on to say how even

if Wordsworth was right in feeling he had something to pursue 'the critic is here in a different case' (Leavis 1959: 174). It is sometimes such incidental asides that especially alert us to the way criticism has moved on since Leavis's time.

I have made no secret of my belief that we disturb an important wholeness, that we in fact misread the whole, if we, like Empson or Leavis, underestimate the importance to his poetry of what Wordsworth thought. This is all the more pressing in view of the continuing relevance to us of the things Wordsworth was given to think most about.

We should not, thereby, be pressed into thinking of Wordsworth as distinctly 'ours' - particularly if we lose sight by this of the special way he was 'his own'. This is so even if, thanks to changes which Deconstruction has certainly done much to bring about, Wordsworth may seem in certain respects closer to our own concerns than to those of a number of intervening generations. A little unwillingly, I take de Man's concluding point in Blindness and Insight[17]:

> The less we understand a poet, the more he is compulsively misinterpreted and oversimplified and made to say the opposite of what he actually said, the better the chances that he is truly modern; that is, different from what we - mistakenly - think we are ourselves. This would make Baudelaire into a truly modern French poet, Holderlin into a truly modern German poet and Wordsworth and Yeats into truly modern English poets. (de Man 1971: 186)

However, I am driven to believe that an older poet may become modern in a different, more fruitful way: when, without any sense of closure, we are able more openly to appreciate him as engaging in dialogue with us over our contemporary

perceptions of things. In which, one might say, he limits and so gives a dimension to our own modernity, yet forces us to add to ourselves. And in this capacity, for us, Wordsworth is a little different to the other poets on the list. Wordsworth seems now a closer, more awkward, therefore more formidable presence.

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PART THREE: MYSTICISM AND MODERNISM

Chapter 5: LITTLE OR NO GIDDING: T.S. ELIOT AND THE DELIQUESCENCE OF THE WORD.

> Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still. Shrieking voices
> Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,
> Always assail them.
> (Burnt Norton V, ll. 13-19)

There is a paradox to be encountered in the critical literature on the great English-speaking Modernist poets. In spite of all the notorious privileging of the aesthetic object in the Modernist masters - or, at the very least, their insistence on the inseparability of their form and content - explication of the text's literal meaning has traditionally dominated in such criticism.

One understands the historic reasons for this. They lie partly in the deliberate and intentional difficulty of Modernist texts, a quality about which Eliot himself has, memorably, spoken. In consequence of this difficulty, exegesis virtually always becomes the critic's first task. Indeed, Modernism seems actually to create a predetermined place for the critic in his role as interpreter, with the added advantage for him that his function is clear and unambiguous; he may even allow himself to feel needed. To traffic in mysteries, even if not one's own, is usually a gratifying occupation.

Correspondingly, for the reader, the presence of so many helpful intermediaries means the literary rebuff that could otherwise follow from such difficulty - a factor otherwise almost inherent in the Modernist text - need hardly be felt. In contrast I would argue that too much accessibility can sometimes lead to a diminution of the text's intended effect. We often forget that these works are difficult not because the author was prone to over-compress his thoughts or in a hurry, but for a specific aesthetic reason. It may be that we are not always intended to understand everything perfectly, and that the uncertainty and shiftiness of the only half-intelligible language is really an essential (though sometimes unpredictable) part of the final effect.

Nonetheless, determined students of Modernist poetry all of them by now have their palimpsest editions of Pound, Yeats, Dylan Thomas, Stevens, Eliot - pencilled in, scribed and reinscribed with references and elaborations. Without each and any of these references, a student might easily feel his understanding would be incomplete.

Or would it? What seems left out, what seems never adequately expounded or refined upon - even after years of Practical Criticism - is our comprehension of the way 'Under Ben Bulben' or 'The Pisan Cantos' work upon the imagination as poetry. To say so is of course vague enough and so easy enough, even familiar enough; but I am not, I hope, speaking in a formalist or New Critical sense. And I am well aware of the irony that the cry 'but what about <u>the poetry</u>?' was in its time responsible for reams of interminable and dry analysis.

What I seem, more specifically, to lack in the critical literature upon these poems is an account of what it is that their distinctive words and thoughts appeal to in us; how they create the different reality they draw us into, and what its presence, alongside our own world, implies. For the arrangement and choice of the words of a poem - by, at very least, being distinct from those of prose or speech - do create a different world from that which everyday language mediates to us.

It is, I suppose, that psychic borderland between the writer's individual style and our subjective response to it that I think still needs to be explored in these Modernist entries. In this project the tired mechanics of Practical Criticism on the one hand, and the function of context and interpretation on the other, must be implicated, but in ways that are not primary. Especially what the text's statements literally mean is secondary; though what they convey to the reader's imagination and inward experience is not.

2

No Modernist poet has been the subject of referencing and exegesis more than Eliot has. It is a fashion he, to some extent, is responsible for: his own notes to The Waste Land are an early example of the kind. But it was, I believe, a fashion he came deeply to regret. Certainly he subsequently implied that the notes in question were a kind of joke, one that unfortunately came home to roost. Most critics have

ignored such puzzling statements as cavil or evasion, and gone on to the serious business of tracking down more hidden references. In my view Eliot's reservations deserve to be taken seriously, and I will explore their nature in a moment. They certainly reflect in an instructive way a case of a poet intending us to respond to his poetry as poetry rather than as 'meaning' in isolation.

But in the service of attempting, in a small way and in a small area, a critical approach to his poetry which does not depend primarily on elucidation of linear meaning nor entirely on the symbolic value of its technical aspects (though it will involve both) my main focus will be on Eliot's highly individual approach to language in a single piece: Little Gidding. Both the informing attitude and the scale of effect on the reader are to be considered here, in terms of Eliot's sceptical and latitudinarian employment of words, his willingness to harness their most mutable and fluid qualities to his purpose.

Of course, more is involved here than an effect of style. The importunate stretching of signification almost to the point of dissolution is, I maintain, both a central stylistic feature and also entirely of a piece with Eliot's overall purpose in Little Gidding. That purpose is precisely to undermine any linguistically-based idea of objects in their fixed identities, to undercut, and substitute for, many of the ordinary processes by which we gain access to meaning. He does so because referential or logocentric meaning is not where the main purposes of the poem actually lie; far from it. What the

poem 'says' is far less important than the pure effect of dissolution which runs counter to its speech; and this 'solvent' force is there, finally, both for its aesthetic function per se and as an eschatological demonstration (of the vanity of this world, a verbally-created world, to what lies behind it) far more effective than anything to be achieved by mere 'saying'.

I do not think Eliot would have balked at this fundamentally Gnostic account of his aims and means: a 'heresy' like Gnosticism seems a comparative near-relation, compared to Heracleitus and the Buddha, who are after all both easily assimilated by Eliot's syncretic religious imagination. It is a perfect instance of what I have been saying, that 'The Word in the desert' (Burnt Norton V), the word which is consequently most attacked by the voices of temptation, should be not only the transcendent logos but at one and the same time that lesser earth-centred power - language iself - which veils 'Him' (the Logos as a dynamic expression of ultimate Reality) from us. The passage in question follows immediately on the one I have used as epigraph, which describes language under strain. Why should the Johannine and Heracleitean logos be threatened by the voice of the disconsolate chimaera, we might ask, were that chimaera not itself an uneasy product of words, as well as a would-be producer of them? Nonetheless, the chimaera too is the sort of being upon which words do not easily stick.

This dissolution of identities (sometimes an equally subversive multiplication and merging of them) is, I hope to

show, at the heart of both the method and - in the widest, least determinate sense - the meaning of The Four Quartets. As Helen Gardner hinted long ago, the moment in the rose-garden at the beginning of Burnt Norton underlies the whole of the poem; it is there, overtly, at its close. For Gardner, this is an aspect of the musical structure of the text.

It is worth going back to her book[1] again (Gardner 1968: 45ff.) to trace with her the transmutation of key images throughout: the guiding bird; the shaft of sunlight, which is also fire - the fire of desire and of ascetic purification, as in The Waste Land; the refining fire; the fires of Dante's Hell; of the air raids; and, finally, of course, as in Heracleitus, the fiery divine energy and active spirit of the logos, source of all the other possible binaries and oppositions - and also the 'end' in which such warring elements are ultimately reconciled. As she tells us, at the beginning of Little Gidding the flash of sunlight flames again, but this time on frozen water, not, as at its first appearance, on an illusory pool. Here, as a gleam of light in darkness, it illuminates 'the paradoxical opposites which are reconciled in the Heracleitean system'; as 'pentecostal fire/ In the dark time of the year' it banishes illusions, not creates them.

For Gardner, this movement of images through multiple variations of meaning - even between opposite meanings - is a structural device in imitation of the forms of music. It is certainly that, but I would like to suggest it is more than that, too; there is another dimension involved as well. As in

Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, metamorphosis, while constituting a structural motif or 'pattern' in the poem, itself functions to put in question the whole relation of forms and meanings: it undermines our ordinary relation to the individual and personal - in other words, to identity itself. This last is indeed the most important of the illusions which the 'fire' in the poem seeks to vanquish: Heracleitean fire, by absorbing and issuing out forms, renders questionable the independent existence of such supposedly particular entities.

There is much in Eliot's prose writings to support both interpretations - Gardner's and mine - of the 'musical' function in the Quartets. While - as I have suggested - the interpretations are not mutually exclusive, they do represent distinct, not complementary, motives. The structural, formal motive - which we may think of as 'musical' - is not immediately reducible to the motive which seeks to dissolve forms and identities into one interpenetrative and interimplicated whole - except perhaps again through Heracleitus, where the supra-personal, super-individual divine logos does display itself in the world through the medium of form, or so we are told.

Form is of course based on oppositions, a product of contrasts and tensions. To ordinary mortal eyes the all-containing logos can only be appreciated by its effects: as a system of oppositions, great and small, though in itself it transcends them. Through form which holds tensions in balance we may gain some brief glimpse of what the logos might be; although we are obliged to remember that all forms and

contrasts are in themselves provisional entities, whose true nature is conditioned by their impending reabsorption into the dynamic and changing whole.

An almost exact parallel to the Heracleitean vision may be found in the area of particle physics: just as the pressure of physical energy can only release a proton from the vacuum in accompaniment with its anti-proton, so here too form is the product of inherent opposition temporarily made visible. Should the particles re-encounter, we are told, they will annihilate back into the original energy. Through such new reformulations we bring our evolving clairvoyant myths up to date; and that in itself seems a sufficiently Heracleitean dynamic. Indeed, Heracleitus might well have been doubly pleased with the way history has offered this modern confirmation of his own original intuitions.

It was the formal, structural motive Eliot had in mind when he wrote[2] in the essay 'The Music of Poetry' on the likenesses of music and verse: 'There are possibilities for verse which bear some analogy to the development of a theme by different groups of instruments; there are possibilities of transitions in a poem comparable to the different movements of a symphony or quartet; there are possibilities of contrapuntal arrangement of subject-matter' (Eliot 1969 [1942]: 38). Here Eliot is responding to an impulse which begins for English readers with Pater's insistence on the primacy of music among the arts, <u>as the most abstract</u> of them, that in which content is most determined by form.

I do not propose to trace this formal insistence here, interesting as it is, but to follow the alternative line of inquiry. It must be remembered that the transmutative approach was pioneered by Eliot not in the Quartets, but in The Waste Land, where he justifies rather differently the appearance of the dramatis personae of subsequent reincarnations in Madame Sosostris's tarot pack - implying the interdependence, for example, of Mr Eugenides, Phlebas the Phoenician, the card representing 'Death by Water', and the relevant vegetation-myths. In this earlier formulation they are more than 'musical' variations of each other (but so is music itself more than a merely 'structural' entity , as we shall see). That the musical element may involve a great deal more than mere formal patterning he hints at in the following comment - effectively a critique of a piece of music, Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, although admittedly it is the mythic ballet which is uppermost in Eliot's mind. The application to the music, and, even more, to Eliot's poem, can, however, readily be made.

> In art there should be interpenetration and metamorphosis. Even The Golden Bough can be read in two ways: as a collection of entertaining myths, or as a revelation of that vanished mind of which our mind is a continuum. (quoted Southam[3] 1968: 70-1)

Here too, then, there is something more fundamental than the individual and the particular: a developing unitary reality (the universal cultural unconscious), whose underlying presence informs and alters the true meaning of more immediate entities. Constantly - he seems to suggest - the momentary is

losing itself into, and re-emerging from, this comprehensive vision, in terms of which its own identity is entirely contingent. In these circumstances, no seen particular is truly itself: it will have multiple features, culled from the All, at any moment accreting to it. As such a phenomenon continually emphasises, differance and identity are inter-implicated.

(Understood in this same way, the notes are a necessary 'supplement' to the poem. We need the notes to grasp a feature which Eliot could not successfully dramatise within his work: the final transmutation of all the characters into an omnipresent Teiresias, who combines in himself the fundamental psychic binaries of male and female. Like the 'cultural unconscious' in the quotation above, Teiresian is an all-embracing underlying entity into which things return.)

Taken in the way suggested, as a description not only of folk-myth, poetry or ballet, but also of music, the passage has affinities with the analysis of music as an art-form which Nietzsche offers in The Birth of Tragedy. Schopenhauer was the true Western source of the dictum that all art aspires towards the condition of music, and Nietzsche, building upon Schopenhauer's understanding of the antipathy of noumenon and phenomenon, finds in the Dionysiac force of music the awesome natural antidote to the principium individuationis, and to the separable existence of things.

Nietzsche[4] attributes to Schopenhauer recognition of 'the stupendous awe which seizes upon man, when of a sudden he is at a loss to account for the cognitive forms of a phenomenon':

> Add to this awe the blissful ecstasy which arises from the innermost depths of man, ay, of nature, at this same collapse of the principium individuationis, and we shall gain an insight into the being of the Dionysian ... It is either under the influence of the narcotic draught, of which the hymns of all primitive men and peoples tell us, or by the powerful approach of spring penetrating all nature with joy, that those Dionysian emotions awake, in the augmentation of which the subjective vanishes to complete self-forgetfulness. So also in the German Middle Ages singing and dancing crowds, ever increasing in number, were borne from place to place under the same Dionysian power.
> (Nietzsche 1910: 25-6)

It is in music, and, to an extent, in the musical element of poetry and tragic drama, Nietzsche tells us, that the Dionysiac finds its true artistic embodiment, simply because the function of music is to undermine that within itself which resembles individuation: the Apollonian and the discrete.

For those participants spiritually and bodily invested in the music, it is

> as if the veil of Maya had been torn and were now merely fluttering in tatters before the mysterious Primordial Unity. In song and dance man exhibits himself as a member of a higher community: he has forgotten how to walk and speak, and is on the point of taking a dancing flight into the air. (1910: 27)

Eliot, like Nietzsche, is reinterpreting classical sources in a modern way. That the gestures of dance mimic an unconscious preparation for flight ... this reminds us that dance, too, is one of the motifs which mutate through the Quartets; indeed, in spite of the 'musical' title of the poem, it is more often to 'dance' - an enacted and embodied 'music' - that Eliot in practice refers.

Correspondingly, to trace through his poem the varied metempsychoses of the 'dancing' motif is actually to reveal certain differences to Nietzsche's position. It is not only by their receptiveness to a disordering of this world, but also through their acceptance of a higher transcendent order, that his dancers function ... where they 'move in measure' to complete their formal rings, signifying the matrimony of primary opposites. Apollo as much as Dionysus is implicated in the 'ultimate Reality', to Eliot's view:

> at the still point, there the dance is,
> But neither arrest nor movement.
> (Burnt Norton II, ll. 63-4)

Eliot insists that just as 'Words after speech reach into the silence', so it is only truly 'by the form, the pattern' that 'words or music' may hope actually to grasp that elusive goal beyond themselves (Burnt Norton V, ll. 139-141). Hence this formal Appollonian element is for Eliot just as much of a bridge to a Reality beyond words and their meanings as is the Dionysiac: music and poetry still hold out to one the possibility of a loss of self, but it may be achieved as much through contemplation of their pure forms as through Dionysiac intoxication. Indeed, this overwhelming and annihilation of the individual identity is also offered by

> The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
> The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
> Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
> That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
> While the music lasts.
> (The Dry Salvages V, ll. 208-212)

Eliot's 'impersonality', then, is more 'measured', less Dionysiac altogether, than Nietzsche's - but, and this is what I want to emphasise, they spring from the same source, from the contingency of all things individual. Such recognitions underlie even that 'continual extinction of personality' enjoined upon the artist in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'[5], with its rejection of self-expression in favour of the 'expression of significant emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet' (Eliot 1932c: 22). The statement is not merely an anti-romantic gesture on Eliot's part (though it is that, too).

> The point of view which I am struggling to attack is perhaps related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul: for my meaning is, that the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium ... in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways.
> (1932c: 20)

We see that for Eliot, as for Jacques Lacan, the 'self' is really a divided entity. Again, for those French thinkers who are influenced by Saussure's linguistic theories, 'langue' (the holistic language-system) stands above 'parole' (the individual act of speech) and so limits what can be stated by it; in a comparable way the individual poet is dependent upon the cultural and artistic discourse of his own time for what he can express. His own individual point of view matters less than the tradition he represents.

In adapting this last principle from Matthew Arnold, Eliot modified it for his own purposes in ways which give expression to its wider implications; in his case, too, it may

be applied to the topic of meaning. Meaning, for Eliot, cannot be personal meaning of the sort 'self-expression' implies. What the poet may speak is not what he has to say but what his medium has to say, from where it has so far developed to permit such speech. He, as poet, simply locates himself where he may transmit some new aspect of this unfolding tradition. He 'interprets' it only as subject to his human inadequacies.

Behind this lies the intense humility of his acceptance that 'he' - Thomas Stearns Eliot, for example - is no more than an artifact, a by-product, an effect more than a cause. The poet must recognise that he does not signify - or, rather, that he is only an empty 'signifier' - in relation to the logos, the progressive revelation of Being in history, of which the development of his craft is only one aspect.

It is important to recognise the constancy of Eliot's scepticism about the claims of personal identity throughout his career, from its beginnings in his reading of F.H. Bradley, who is likewise dismissive about the 'self'. This scepticism is crucial for The Four Quartets, not least in the way the poet's prescence functions there: he, like Teiresias in The Waste Land, is essentially a 'medium' (in every sense) for a vast echoing intertextuality, the synthesised amalgam of past culture. For it is simply this - the past - which, in Eliot's view, speaks through him, not the vagaries of his own subjectivity; or, at least, those vagaries may be the least fortunate elements in the resulting product. The poet's originality, for Eliot, consists in his learning to speak with a different, more responsive voice than his own.

Thus the explication of the references in the poem is less central to its poetic functioning than is the simple presence there of these 'windows' onto prior writers. Such half-ironic imitation of the eighteenth-century neo-classical practice so decried by Coleridge is a deliberate rebuff to the romantic emphasis on the individual poet. It functions as an assertion that, for the poem, the poet does not truly exist - at least, if it is as an individual that he is to be invoked.

We see how even Eliot's Mallarméan desire to 'purify the dialect of the tribe' is an impersonal quest: a concern with 'the language', seen as an entity which transcends the subjectivities of the individuals which employ it, to arrange its maximal activation for 'the tribe'.

This is in spite of, because of, the fact that language, by its inherent nature, cannot say enough. In spite, too, of the suspect nature of the supposedly discrete entities with which language deals - including the personality. Eliot thus does retain at least the disdain for 'individuation' of Nietzsche's Dionysus. We may appreciate the fact that his theoretical adoption of 'impersonality' on behalf of the poets is really permitting facets of mystical Reality to have their part-way influence upon artistic practice in the actual world.

It is no accident that Eliot prefaces the Quartets with a fragment from Heracleitus which runs, in translation: 'Although the law of meaning (logos) is common, the majority of people live as though they had an understanding (wisdom) of their own.' It is this insufficient personal wisdom which must

be set aside in the interests of greater contact with 'meaning itself' - with what the logos in its totality represents.

Lest the personal self-immolation implied here seem needlessly depressing, it is worth noting that in Eliot's cosmology, it stands as the first step to a truer and more positive discovery of the Real Self, beyond its accidents. The mystical via negativa was entirely, through its negations, a process of discovery. As the lines from St John of the Cross, with Eliot's continuation, put it:

> In order to arrive at what you are not
> You must go through the way in which you are not.
> And what you do not know is the only thing you know
> And what you own is what you do not own
> And where you are is where you are not.
> (East Coker III, ll. 142-6)

Inevitably this passage recalls Lacan's version of the cogito of Descartes: 'I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think to think ... What one ought to say is: I am not wherever I am the plaything of my thought; I think of what I am where I do not think to think' (Lacan 1977: 166).

Lacan's psychoanalytic theory is centered upon language; and, as we remember, in the Lacanian picture of things, a remarkable barrier is posed for us by the point in childhood at which we acquire language. Since the barrier is an impasse for speech, Lacanian theory concerns itself with what lies on its near side; yet, it is hard not to suppose that, like the rose-garden in The Four Quartets, the pre-linguistic trace is somehow omnipresent, continuing to affect us in our articulate later life. It acts through the unconscious with a disturbing solvent force, shifting meaning and rendering sense uncertain.

This is because, to a certain extent, the linguistic world is an unstable illusion, a structured human artifact. The intimation of a 'beyond' to language at once throws its authority into question; yet all we can suppose about the beyond - which is, in the linguistic sense, non-existent, a non-centre - can only be said negatively. It is, for example, a-temporal and a-causal, since words are necessary to underpin our sense of 'before' and 'after', to reflect such 'differences'. It was Schopenhauer, again, who pointed to the gift of occasionally regarding men and things as mere dreams and phantoms as the criterion of natural philosophical ability (cf. Nietzsche 1910: 23). The simultaneous presence and absence of a 'beyond' to language introduces just such an uncertainty into our perceptions.

Even for Helen Gardner, the rose-garden of the poem's beginning seems to have the force of our 'first world' of Eden, before experience (Gardner 1968). There can be little doubt that the moment in the rose-garden, situated in the same relation to the poem's whole as our pre-linguistic experience maintains to life, acts catalytically throughout the Quartets to effect the dissolution of forms and to render meaning uncertain. As such a catalyst, it is a metonymy for the larger ontological scepticism of the work. Its presence may be felt through the fragmented influence of its separate garden-related images, which shift and re-compose themselves, acting with a viral-like effect on the whole. It is as if the Edenic 'garden' is always there, exerting an undercover influence towards denaturing and disintegration.

All this contributes to the strange sense, everywhere felt, of the movement of 'darkness on darkness', when it is as if 'we know that the hills and the trees, the distant panorama/ And the bold imposing facade are all being rolled away - ' (East Coker III, ll. 115-7). Yet, in our perplexity, we are further tormented by other inexplicable impressions not far off: 'The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,/ The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy/ Not lost' (ll. 130-2).

If what the 'bold imposing facade' hides is a higher reality, the Real, to which the unreality of hills and trees might, we feel, suddenly give way, then the interacting glimmer of poetic words can only, of necessity, obliquely reflect it to us. But for us, imprisoned within language, there is the threat of deception here, too - for we can know nothing of this sort clearly. Only the fact that the 'deceiving' thrush which leads us into the rose-garden later transforms itself into the pentecostal dove (which may also be a dogfighting aeroplane) seems a kind of hopeful portent, through the very instability of its forms. But of course we are not in a situation where objective tests are what signify.

Instead 'Through the first gate,/ Into our first world, shall we follow/ The deception of the thrush? Into our first world' (Burnt Norton I, ll. 20-23). This 'first world' has some of the qualities of the Lacanian Imaginary order; encountered first as in the pre-Oedipal stage of development, the Imaginary is a kind of half-way house between language and the Real. It was perhaps Hugh Kenner[6] who first saw this moment in the rose-garden as something positive rather than the mere

illusion it is sometimes thought to be (Kenner 1965: 248ff.); for him it represents not illusion but the reality of which mankind cannot bear too much. We have seen how it may, in fact, at once implicate both Reality and illusion. It is, after all, a borderland world, between language and silence, where forms are suggested but are still undifferentiated, and where the undefined shapes of near-invisible children hover and yet command the scene.

If language is here not yet a tangible influence, even so there is 'unheard music hidden in the shrubbery' (l. 27). Although in this place speech falters to gain its first foothold, nonetheless Being may still intimate its origins, for the element of fire in sunlight produces the effect of its opposite in the drained pool: a blurred Heracleitean manifestation of 'water' and 'fire' together, in which neither element predominates.

The nostalgia of the forgotten past which haunts the deserted garden, together with its strangely importunate - even imperceptibly dangerous - unborn infant ghosts, thus gives way to a sudden apprehension of positive being, so momentary it too may be unreliable. While in the unstable paradox of 'water out of sunlight' (l. 35), actuality may have been 'seen through', in the pool's reflection is enacted a version of the Lacanian mirror stage, said to signal - in the moment of the child's first recognition of his or her reflection - the impending arrival of language and identity.

Appropriate that in this ambivalent intermediate stage when all things are in question, the mirror should itself

hover in a ghostly fashion, half-way to or from materialisation:

> The surface glittered out of heart of light,
> And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
> Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.
> Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
> Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
> Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
> Cannot bear very much reality.
> (ll. 37-43)

What is important here is not that we relate this passage to Mime in Wagner's Siegfried, or to Kipling's They or de la Mare's The Looking Glass (though prior knowledge of these stories might add an extra 'poetic' dimension, especially if we knew of them but had also half-forgotten such knowledge). What is significant, poetically, is that Eliot has sketched a situation which reminds us irresistibly of the world of the children's story, or of a story we may half-believe that we remember, the further details of which we might almost be able to fill in.

With this intriguing and suggestive shaping and unshaping, full somehow of vague but imposing significance, the main engine of Eliot's (post-)Symbolist poetic method has come into play; but its most distinctive characteristic depends not on its meaning, but on defeating meaning.

(I should properly refrain here from adding to the list of potential sources another which seems to me likeliest of all to have been influential: the scene from George MacDonald's faintly heretical Christian fantasy Lilith[7] in which the hero finds himself in an orchard tenanted by friendly but pagan-innocent children, who climb and eat the

fruit but are invisible to the orchard's debased and brutal owners [MacDonald 1895: Ch. XIII]. The group is 'mothered' by an older girl who is yet not their mother; children who unfortunately grow up may join the orchard's debased workers and forget their past.

To be consistent I would have desisted from suggesting yet another source - since it matters hardly a jot to the poem - were not the symbolism [recalling the transition from the Lacanian pre-linguistic state] closely complementary to Eliot's, and the free-wheeling employment of imitation archetypal folk-tale and Christian myth in MacDonald a kind of preparation for Eliot's imaginative world, and a hint as to its colouring. Eliot's rose-garden scene is in any case a composite creation, not imitated directly from its sources, and not intended to be dependent for its imaginative and evocative power upon any of them - except in a sense he would recognise: that his unwritten story reflects the inherent intertextuality of art.)

While we are concerned with the rose-garden of the poem's (and, symbolically, our own) beginning, I wish briefly to trace the progress of one image plucked from this garden - that of the rose - through its successive transformations in the poem. As I have implied, this is a question not of repetition or return but of metamorphosis and mutation. It is as if the rose is itself like the Lacanian pre-linguistic 'trace', for it brings protean instability in its wake.

In The Four Quartets, the manifestations of an image should be treated as apparitions of one single morphic

reality, undergoing its own fluid evolution through the work; apparent units of meaning are transforming themselves, in the context of other such units from which their history is really not separate. The conscious or unconscious appreciation of the instabilities involved is highly important aesthetically: we become imaginatively and almost physically involved in the poem's transformative effects.

In this work, as it turns out, a rose is not dependably a rose. In due course, the humble rose transforms itself over and again, until at last it becomes the vast rose-like apparition of Dante's Paradiso, its multitude of infolding petals symbolic of the reconcilation of the binaries of being. In this final apotheosis where love and strife, desire and purification, begetting and dying, come together, the Heracleitean fire which upholds the world and the rose are one.

The signifier 'rose' thus starts to slide away from its mere connection with the garden flower, though that is never finally shed. To shift one's botany a little, the miracle of in-carnation is represented in this widely accommodating relation between meaning and its appearances; and incarnation, like the manifestation of Platonic forms, is a timely as well as an eternal mystery. Correspondingly, the humble flower is never absolutely free of its other significations: though they are out of sight, they may be scented from the beginning.

The exploration of possibilities not actual, not in our personal experience, is thus almost enjoined upon us by the spreading relation of words and meanings. So it is 'the door

we never opened', not surprisingly, which leads into the rose-garden (Burnt Norton, l. 13). Since meaning is not our own, there is no reason, paradoxically, why we should be limited to our allotted part of it. The poet, in particular, goes beyond any restriction to what concerns the self alone.

Like Prufrock, Eliot's speaker at the poem's beginning feels reluctant to unsettle the universe, to contemplate the effort of exploring this mysterious coalescence of other people's memory and his own. The dust which settles is the dust of the past and of forgetting; for our mortality and our will to forgetfulness are linked, as the start of The Waste Land iterates. Why should Eliot - he seems to ask himself - try once again to refurbish this common meaning, a meaning which is after all not his own, and which must be divined virtually from the Earth itself at the four nodal places of the poem's setting, in order to be disclosed; why disturb 'the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves'? It cannot be for personal aggrandisement, for the personal does not matter, as we have seen. Nonetheless, the process is set in motion, and the poem proceeds.

The partial answer to his question comes a little later. Paradoxically, it concerns the poet's freedom. To forget or overlook the deep sources of meaning in the past, Eliot implies, would be simply to submit oneself to the total domination of immediate appearances, the only alternative. By ignoring the historical - and beyond it the eternal - one is paradoxically subjecting oneself to 'the enchainment of past and future' (l. 79) without realising it.

Yet Eliot is not privileging the unconscious over the conscious or the past over the present. Although 'Time past and time future/ Allow but a little consciousness', nonetheless 'only in time can the moment in the rose-garden, ... The moment in the draughty church at smokefall/ Be remembered' (II, ll. 83-9). Only in the conscious recapture of the past can its unconscious lessons be elaborated, to the point where we are at last free from their domination. Knowing, in the true sense, is a kind of freedom from time, as it is a freedom from signification.

It is because they are already part of the vast 'cultural unconscious' that

> the communication
> Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.
>
> (Little Gidding I, ll. 50-1)

In East Coker II the rose is again directly implicated in a union of opposites: 'Late roses filled with early snow' (l. 57). Here it is a metonymy for the confused seasons. A similar paradoxical pattern in The Dry Salvages ('The salt is on the briar rose/ The fog is in the fir trees' [I, ll. 26-7]) reflects the encroachment upon life of that which is beyond it, for Being in this case is expressed not through fire but sea, the 'oceanic', a trace of which persists where we might least expect to recall its presence. Again when we are told in the last movement that 'The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew tree/ Are of equal duration' (Little Gidding V, l. 232), the rose has come to stand for all love and life, facing a different opposite: death.

Yet it is in their cremated form, as a vestige of human love and mourning, of bouquet and wreath, that the 'burnt roses' remain as 'Ash on an old man's sleeve' (II, ll. 54-5). They are not, however, banished - they again take sides with the fleeting yet remembered, when summoned as 'the spectre of a Rose' (III, l. 184). The connection is not to the ballet but in this case to the Wars of the Roses, yet another signifying permutation; while the past, even the historic past, now becomes at once both spectral and yet everlasting.

The precise details of the transmutations are, as I have suggested, less significant than the fact of transmutation itself, and the reader's oblique awareness of it. In a way the echoes which catch his ear work not to create symbols, but to establish a different idea of meaning. To the call of those elfin horns he hears and responds, if the poet has achieved his ends; such conscious or unconscious self-involvement is the essence of how the poetry at such moments works upon the reader, and its mixed tone-colourings account for its distinctive quality.

3

By way of justification in Eliot's own words of his belief that to over-emphasize meaning in a reading is actually to turn meaning against the poem, it is worth going back to read again perhaps over-familiar passages on the function of poetic technique, which may now appear in a new light. The following, for example: obscurity in modernist poetry

> is due to the suppression of 'links in the chain', or explanatory and connecting matter, and not to incoherence, or to love of the cryptogram. The justification of such abbreviation of method is that the sequence of images coincides and concentrates into one intense impression .... The reader has to allow the images to fall into his mind successively without questioning the reasonableness of each at the moment; so that at the end, a total effect is produced. Such selection of a sequence of images and ideas has nothing chaotic about it. There is a logic of the imagination as well as a logic of concepts.
> (quoted Williamson[8] 1967: 41; my emphases)

In this view of poetry's meaning, the most important aspect of that meaning is provided by the 'total effect' and not the specific parts; indeed, the reader must encounter those parts 'without questioning the reasonableness of each'. The justification for this is that there is a higher 'logic' that is different from conceptual logic, and is more appropriate for poetry.

One of the most plain and uncompromising of Eliot's statements about literal meaning appears in The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism[9] (1938). Here is made explicit the general tendency of the passage above.

> The chief use of the 'meaning' of a poem, in the ordinary sense, may be (for here again I am speaking of some kinds of poetry and not all) to satisfy one habit of the reader, to keep his mind diverted and quiet, while the poem does its work upon him: much as the imaginary burglar is always provided with a bit of nice meat for the house-dog.
> (Eliot 1955: 144)

It should be noted, as Eliot himself does, that the passage does not discount meaning altogether, or call for its entire elimination. Yet it seems quite unconciliatory enough, by placing this element on so relative a footing.

He gives voice to similar opinions again in his essay on Dante[10]; indeed, his views on the classic Italian poet must have perplexed and frustrated many readers. Yet they pose a direct criticism of the kind of literary-critical exercise most common in relation to his own poetry.

'In my experience of the appreciation of poetry,' Eliot notes, 'I have always found that the less I know about the poet and his work, before I begin to read it, the better' (223). He tells us of his own passion for certain French poems long before he was capable of correctly translating two verses. In respect of Dante, Eliot does not discount the value of scholarship entirely, 'but certainly there is an immense amount of knowledge which, until one has read some of his poetry with intense pleasure - that is with as keen a pleasure as one is capable of getting from any poetry - is positively undesirable' (ibid.).

It is the modifying interpolation in this quotation which is especially significant, for it clearly asserts that scholarly knowledge is capable of adding nothing whatever of any kind to the pure poetic enjoyment of a poem. In fact, he suggests, it is positively detrimental to a perfect emotional and imaginative appreciation of the work, though - he appears to concede - there is no reason why it should not be pursued for its own sake. But that is a different matter.

Although such statements have been siezed upon by generations of Practical and New Critics, it is not really in their sense that Eliot is speaking here. What he means is that

the quality of the poetry is fundamentally independent of the conceptual aspect of the signification.

Hence his statements about the function of allegory, wnich to many must have seemed purely perverse:

> I do not recommend, in first reading the first canto of the Inferno, worrying about the identity of the leopard, the lion, or the she-wolf. It is really better, at the start, not to know or care what they do mean. What we should consider is not so much the meaning of the images, but the reverse process, that which led a man having an idea to express it in images ... and, for a competent poet, allegory means clear visual images. And clear visual images are given much more intensity by having a meaning - we do not need to know what the meaning is, but in our own awareness of the image we must be aware that the meaning is there too. Allegory is only one poetic method, but it is a method which has very great advantages. (1932[b]: 228-9)

That the 'allegory' in The Waste Land is an artistic addition, not to be expounded as a weighty philosophy of life, but there instead as a functional aid in structuring and inspiring the play of scene and image within the work, is an interpretation that cannot be overlooked, though it may be disturbing to many. Though the sense of mythic 'meaning' may contribute its half-apprehended buzz of interacting signification beneath the images, such an interplay of sense is perhaps intended as only one aesthetic element among others, less important than the synthetic and transformative possibilities opened up by the mythic framework.

Certainly it is possible to extrapolate from this pattern some thesis about the active effect of the poetic element in man's past and present consciousness, leading up to a judgment about the nature of creativity and what prevents it in the

present day. But the centre of the poem lies rather in its aesthetic transformations themselves, and not in the anthropological or philosophical or autobiographical 'sense' that we might be able to derive from them.

The Four Quartets offers us a far more satisfying blend of form and purpose than The Waste Land, hence its greater intensity. But this is only so if, equally, we appreciate that the details of the underlying synthesis between Pre-Socratic philosophy and Christian mysticism is of far less moment than the transmutation and even the dissolution of meaning that it brings about. Not the elaboration of the signified, but its subversion in favour of a Reality anterior to and independent of our linguistic recognition of it, is what is dramatised here; and our proper response is not the grasping of a schema but participation in the poetic effects by which that subversion is embodied.

It is appropriately in his essay 'The Music of Poetry' that Eliot begins to experiment with the idea of a confluence between the 'music' of the verse, in the broadest sense, and those aspects of a poem which are meaning but not sense:

> if we are moved by a poem, it has meant something, perhaps something important, to us; if we are not moved, then it is, as poetry, meaningless. We can be deeply stirred by hearing the recitation of a poem in a language of which we understand no word; but if we are then told that the poem is gibberish and has no meaning, we shall consider that we have been deluded - this was no poem, it was merely an imitation of instrumental music. If, as we are aware, only a part of the meaning can be conveyed by paraphrase, that is because the poet is occupied with frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail, though meanings still exist. (1969:30)

In a situation where the content is not the central or final end, curiosity may be the bane of poetry. In fact, Eliot's poetic effects are attempting to by-pass consciousness with its own materials, to conjure responses and affinities from an unconscious which itself is not chaos but is 'structured like a language'. As cultural beings, we are being drawn into an interaction with the cultural unconscious, larger than any individual, of which Eliot himself earlier spoke. (It would almost be the same thing to say that we have been brought into relation with the Lacanian unconscious of the language.) There is a being unconscious which is like forgetting; it is the unconscious which is more like remembering that Eliot seeks to stimulate.

But not just for the sake of remembering, nor for the sake of extracting the swimming fish from its medium. Eliot was inclined to place the blame for the fashion for literary detection upon The Road to Xanadu, with its intensive excavation of the vast reading that underlay Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan'. As I have already supposed, this is somewhat disingenuous of him, for the notes to The Waste Land also contributed their ell; at any rate it is a fashion whose excesses he was led to deplore - and it is clear that there is an oblique and anxious glance here at the burgeoning critical treatment of his own poetry.

On the other hand, Eliot was no more favourable towards an intensive analysis which disregards context; it, too, attempts an 'exhaustive' account of the poem, to its ultimate detriment. He once commented on a book by Cleanth Brooks that,

after reading it, he was quite unable to look at the poems dealt with, including some of his own, with any pleasure thereafter. Eliot's perception is that, for all that is essentially poetry, the ordinary verbal relationships are not what - literally - signify. If the unconscious is involved, then inevitably to try to bring meaning into full awareness will mean a mistranslation. Only within the body of poetry - while the song lasts - is the Orphic passage to the unconscious laid open; and any attempt to turn around upon it with our daylight eyes would be to consign the hidden 'feminine' side of language back to the underworld.

But, as Eliot has indicated, it is not unconsciousness that poetry requires, but a more 'alive' way of being conscious: a consciousness in which the vast and echoing converse with the 'supernatural' is not excluded, as it is in our material life. In both The Waste Land and The Four Quartets Eliot attempted to open channels between our ordinary language and its 'beyond'.

4

Heracleitus is best known as the philosopher of flux, as the sage who pointed out that it was impossible to step into the same river twice; or, as one of his pupils is said to have reported it, that it was impossible to step into the same river even once. Though this reminiscence may have been apocryphal, that pupil had certainly steeped himself in the true atmosphere of his master: for the implication stands that there is an incompatible divide beween the intellect's innate

desire to deal with fixities and definites, and the real outward things of this world which are all in a state of uncooperative change and flow. This is all the more so if we see language not so much as taking its substance from external things, but as imposing upon them what definition and concreteness they possess.

Little Gidding takes up this insight, together with the gnomic Heracleitean method, in attempting to return the 'things' specified by its own words to the fluid medium which underlies them. Since this is an inherently paradoxical enterprise, its main means must be the paradox: paradox is, after all, the most subversive of literary forms. As in Heracleitus, our sense of things is assumed to be derived from the play of opposites, of differences and similarities together. Hence the confrontation of antinomies within the paradox is best fitted to expose the true process - though ordinarily repressed from view - of deliquescence that is always sapping its application from the word.

Even in Heracleitus, all this does not amount to unrelieved ontological pessimism. Behind appearances lies the logos, the reflection of the great fluid and evolving unity of all being, whose unity is dimly visible even to our eyes, at least whenever we seem to perceive an unusual form, order, and harmony in things. In ordered movement, as in escape from movement, the presence of the logos may be felt.

Yet it is necessary first to disorder our ordinary perceptions for this heightened awareness to be possible. The opening of Little Gidding thus plays upon the opposites of the

four seasons as it will later play upon the four Heracleitean (or Empedoclean) elements, transmuting each into each in alchemical fusion and dissipation - for the purpose is to demonstrate that not even elemental 'things' are absolute. The only absolute is the total dance, in which the elements are no more than fluid and uncertain movements.

The season that counts is the season 'out of time' - in the sense of being beyond appearances. Hence 'Midwinter spring is its own season' (l. 1), discoverable suspended 'between pole and tropic' (l. 3) - between two fixed points, but determined by neither. Here in this strange mixed zone it is as if latitude, not longitude, determined time; which it might the more appropriately do, since latitude enforces the opposites, the heat and cold, of climate, whereas longitude mediates between the poles. Here 'with frost and fire,/ The brief sun flames the ice, on ponds and ditches' (ll. 4-5). The opposite elements of fire and water are already in play, interimplicated with the seasons, and displaying their own capacity for metamorphosis - fire to sunlight, water to frost and ice - parallel to the manner in which seasons change, and so become 'not themselves'.

It is evident that this midwinter spring is also an ecstatic inspirational moment for the unnamed speaker, one which comes upon him in the depths of the cold season. The poem's language attempts to reproduce the same experience in the conflicts of its paradoxes. In the background, a 'watery mirror' glimmers upon water or ice, reflecting, as such surfaces always do, the mirror-thin insubstantiality of the

presences they shadow back. In this case it transmits a 'glare' which is also 'blindness' (l. 8): just as appearances are 'blind' to the Real, so the experience which transcends them is blind to all transient externality.

Thus the lines move between their variant readings, none of which are exclusive or finally determinant. The description 'windless cold which is the heart's heat' (l. 6) is, apart from its mixture of contraries, a line it would be futile to search out a 'right' explanation for. We recognise that it defines an emotional and spiritual condition, an inner stasis which 'fires' the heart's life, but nothing would be gained by greater specificity. The line serves as something like a linguistic 'shifter': a category broad enough to embrace all or any suitable specifics. We could interpret it, but it would not be the same as our interpretation.

The main poetic feature of these lines is their surprise, a surprise which is also subversive. They are so constructed as to make a 'right' interpretation irrelevant for their poetic understanding. As with the 'clear visual images' of the Dante essay, or the poems in an unknown language which may still be poetically effective, our reader of Little Gidding, confronted by the sharpness of the conflicting pictures and yet baffled as to the meaning, will have arrived at the right sense anyway. Bafflement of the linguistic sense is exactly what the passage is about.

We need not suppose that Eliot, like his speaker, went for a walk and had such a mystical experience - except as a fictional indulgence, if we wish. The country scene serves

rather as a compressive device, whose neatness we appreciate, for it is able to contain without strain all the symbolic and imagistic weight demanded, through all its ramifications: including the hedgerow which

> Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom
> Of snow, a bloom more sudden
> Than that of summer, neither budding nor fading,
> Not in the scheme of generation.
> (ll. 15-18)

Why else the poignancy of the passage if it is not owing to the pleasurable (because, ultimately, containable) short-circuit of sense involved? There has been a vast, energetic conflation between the pure shroud-like whiteness of the clinging snow, and the blossom, something so much the polar opposite of this season of wintry death. The white May-time blossoms are absorbed <u>into the snow's being</u> to create a new reality. Yet just as the snow literally cannot bud or fade, this newly minted linguistic reality is also beyond the depredations of time. Eliot's new reality of the snow/bloom alerts us to that further undercurrent Reality, which is itself 'suspended in time' (suspended = temporarily ended or excluded, as well as 'hanging') and so also free of generation.

It is the absolute confluence of image with meaning - the cold white blooms are not left behind - which creates the distinctively poetic excitement of this passage. We see that the augmentation or crowding-in of meaning is as important in disturbing our ordinary linguistic expectations as is the undercutting of meaning. Like the synthesis of Heracleitus, St

John of the Cross, Dante and the air-raids, the smoothness, completeness and conviction with which the metamorphoses are effected are a particular cause for poetic satisfaction. It is like the reasons for which wit appeals to Eliot (Eliot[11] 1932 [1929]: 289): its 'recognition, implicit in the expression of every experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible'. As Heracleitus[12] says, 'you would not find out the boundaries of soul, even travelling upon every path: so deep a measure does it have' (Fr. 45).

A paradox may be said to have three logical terms: its two contradictory elements and also its resolution. But there is also a sense in which the antinomies are not, after all, reducible to the resolution: the resolution offers appeasement, not permanent peace. In the same way there is a refusal of the mathematical product 'winter' to the equation 'Zero summer' in lines 18-19. This zero, which is both the zero of temperature and the zero of negation of the word, cannot do its work: the summer remains, only partially elided. Hence the zero summmer is 'unimaginable'. In what unknown space do they exist, the realities of this purely linguistic concatenation? Is it somewhere 'beyond sense', as the line (19/insert/20) from Eliot's original draft puts it: 'Where is the summer, the unimaginable/ Summer beyond sense, the inapprehensible/ Zero summer?' ('Sense' could imply here <u>either</u> the sensory <u>or</u> the meaningful.) Eliot's final decision was the right one: the remaining lines say everything needful:

> Where is the summer, the unimaginable
> Zero summer?

The answer is, then: in that joyful summer-like space that is beyond the determinations of the word, and where such designations as 'summer' are reduced to zero. Such a winter/summer escapes both the snows of yesteryear and of tomorrow. But is such a place summery? Or is it rather a 'windless cold that is the heart's heat'?

At the same time, we see how in such a context to pray is to 'put off/ Sense and notion' (ll. 41-2): it is to attach oneself to a region where the senses and physical movement are as irrelevant as signification.

5

The linguistic 'loop' from which we imagine, but cannot find, true or final release - even in poetry - is not the only circle of its kind. Heracleitus may have insisted in Fragment 60 that the way up and the way down are identical, but of course they also are <u>not</u>, or the statement would not signify. Among the cycles of transmutation, the most fundamental is that of the elements, and it is this to which Eliot turns in <u>Little Gidding</u> II.

But the elements themselves depend on oppositions, and are thus not absolute and ultimate entities. According to Heracleitus, behind the fire we know lies the unifying fire of the divine Energy, into which all else is dissoluble. As Heracleitus gnomically records, 'Thunderbolt steers all things' (Fr. 64). If we read his perception aright, he was the first to enunciate both Einstein's principle of the

convertability of energy and matter, and the law of conservation of energy: 'All things are an equal exchange for fire and fire for all things, as goods are for gold and gold for goods' (Fr. 90).

The Unity - which for Heracleitus is closely identified with this primal creative energy - is, then, prior to both the elemental opposites and the binaries of appearance, from which human perception can, in any case, never disentangle them: 'God is day night, winter summer, war peace, satiety hunger; he undergoes alteration in the way that fire, when it is mixed with different kinds of incense, is named according to the scent of each of them' (Fr. 67). Even the contraries of life and death are better understood not as absolutes, but as aspects of transmutation: 'For souls it is death to become water, for water it is death to become earth. From earth water comes-to-be, and from water, soul' (Fr. 36). If these entities are understood as referring not to physical realities as much as to moments in the cycle of life and death, these statements are not merely quaint. Their real message is that death as finality is overcome if we understand that death in one 'form' is life in another: 'Fire lives in the death of air; air lives in the death of fire; water lives in the death of earth and earth lives in the death of water.'

Eliot takes up the spirit of Heracleitus's high theme by adding, as he does again in Little Gidding IV, transmutations of his own. The aeroplane of strife and war becomes the dove of benediction spitting pentecostal tongues of fire (the 'dove-bomber' Williamson wittily calls it [Williamson 1967:

229]): 'speaking in tongues' is, after all, another kind of speech probing beyond signification. The fire of desire and passion becomes the fire of purification, of the funeral pyre, of the respiratory process, of the Nessus shirt, of universal love and of the unifying power of the logos.

> We only live, only suspire
> Consumed by either fire or fire.
> (IV, ll. 212-3)

The lyric at the start of Little Gidding II thus takes the elements and their changes in turn. It allows that death may be the leveller which reduces human pride, vanity and personal nostalgia. But behind this, death not only disintegrates the individual things that words would fix and encapsulate, but disseminates them into a continuing process of metamorphosis. Indeed they were in this process all along.

> Ash on an old man's sleeve
> Is all the ash the burnt roses leave.
> Dust in the air suspended
> Marks the place where a story ended.
> Dust inbreathed was a house -
> The wall, the wainscot and the mouse.
> The death of hope and despair,
> This is the death of air.
> (ll. 54-61)

What is involved in the three related stanzas is, then, not only the death of the four elements of the material world. The Christian application is expanded to embrace a broader kind of death: the death of the individual identities of all the things conveyed by words, a death in which they are constantly participating. Even the elements are implicated,

for ultimately they are only more comprehensive 'things' themselves, no less illusory than what they constitute.

To touch in passing on a point which usually receives no comment. It is worth pausing here to meditate on the poetic tendency - not confined to Eliot - to insist on the Empedoclean or Aristotelian elements in preference to the 92 or more of science, even after these are well-known. Here it is not just a question of metaphoric shorthand, convention, or of poetic 'antiquing'. The deliberate archaism is itself a statement. Not only is the point in the preceding paragraph better made with counters that are already known to be mythical (so that the transitoriness and changefulness of human interpretations is also incorporated). It is also a deliberate privileging of the metaphoric vision of reality over the scientific: an insistence that the poet's echoing and allusive reality is more, not less, real than the physicist's. In this regard, it is to Aristotle's advantage to have been superseded by physics, for he is now elevated to the domain of myth, with its superior incorporative power.

It is the reverse achievement to the use of archaism - the entirely successful weaving of all the past threads into the actual moment of the poem's composition - which constitutes the tour de force of the last stage of Little Gidding II. Here myth and moment merge in a collaborative illusoriness. The multiple expansions of meaning we have been witnessing at last incorporate even the air-raids in war-time London, and the poet's perambulations as an air-raid warden there.

Yet even this is seen, as it must be, through an acculturated vision. The cultural mind of the tribe asserts its presence through the parallels between this wartime world and Dante's Inferno; and we remember the way even strife and love are bound together in meaning.

As the oxymorons and other antithetical figures of the verse serve to underline, the metamorphic purpose is, even at this stage, not relinquished. As Elizabeth Drew[13] may have been the earliest to say:

> the dove becomes the 'airplane'; the tongues of flame those of the guns; the 'rushing mighty wind' that of the 'urban dawn', blowing the 'metal leaves' of the fragments of shrapnel over the asphalt.
> (Drew 1954: 230)

We inhabit the 'uncertain hour' which we have in fact occupied throughout the poem: the hour is uncertain for this is the 'no-time' of semantic and directional uncertainty. Here, we follow through the contradictions of our situation: we are 'near the ending of interminable night' where we face 'the recurrent end of the unending' (ll. 79-80). Even the poet's personal identity is drawn into the universal deliquescence of this apocalyptic hour. The 'compound ghost' he encounters in his patrol is not only Yeats dissolving into Dante, it is the poet himself. What he confronts in the waning dusk is his Lacanian mirror self, who is nevertheless not himself but an amalgam of the transmigrating ghosts 'both one and many' (l. 94) who intertextually compose him.

> So I assumed a double part, and cried
> And heard another's voice cry: 'What! are you here?'
> Although we were not. I was still the same,

> Knowing myself yet being someone other -
> And he a face still forming
> (ll. 97-101)

The lesson the ghost has to tell Eliot is that he has accepted that his own 'thought and theory'

> have served their purpose: let them be.
> So with your own, and pray they be forgiven
> By others, as I pray you to forgive
> Both bad and good. Last season's fruit is eaten
> And the fullfed beast shall kick the empty pail.
> For last year's words belong to last year's language
> And next year's words await another voice.
> (ll. 113-119)

Though together they agree that 'our concern was speech' (l. 227), and though they recognize that their contribution to enlarging the scope of what language might say has added to the 'aftersight and foresight' of the tribe, it is necessary that that achievement will be overturned and discounted by future generations of writers they have helped produce. 'What does this matter?' Eliot seems to ask. In fact it matters little, beside these poets' joint recognition that their involvement in the project was not a personal one, in the last resort. Thus, of what they dared to contribute, even the good must be forgiven; for the <u>hubris</u> was not their own.

What the Yeatsian ghost leaves behind him in testamentary fashion is the image of the dancer. For that is what Eliot must make this poem into, at its close. Since its shifting meanings are - like Yeats's dancer - in constant movement, it cannot be sculpted into a static object; but what it can be is a <u>dance</u>: an ordered pattern of movements. Only, finally, in its formal aspect may it have transcendent qualities '(where

every word is at home,/ Taking its place to support the others, ... The complete consort dancing together)' (V, ll. 217-223).

This ultimate course accepts, nonetheless, that though meaning may be patterned, it cannot be contained:

> Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
> Every poem an epitaph. And any action
> Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat
> Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.
> (ll. 224-227)

Since meaning spreads so wide, it cannot be anyone's possession. But that is <u>the guarantee of our community</u>, for all meaning is our own as well as others': 'We die with the dying' (l. 228) and '... are born with the dead' (l. 230). Dead, even Yeats's images are no longer his own.

We see, in part, why it is that Eliot writes in an elided way, or leaves lacunae in his verse. It is because the meaning is to an extent undetermined because undeterminable: it is there to be filled in by the community for whom the poem is a meaningful artifact. Its circles of signification spread outwards, incorporating synthetically into its patterns still unforeseen convergences - which were, in every sense, <u>there</u> in the original, however invisible they may once have been. Hence, also, Eliot's reported lack of proprietary concern about variant interpretations of his work. After all, the poems were no longer his.

> A poem may appear to mean very different things to different readers, and all of these meanings may be different from what the author thought he meant ... The reader's interpretation may differ from the author's and be equally valid - it may even be

> better. There may be much more in a poem than the author was aware of. The different interpretations may all be partial formulations of one thing; the ambiguities may be due to the fact that the poem means more, not less, than ordinary speech can communicate. (Eliot 1969 [1942]: 30-31)

Eliot's forceful recognition of the text's own signifying 'unconscious' shows remarkable clarity of insight.

There is, however, one further fact: that meaning is not all there is. Or rather, that human beings may at least conceive of casting themselves beyond language. The clue is in the visionary phrase over which Juliana of Norwich meditated for fifteen years. Her fourteenth revelation from the cross ran, we are told, 'I am the Ground of thy Beseeching' (cf. l. 199). 'Beseeching', among the varied echoes of its sound and sense, seems allied with 'be-speaking'; it is, at any rate, a form of speech most expressive of the metonymies of desire.

It is, finally, what is outside words, beyond signification, which is both the ground and basis of language, in the sense of giving rise to it. But that 'beyond' is also the ground of our beseeching - Juliana's mysterious informant might have added - in the sense of being the only Reality which could satisfy language, and its inherent desires.

It is not as creatures of language, then, that we may approach that something that is not a thing (ll. 253-4). It is approachable, if at all, only in

> A condition of complete simplicity
> (Costing not less than everything.)

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Chapter 6: CLARISSA DALLOWAY'S DEATH-WISH: THANATOS AGAINST LOGOS IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S MRS DALLOWAY.

Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway[1] is a deliberately mysterious work, perhaps more mysterious than critics have always realised. Its elusiveness is indeed a little different from that of her other novels, the meaning of which is, admittedly, never straightforwardly given. However much difficulty we may have in fully comprehending her books, we can at least always be sure that there is a firm structure to be found, and that the novels will 'work out' beautifully in a moment of formal dovetailing, in accordance with the requirements of 'significant form': the rigorous theory of artistic form she learned from Bloomsbury art theoreticians like Clive Bell and Roger Fry[2] (cf. Fry 1937: 231).

In To the Lighthouse[3], for example, the tensions which have been set up in the course of the work are resolved without strain by its close. Masculine and feminine, art and life, order and time, the self and experience: all have found their proper place by the final moments. Even if this accommodation of the opposites of human experience is managed as a triumph of art, rather than life, this in no ways devalues the achievement in the book's own terms. After all, part of what it advocates is that art and its consolations should be seen as an essential ingredient of life. Art acts as the agency of a higher even if principally human reality, one which alone is proof against the inadequacies and failings of physical existence - including death.

In view of this, the reader's final position in To the Lighthouse is meant to be an optimistic one: she or he are left with a sense that, whatever forces may combine from experience to threaten individual works or lives, the basic human activity of Art itself remains. Art persists as an affirmation of human existence which comprehends and sublimates all change and suffering. There is even a hint or a hope which the form of the artwork offers of something beyond itself: its formal structures may, it is suggested, dimly echo a vast and universally accepting underlying Reality which is perceptible also in the mind's depths; a Reality beyond the simply human, which, if it exists, somehow subsumes the world's binaries - including life and death.

It is probably significant that in the major novel preceding To the Lighthouse it is, in contrast, the strains and tensions that are given expression, and indeed allowed to dominate. If what lies at the root of such tensions are, to an extent, reified out into a separate 'section' ('Time Passes') in To the Lighthouse, one which isolates and contains most of what threatens its characters, they are not so safely insulated here. In Mrs Dalloway we cannot but be aware of powerful disruptive forces everywhere threatening the deceptively safe and familiar surfaces of life: the novel is indeed structured to reinforce this sense. In terms of the relation of the two books, it is almost as if an act of exorcism was necessary as a preliminary to the more balanced creation that came on this work's heels. Of course, one other enabling factor was that To the Lighthouse drew on memories of

childhood, whereas Mrs Dalloway concerns the contemporary adult world: and in it present bitternesses came, understandably, to the fore.

Not that there is any shortage of pattern and design in Mrs Dalloway (even if critics at one time may have had difficulty in finding it). If anything, it is perhaps too densely constructed: indeed, its obsessively layered structure is actually an inverse sign of the powerful strains such formal elaboration is meant to hold in check. 'Overwrought' is a doubly appropriate term for such a structure.

An earlier generation of critics missed the structural aspect through being waylaid by their own idea of what they saw as the book's 'impressionistic' surface. Certainly, the surface glitter and multiplying associations of Clarissa's consciousness are what first engage the reader. Even the external narrative links seem to operate in the lateral manner of random thought-associations: through the use of transitional devices (like the aeroplane which writes 'toffee' in the sky and so allows us to hop from one spectator to another without a break), events move smoothly one out of the other. So smoothly, in fact, that we tend to forget the total design, and are rather surprised when Woolf records in her diary[4]: 'I think the design is more remarkable than in any of my books' (October 15th, 1923); and again, more revealingly, 'The design is so queer and masterful. I'm always having to wrench my substance to fit it' (AWD, 58. June 19th, 1923).

Virginia Woolf is correct: the pattern is 'masterful', 'remarkable' and 'queer'. It is also elusive, for reasons that

have less to do with the book's distracting surfaces than with the 'queerness' of what it advocates. Its main themes, the values it advances, are in their very nature so abnormal and unfamiliar that the reader's or critic's mind may refuse to take hold: for the critic, it is as if one had to name objects simply by touch, in the face of a heartless and uncompromising dazzle to the sight and rational sense.

Until recently, criticism has to some extent quailed before the demands of such a radical vision, and has preferred to situate the work within more familiar and more comforting categories. We should not, however, minimise the extremist character of the authoress's intentions, however uncomfortable we may be with them. At every stage, behind the surface glitter or the social show, she is concerned to disturb the conventional ideas - even the processes - not only of the external world and of society, but of the ways the mind deals with that world. Our strategies of conceptual appropriation and of social manipulation are all in question.

Of course, we are much more cognisant of and even open to such literary tactics than we once were, or than Virginia Woolf's original readers would have been. The real enormity is that what looms behind the rejected categories, as a more authentic alternative, is a state hardly distinguishable from death. To put it plainly: this is a novel obsesssed with death - strangely, seductively, compellingly. Death appears as the one decisive transvaluer of all values; as, paradoxically, an alternative way of life. Finally, death is advocated as the most absolute agent of social change, an ultimate force

against social ills: the one power for rebarbative action decisively within the grasp of us all.

Avrom Fleishman is one critic who seems to have sensed this element at work, though he wishes to redeem it within a structure in which Clarissa 'opposes' Septimus's suicidal tendencies: by choosing to continue living, she ultimately reaffirms life's value, a value which Septimus's suicide shows that he holds in small esteem.

In my belief, this view - though it has its force - underrates the intensity and bitterness behind the novel; and hence the radical nature of what it advocates. That Clarissa cannot easily be contrasted with Septimus in this way, some of Fleishman's more detailed and sensitive comments actually themselves disclose:

> Clarissa's repeated quotation of the dirge from Cymbeline - 'Fear no more the heat of the sun' - has generally been taken as her self-encouragement to face life and the demands of the social world, in contrast to Septimus's escape from his fear by suicide. It will be recalled, however, that the dirge contains a biting ambiguity, which makes its way into the fiction: the singers are congratulating the (supposed) departed for escaping the rigors of nature, history, age - of life itself. Thus Clarissa's affinity for the refrain may be taken as a mark of her strong propensity for death, which she indulges in imagination throughout the work: on her morning walk (12), during her midday activity (45), and on her withdrawal from the party (202-4).
>
> (Fleischman[5] 1975 : 87)

Perceptively, Fleishman sees that other aspects of Clarissa's behaviour may be traced back to her intense relationship with death:

> A passage from the manuscript version makes her drift toward death even clearer by ringing in another line of the dirge: 'Though thy worldly task has done, Mrs Dalloway read. Tears unshed, tears deep, salt, still, stood about her for all deaths and sorrows ...' (BM, II, 128). We can sense from this that Clarissa's tendency toward virginal coldness and withdrawal into chaste isolation is an expression of the universal reversion to the security of effortless stasis. And her temptation by death is furthered by her anxiety in the face of the dangers of living. Summing up a number of marks of this fear, in a canceled passage, Clarissa is seen 'thinking of her childhood all the time; the oddest ideas coming to her; fragments of poetry; & a sense of being out out far to sea, & alone; & blown on, very dangerously, for she never lost her sense that it is dangerous, living even one day. A rope walker, & beneath death; so she thought most people felt ...' (BM, II, 125). (ibid.)

This cancelled 'rope walker' passage is indeed very revealing in the connection it sets up between the sea, childhood and death: indeed, we might sense here an anticipation of her later novel The Waves, in which these elements are more overtly and directly linked by that book's symbolism. Certainly, the presence of images of death even in the cancelled passages shows just how ubiquitous this concern is in Mrs Dalloway. They are also an indication that these meditations upon death go further than the fantasy indulgence which Fleischman apparently takes them for.

The last of Fleishman's comments on this passage attempts to re-establish a more positive, if still equivocal, position: 'It is at the end of this prolonged transaction with death that Clarissa chooses life, and her affirmation must be seen as the temporary resolution of a continuing ambivalence in the heroine - and in her creator' (ibid.).

As Fleischman's unease may disclose to us, Clarissa's 'affirmation' is really even less than 'temporary'. Rather than enacting some final 'affirmation of life' as Fleischman wishes, it is more that she unwillingly resigns herself to being alive at all. Clarissa is, indeed, as implicated in the death-design as is her 'double', Septimus.

It is clear that we cannot easily recuperate this radically subversive element; it eludes our best efforts to do so. Indeed, if we read the work in - what I believe to be - the correct way, then behind almost every line or image we should be hearkening to the far, seductive harmonies of this preferred state, represented as being death itself. Now, although we may be repelled to encounter the 'death wish' so centrally placed in an eminent literary work of this kind, it is as well to remind ourselves that in the founding vision of modern psychoanalysis, the death wish came to be seen as a universal unconscious drive, applicable to everyone. Thanatos, the death drive - the urge to destruction and dissolution of the self and even the bodily organism - was for Freud the natural counterpart of Eros, that unifying impulse which includes the sexual instincts.

Freud's analysis of these drives remains controversial; and there is no doubt that a state of mind in which the death drive predominates can be seen as neurotically depressed ... even, by some, insane. Since I am nonetheless asserting that Mrs Dalloway gives expression to just such a state of mind, for reasons which are displayed within the work itself, it may be helpful to look at Freud's account of this drive.

Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920)[6] is generally recognised as the first text in which he deals at length with the death instinct. Here it is understood not only as the genetically-encoded instruction which brings about the organism's eventual demise, but also as an urge related to a primitive yet self-protective desire for 'quiescence', for the most economical mastering of energies within the psychic being, 'the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life' (BP: 36).

In these later Freudian essays, such a desire on the part of living matter for an earlier, non-living, state is actually seen as prior to, and hence potentially more powerful than, the pleasure principle itself. The quest for pleasure, together with other life-directed impulses, are now viewed as somehow 'forced upon' the organism by the necessities of life - life being something of a latecomer on the plane of existence, compared with inorganic matter. Life's demands combine to overlay and inhibit the 'return' to the inorganic which is still the organism's most primitive desire.

Though this explanation relies on some dubious quasi-mythical suppositions about the origins of organic life, it fits well with Freud's general treatment of the instincts which he had recently linked together with the 'compulsion to repeat': 'It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces ...' (BP: 36; Freud's emphasis).

> And now the instincts which we believe in divide themselves into two groups - the erotic instincts, which seek to combine more and more living substance into ever greater unities, and the death instincts, which oppose this effort and lead what is living back into an inorganic state. From the concurrent and opposing action of these two proceed the phenomena of life which are brought to an end by death.
> (Freud[7] 1973: 140)

The evolutionary speculation upon which this stands is vivid enough, but perhaps less than intellectually satisfying as a final explanation. In the hands of Jacques Lacan, 'Freud's biologism', as he calls it, is reinterpreted, and his fundamental ideas vindicated in a new context: that of language. Now Freud's biological explanation is treated as a metaphor, not a neo-scientific hypothesis; nonetheless, Lacan in his revision of Freud's thought continues to affirm that 'to ignore the death instinct in his doctrine is to misunderstand that doctrine entirely' (Lacan[8] 1977: 301). The true setting for the death drive is henceforth in that 'loop' where 'desire becomes bound up with the desire of the Other'.

Effectively, this 'universalisation' of desire undoes the particularity of language and its objects altogether. I suggested in Chapter One that the Other's desire is, properly understood, a desire for the Real: which is to say that the ultimate but impossible aim of the whole language-system is to cancel itself and reach that unspeakable or inexpressible something which lies always just out of the range of symbolic discourse.

For Lacan, the self is constituted by the fact of language. But since language is not and never can be Reality, this supposed self shares in the instability of language as a legacy of 'the scandal' of their joint origins:

> Being of non-being, that is how I as subject comes on the scene, conjugated by the double aporia of a true survival that is abolished by knowledge of itself, and by a discourse in which it is death that sustains existence. (1977: 300)

Seen in this way, the death drive becomes a force which seeks to undermine the phallic authority of all that is constituted by language, in unconscious recognition of the unstable nature of its psychological origins. As aspects of the Name of the Father, the 'Name' which is the symbolic prototype of all language, traditional ideas of social hierarchy and power - and everything else associated with the advent of logocentric rules and laws - become the sort of entities which the death drive naturally opposes: a situation which Shakespeare's song from Cymbeline aptly dramatises.

The universality of death certainly helps to undermine the ultimate efficacy of 'the tyrant's stroke', since the tyrant, too, is subject to death. But by the same token death threatens the autonomy of the self; and it renders equally futile the self's attempt to differentiate itself from the world of material objects through the agency of words. The death drive deconstructs the distinctions between the self's body and material objects, just as it undermines language's pretensions to deal with discrete and distinct 'things' - which are, in fact, of language's own making:

> the reader should recognize in the metaphor of the return to the inanimate (which Freud attaches to every living body) that margin beyond life that language gives to the human being by virtue of the fact that he speaks, and which is precisely that in which such a being places in the position of a signifier, not only those parts of his body that are exchangeable, but this body itself. Thus it becomes apparent that the relation of the object to the body is in no way defined as a partial identification that would have to be totalized in such a relation, since, on the contrary, this object is the prototype of the significance of the body as that for which being is at stake. (1977: 301).

Even the very objects of our physical world are, it appears - as language-designated entities - vulnerable to the menaces of the death drive - exactly like the body upon which we might hope to ground our tenuous identity and independent existence. The very existence of that 'margin beyond life' which should, by definition, be termed 'death' serves to attract to itself everything the symbolic process cannot assimilate - including the problematic relation between objects and the body. The body, it seems, is neither wholly an 'object' nor can it be 'part of a subject'; and yet if it is <u>not</u> an object then it has none of the solidity and reliability we wish to discover in it. If, as an impossible object/subject, its status is in doubt, then so perhaps may be that of objects in general!

Whether or not Lacan has hit on the essence of the Freudian force in question, it is clear that his analysis of the death instinct is of great potential value as an aid to understanding aspects of <u>Mrs Dalloway</u> which might defeat another model. If we accept a close correspondence between Lacan's ideas and Virginia Woolf's, then it must be admitted that her book actually adds a further dimension to Lacan's

picture: a conception which, interestingly enough, Lacan himself came to acknowledge in later life, along with others of his school - that not only death, but the feminine, are implicated in the 'beyond' of language (cf. Ch. 1).

There is, of course, some psychological justification for this inference, since it is entirely into the mother's world and being that the child is unconsciously absorbed before the onset of the Oedipal crisis - which, in Lacan's view, is intimately bound up with the arrival of language in its life.

With the arrival of the Oedipal stage, a different 'phallic' vision now vies for the child's attention. The real father's form is less significant here than what he represents, through the imposition of the incest-taboo, which inevitably accompanies his person and role: as the embodiment of the Name of the Father, he brings law and authority; and along with the language it learns the child acquires a respect for the power and importance of conceptual divisions. Henceforth the literalist and legalist attitudes to rules and words, respectively, are linked together by the same Oedipal imperative. They are also part of an institutional system which separates 'selves', one from the other.

2

With such a preparation, we may now recognize that Mrs Dalloway is about 'full' as opposed to 'cramped' selfhood. Strangely, the 'fullest' self is the one which entertains with a sense of welcome the possibility of its own dissolution - at

least in its relation to other selves and to the idea of bordered selfhood. This less bounded personality is actually at home with the insubstantiality of its own borders on to experience: it is therefore by the same token a self more open for communication with others on the deepest, unconscious levels of being. As her book reveals, Virginia Woolf identifies such an all-incorporating perspective on life and reality as specifically feminine in character.

The main threat to the worldly exercise of this different perspective - a threat which is treated with scant mercy in these pages - is society's dominant masculine ideology, enforcing conformity to laws, rules, traditions: involving, in effect, the unquestioning observance of verbal boundaries. Its most notable representative in Mrs Dalloway is Sir William Bradshaw; he and his cohort Evans attempt blindly to inhibit this 'deeper' communication which they sense as alien.

On the whole, society's masculine strategies have been successful: as a representative of the 'feminine', Clarissa herself has been imprisoned, in all but her deepest hidden self, by the male-dominated social structure. Her only resource as a consequently damaged being is to nurse her privacy, to pretend to the world, to immure her true inner being even further - beyond the possibility of further harmful contact from 'outside'.

We are to understand the role of Septimus Smith in the novel in a complementary light. Since the 'feminine' psychic perspective is by no means the exclusive prerogative of biological females, or even definitely to be found in all of

them (witness Lady Bradshaw and Miss Kilman), there is symbolic justice in the fact of Septimus's physical gender; for Septimus is Clarissa's feminine inner world as it would have been, had she foolishly made it visible: lacerated, traumatised by a male-inspired war, effectively driven insane. Obviously enough, we are being shown that there is a truth in Septimus's insanity that goes beyond any of the 'saner' truths offered by the world of pomp and power.

His is a tragic sacrifice for the knowledge he and Clarissa both share. But the sacrifice represented by his suicide is also a release. As the Lacanian references help to clarify for us, death here stands as the equivalent of some primal experience of cosmic union of subject and world: a merging of the isolated consciousness with Reality which has, indeed, a mystical character. We may take death in the novel as a symbolic fact which 'stands for' mystical dissolution of the self into the cosmic whole; or else as a tragic and desperately physical substitute for this in a world which allows no scope or place for mystical perceptions of a more gentle kind. Clarissa, however, certainly sees death quite literally as a merging back into the whole, without - any longer - those contingent distinctions of identity that the restrictions of language help to impose: 'Death was an attempt to communicate', she tells herself, after Septimus's suicide (D: 202-3). This sort of communication does not, of course, depend on speech.

Certainly, her interpretation of Septimus's suicide is buoyed up by the sentimental quasi-metaphysical theories of

death with which she occasionally consoles herself. But just as Septimus's ramblings disclose a 'reason in madness' as pellucid as Lear's, Clarissa's effusions are an attempt to transpose into a workable myth the transcendent 'feminine' vision. Significantly, her myth scorns the entrapments of both personal identity and personal immortality:

> Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being a part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house, there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. (D: 11-12)

For all its sentimentality, this passage helps towards understanding the present novel. However, even in so classic a study as that of A.D. Moody[9], he takes it all merely as evidence of Clarissa's superficiality, its intention apparently being to show her as 'something of an animated mirror' (Moody 1963: 20). This misreading later leads him to identify Clarissa and Sir William Bradshaw!

The quotation above is associated first of all with an image, that of throwing a shilling into the Serpentine, and also, as we have seen, with the first lines of the song from Act IV of Cymbeline: 'Fear no more the heat o' the sun.' Both

these tags recur throughout the book as 'little rhythms'[1] (cf. Forster[10] 1966). They enter and re-enter the mind not only of Mrs Dalloway, but of Septimus, the madman who commits suicide.

The intention is quite plain. Shakespeare's song, and the discarded shilling, are symbols of death. Even the original lyric may still trouble a sensitive reader who discerns, behind its hypnotic and seductive harmonies, its forbidden enticements to oblivion. But, as the passage above hints, there is something more (or less) than sheer oblivion involved: the insignificant falling shilling does not disappear without transforming itself into ripples on the lake. Similarly, Virginia Woolf seems to suggest, the death of a human personality cannot be an event entirely without consequences for the whole, as the ripple image suggests.

There is at least this compensation, then, in the fact of death. We need 'fear no more', firstly because 'life is all' (D, 13): it is the only thing we shall know. We must face life's finality, since our share of life 'is all' we shall get, in personal terms. (It would be wrong to read this ironic slogan as 'affirming life' in Fleischman's fashion; indeed, its apparent affirmations are so large and all-inclusive as to become meaningless: they simply affirm 'all', whatever that contains.)

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[1] D: 11, 202, 12, 45, 154. The term 'little rhythm' or 'little phrase', applied to a literary device something akin to a Wagnerian leitmotif, is one of the central analytic tools of E.M. Forster's Aspects of the Novel (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1966 [1927]). It seems entirely appropriate to apply this term to the equivalent entity in the work of his fellow Bloomsburyite. J.K. Johnstone deals with this device in his still highly valuable The Bloomsbury Group (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954).

But life is 'all' also in the sense that it extends beyond the individual, as a cosmic mode of being; so that the 'life' meant is not, necessarily, the personal life at all. Indeed, it may even incorporate a kind of 'life as death', beyond the self. Hence, if life is celebrated in Mrs Dalloway, it is is vaunted here in a form which comprehends with equanimity the fact of death and the individual's annihilation.

It is only to a literally self-centred consciousness that such an ending in death is devastating or even momentous, to Virginia Woolf's picture of things. If we choose to view the matter less narrowly, then however absolutely the spark of individual consciousness may be extinguished, there may still be some meaning to survival, it is hinted here: for even if awareness is no more than some illuminating bar of light over which we pass the woven skein of universal history, its design is still one in which we each have our place, in which we are figured through the simple fact of having lived. We have made a difference to the pattern, however small, and may surely take some crumb of comfort from the fact.

A hypothesis like this is presented as one of Peter Walsh's memories. It is clear here that Peter is aware of the theory's danger, its compensatory features:

> Clarissa had a theory in those days - they had heaps of theories, always theories, as young people have. It was to explain the feeling they had of dissatisfaction, not knowing people, not being known. For how could they know each other? You met every day; then not for six months, or years. It was unsatisfactory, they agreed, how little one knew people. But she said, sitting on the bus going up Shaftesbury Avenue, she felt herself everywhere; not 'here, here, here'; and she tapped the back of the seat;

> but everywhere. She waved her hand, going up Shaftesbury Avenue. She was all that. So that to know her, or anyone, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places. Odd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter - even trees, or barns. It ended in a transcendental theory which, with her horror of death, allowed her to believe, or say that she believed (for all her scepticism), that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death. Perhaps - perhaps. (D: 167-8)

Such conceptions may help to mitigate the negativity of the novel's 'death-longings' to a degree, since it is not to simple annihilation that the siren-calls of death invite us, even though our personal 'self' may be irrecoverable from the event.

It is, then, only to a consciousness which has fetishised individuals and particulars that the apparent loss of one of these is an overwhelming disaster. The alternative - 'feminised' - truth is that the world beyond our limited perceptions of it is essentially homogeneous and undivided, even perhaps to the extent of somewhere figuring all its elements - past as well as present - seamlessly within itself. But such a truth can be fully appreciated, it appears, only by someone who has already in a sense settled her accounts with death; it can be seen only, so to speak, through the 'eyes' of death, through a vision in which death is already implicated. The result is, strangely, not all that different from seeing the world through the eyes of love, an expedient which Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse advocates while watching Mrs and Mr Ramsay together:

> They became part of that unreal but penetrating and exciting universe which is the world seen through the eyes of love. The sky stuck to them; the birds sang through them. And, what was even more exciting, she felt, too ... how life, from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up with it and threw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach. (TL: 76)

Startling as such views are, it is perhaps worth noting that they were not without their equivalents in some of the respectable psychology and philosophy of the years of Virginia Woolf's early maturity. There are elements in William James's Principles of Psychology[11] which key in well with certain of Virginia Woolf's notions - and there can be little doubt of James's direct influence.

> Once more take a look at the brain. We believe the brain to be an organ whose internal equilibrium is always in a state of change, - the change affecting every part ... in the brain the perpetual rearrangement must result in some forms of tension lingering relatively long, whilst others simply come and pass. But if consciousness corresponds to the fact of rearrangement itself, why, if the rearrangement stop not, should the consciousness ever cease? (James 1901: 246)

This quotation comes close to the passage in which 'stream of consciousness' is mentioned for the first time. There is a hint in James's final unanswered question which Virginia Woolf can hardly have missed - that 'consciousness' is dependent more upon changing patterns themselves than upon any individual or personal centre of being: and if so, may even be considered to exist independently of the individuals who contribute to it.

But even in the work of James's arch-opponent, F.H. Bradley, we may see some affinities. Bradley, upon whom Virginia's friend T.S. Eliot had written his thesis, distinguishes in his system between modes of perception conditioned by Appearance and those which are directed toward Reality. Bradley's 'Absolute' is in its essentials a transfigured universe, shorn of the 'unreality' of perceived 'relations'. For Bradley too, the self is unreal; an aspect of 'appearance', only. Though Virginia Woolf's terms may be different, her underlying vision is comparable.

In certain unexpected moments Bradley[12] even sounds a little like the novelist, for she and he sometimes choose similar images to symbolise their not entirely dissimilar ideas; for example, in the following picture of the action of consciousness in time:

> Right under our faces is a bright illumined spot on the water, which ceaselessly widens and narrows its area, and shows us what passes away on the current. And this spot that is light is our now, our present. We may go still further .... We have not only an illuminated place, and the rest of the stream in total darkness. There is a paler light which, both up and down stream, is shed on what comes before and after our now. And this paler light is the offspring of the present. (Bradley 1922: 54-5)

Like Virginia Woolf, Bradley[13] looked towards a form of communication beyond the restrictions of language and other constraints. He felt that it was unfortunate that 'I cannot spread out my window until all is transparent, and all windows disappear' (Bradley 1897: 253). The symbol of the window, both as a barrier to communication, and again as the link between the 'room' of one person and the outside world, is widely used

in - as the title anticipates - Jacob's Room; it will be a feature of To the Lighthouse, and it is important in Mrs Dalloway. It is, after all, from a window that Septimus leaps to his death.

The elements of room and window alert us to a seeming paradox in the novel - they emphasize the importance of individual privacy and personal diginity, in a context where we are also continually being made aware of the insubstantiality of the self and its openness to dissemination into externals, into other consciousnesses. For example, on pages 140-1 of Mrs Dalloway we see Clarissa inwardly raging at the twin threat to the privacy of the soul that love and religion jointly present. For Clarissa, these forces crassly intrude upon the freedom of the inner life of imagination and intuition. At this point she goes to the window and sees the old lady in the house opposite climbing upstairs to bed. This lady is herself a symbol - of the dignity of the individual human presence which moves towards death: 'love and religion would destroy that whatever it was, the privacy of the soul. The odious Kilman would destroy it. Yet it was a sight that made her want to cry'. Neither religion nor love can solve the supreme mystery: 'here was one room; there another.'

We may see this as an inconsistency, if we like. But, clearly, since humans confront a social situation which endangers and inhibits any possibility of full communication, society's depredations and intrusions somehow must be resisted; defences are necessitated by the colonising ambitions of the male vision. Hence it is only on the deepest

levels of consciousness and being that such contact can ever take place: perhaps art is the only effective medium for its open transmission. Clarissa's damaged self strikes out in thought against whatever in her male-dominated environment threatens her privacy, precisely because at the depths of her private soul is her female 'secret': her intuitive awareness of the possibility of a different mode of being, not confined to restrictive categories of selfhood. But this 'other' awareness is precisely what the power structures behind the social process force her to suppress and hide.

The 'rooms', too, are thus - finally - artificial constructions, a protection against an uncomprehending public world. Nonetheless, the ideal possibility exists of their removal; though it would take a madman like Septimus to attempt it in the present order of things.

As Septimus goes to commit suicide, he sees an old man coming down the staircase opposite, a figure who is, no doubt, the counterpart of Clarissa's old lady (D: 164). It is the symbolic appeal of this figure that Septimus must set aside in order to perform the act he plans. He must waive his right to individual dignity and privacy in the interests of the 'madcap' sacrifice he feels impelled to perform: a sacrifice which is indeed utterly mad in the world's terms.

Some time later, during her party, Clarissa hears of the suicide, and goes for a moment into a private room to accommodate herself to the news. (She has never actually encountered Septimus; her relationship with him is thus entirely intuitive - 'psychic' if you will; but Virginia Woolf

gives a new meaning to the term.) Once more she sees the little old lady going to bed, and at this point realises that 'Death was an attempt to communicate' (202). What has to be realised to grasp the nature of the unfolding drama is that the true level at which it moves is not at all the social plane; indeed, its action opposes that plane.

We see that a principal theme of Mrs Dalloway is one which has occupied Virginia Woolf, in different variations, from her earliest fiction onwards: the conflict between 'night and day', 'the inner and the outer', between the private life of imagination and contemplation and the public life of action. Now, more than this, Mrs Dalloway is about the opposition of the public and private identity.

We find that the freedom of the unrestricted spiritual life has one overriding enemy in the novel, or rather, two, but each threatens in the same way: it adores to see its face stamped on the face of others. The enemies are Proportion and Conversion, twin sisters. Sir William Bradshaw, the Harley Street psychiatrist, and Miss Kilman the frustrated evangelist are respectively, their two exemplars.

But there is another element, one perhaps even more alarming, from the reader's viewpoint. We remember Clarissa castigating both religion and love as her predatory enemies. Although we might be inclined to blame an unwitting and insensitive Richard Dalloway as the culprit here, in fact Clarissa has quite deliberately immured herself in the safety of a loveless and undemanding marriage, without physicality. It is Peter Walsh, the old flame newly returned from India (he

plays ominously with his divisive 'masculine' penknife) who serves to inflame her sense of threat: far more potently than her husband, Peter represents the dangers of heterosexual passion. When he first returns from India, '[s]he made to hide her dress, like a virgin protecting chastity, protecting privacy' (D: 45). Clearly, so terrified is she of insensitive inroads into her deepest recesses of being, she secludes herself even from meaningful romantic fulfilment - with either men or women.

Hence - from Clarissa's point of view - love in the guise of Possession must be added to the other negative forces, to form a trio of unwelcome external demands: Proportion, Conversion and Possession are the three enemies of Clarissa's 'disproportionate' vision.

As a character, Bradshaw is certainly the worst of the representatives of such negative powers. His method of treatment for Septimus, as a shell-shocked ex-volunteer returned from the war, is to lock him away in an asylum. Bourgeois mediocrity - proportion - is Sir William's universal panacea, administered liberally on society's behalf. What he is really doing is not curing but imposing upon his patients his society's standards of 'normalcy':

> Worshipping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion - his, if they were men, Lady Bradshaw's if they were women (she embroidered, knitted, spent four nights out of seven at home with her son). (D: 110)

In this work Woolf has adopted a decidedly combative stance; if her personal anger leads to a certain occasional shrillness in the tone, we should take this as a sign that the issues are deeply-felt by the novelist. Such personal identification may pose a threat to her ability to distance herself from her characters, to 'see round' them; and this is one criticism which could be brought against Mrs Dalloway. The book has no interest in presenting fair and balanced views - a task her later novels did, in contrast, attempt.

In what follows it will be important for us to recognize to what extent Virginia Woolf may be supposed to identify with Clarissa and Septimus, and to what degree she is critical of them, for we have it on her own authority[14] that the two are 'one and the same person' (Woolf 1928: vi). We find that they each have one central flaw in their character: Septimus is aware of his. It becomes his 'crime', for which in his deranged state he believes human nature, the 'brute with the bood-red nostrils' (D: 102, 162), is sentencing him: it is 'that he could not feel' (96). Once you stumble, 'human nature is on you', he cries.

Clarissa, likewise, while her response to life is full, also shows on some occasions a strange lack of feeling. She realizes she is missing 'something central which permeated' (36)[2],[15]. She sleeps in a separate room. The friends of her

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[2] Clarissa, we are told, lacked 'something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman'. Since this is a sign of the imprisonment and sterility of her feminity in a masculine world, it is appropriate that J. Hillis Miller ('Mrs Dalloway's All Souls Day', in The Shaken Realist: Essays in Modern Literature in Honor of F.J. Hoffman, ed. O.B. Hardison [Baton Rouge, 1970],

girlhood, Peter Walsh and Sally Seton, contrast with her in this. They felt 'more deeply, more passionately, every year' (214). The blame for this absence of sympathy and feeling is placed squarely on the shoulders of society, Pound's 'old bitch gone in the teeth', responsible for the First World War. We learn that Clarissa has recently suffered 'an illness'; there is no such euphemism for the source of Septimus's lack: it was in the war, where his best friend Evans died, that he lost the ability to feel. He has married his wife, the Italian girl Rezia, as a desperate reaction against this growing emotional sterility. His madness is the price he pays.

Clarissa, the society hostess, the wife of a conservative MP, may also blame postwar British society as the root cause of her personal failing. She, like Richardson's Clarissa, is in a sense imprisoned - but in herself. Her lack of 'something central' is due to the existence of two identities in her, and the dichotomy between them. Her private inner life, which she protects even from the demands of love, forms one of these selves. Her other self is her public persona, her public function, Mrs Richard Dalloway, 'the perfect hostess' (69) as Peter once called her.

> But how often this body she wore ..., this body, with all its capacities seemed nothing - nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown, there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs Richard Dalloway. (D: 13)

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113) should discern a certain lack of power in Clarissa's narrative voice.

In her public life she is forced to give up the infinite possibilities of personality and become something fixed. Regrettable as this is on many levels, the situation is not without its rewards. Other people, attracted by her seeming stability, revolve around her at parties like boats around a lighthouse: she 'forms' their lives on these evenings rather as if she were the centre of a diamond or cone:

> That was herself - pointed; dart-like; definite. That was herself when some effort, some call on her to be herself, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point, a radiancy no doubt in some dull lives, a refuge for the lonely to come to, perhaps, she ... had tried to be the same always, never showing a sign of all the other sides of her. (42)

At the same time she realizes that like herself, the parties, 'these semblances, these triumphs ... had a hollowness; at arm's length they were, not in the heart' (192). The metaphor for what is needed to fill her 'missing centre', a 'shadow' counterpart of her own failing, is provided when the Bradshaw's enter the party which is one climax of the novel and report Septimus's suicide. 'Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death she thought' (201).

This death-in-the-centre is also, paradoxically, what may liberate. It is the most real and concrete thing in the glitter of her shallow achievement - yet to call it shallow is not quite appropriate. Her party is, in a sense, Clarissa's 'work of art', her significant form ... not unlike Mrs Ramsay's dinner party in <u>To the Lighthouse</u>. Others find a

meaning there, discover their place in the 'structure' Clarissa composes, even if they do not see the ultimate truth that underlies it.

When we first meet her, we find that her reaction to life is much like that of the artist: 'Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh' (6). We learn that she is part of the procession of public life, since her ancestors were courtiers in the time of the Georges. Thus, that night she too was going to celebrate in traditional manner; she was going to 'kindle and illuminate' (7) by giving her party. Despite its private meanings for her, the artwork she actually creates is determined by her public role. Her party is 'her gift. Nothing else had she of the slightest importance; could not think, write, even play the piano' (135). From the moment her invitations are delivered, Clarissa collects and orders people into an artistic 'form' much as a novelist does with his characters.

> Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; someone up in Bayswater; somebody else, say, in Mayfair. And she felt quite continuously a sense of their existence ... and she felt if only they could be brought together; so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create; but to whom? (135)

So Clarissa, restricted by the nature of things from revealing her true unlimited self, forced to hide it from unsympathetic eyes, is nonetheless able to communicate in her own oblique way. But she does so not through the medium of words; rather, through the more direct and yet less exposed medium of pure form. An offering of 'significant form' - to

combine, to create: again a sacrificial gesture to the principle of unlimited contact, to the Reality obscured behind appearances. This is in curious contrast to the Clarissa who feels 'alone for ever' and who had 'gone up into the tower alone and left them blackberrying in the sun' (57): the introspective, isolated Clarissa.

Thanks to the Bradshaws, though, Clarissa herself is rudely awakened to the underlying reality behind the formal triumph of her party. Death itself lies at the centre of her artistic work of form.

But this may also be death in its benign guise - death as an embrace with the mystic totality, a dissolution of self into the whole. Somehow, Clarissa's 'significant form', as a pure form whose separate significance transcends that of any of its contributing elements, serves to evoke the thing-in-itself, exactly as the Bloomsbury art critics predict: its non-signifying formal aspect calls into presence an extrahuman reality, indistinguishable, in what it negates, from death.

So this is where Clarissa's tragedy lies, as the oblique communication of her party subtly reveals: she leads a 'double life', in which her outer self is not an expression of her inner reality. For the world, she stands as a kind of signifier others believe they know the value of, but in truth the real 'signified' is unreachable - even, on occasions, by herself. Her public bodily being and its actions have become a kind of hostage to the world: she has allowed herself to become an object, to be crystallised into the hard surface of society as one of its ornaments.

But, paradoxically, this is necessary if she is to retain her inner freedom, and to preserve her distance from a society hostile to her true nature. She excludes even the demands of feeling, as the sort of bridge she seeks to avoid between her inner being and the social world. This enforced duplicity, it is implied, is the only reason she is not insane as Septimus is. In the original draft of the novel (see the novelist's own Introduction to the Modern Library edition [Woolf 1928]) he did not in fact appear, and Clarissa herself was to commit suicide at the height of the party.

What we have here is an unresolved gap between signifier and signified, between symbol and meaning, which is in fact one of the symbolic motifs of the work: it is as if the elements of Clarissa's world constantly threaten to dissolve into significances far too large to grasp - as if Lacan's mirror stage had somehow been undone, or finally repudiated. What is fully recognised and asserted here is that what may be seen in the mirror is not in any way the true reality.

Hence we even find a deliberate ambivalence, something ungraspable, in Clarissa's own characterisation. We are denied the clarity which would enable us to pin her down or, especially, make absolute value judgments about her. Hence our positive and negative notions of Clarissa are mere defining points in a widely varying, sometimes irresolvable, presentation. This aspect evidently caused difficulties even for the first readers. Included in the diary is Strachey's understandable comment on Clarissa: 'he thinks that I

alternately laugh at her and cover her, very remarkably, with myself' (AWD: 78).[3]

Virginia Woolf clearly does approve of a great deal of both Septimus and her heroine, who is a far cry from the shallow socialite we first met aboard the good ship Euphrosyne in The Voyage Out[16]. Aspects of her own experience are incorporated into the presentation of both of the main characters. For example, in her diary she records the struggle she had over the descriptions of Septimus's insanity, necessitating the entry into the mind of a madman: 'Of course the mad part tries me so much, makes my mind squirt so badly that I can hardly face spending the next weeks at it' (June 19th,1923; AWD: 57). These pages taxed her because they drew, painfully, on her own experience.

As is now well known, Virginia Woolf suffered four breakdowns during her life: a minor one in childhood, a major one after her brother's death in 1895, another in 1914 and a fourth in 1940. As Leonard Woolf[17] records the experience:

> In the manic stage she was extremely excited: the mind raced; she talked volubly and, at the height of the attack, incoherently; she had delusions and heard voices, for instance she told me that in her second attack she heard the birds in the garden outside her window talking Greek; she was violent with the nurses. In her third attack, which began in 1914, this stage lasted for several months and ended by her falling into a coma for two days. During the depressive stage all her thoughts

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[3] Virginia Woolf was aware of some unwanted distaste on her own part intermixed with her other responses to her created character: 'I think some distaste for her persisted. Yet, again, that was true to my feeling for Kitty and one must dislike people in art without it mattering, unless it is true that certain characters detract from the importance of what happens to them' (AWD : 79). 'Kitty' is evidently one of the real-life models for Clarissa.

> and emotions were the exact opposite of what thy had been in the manic stage. She was in the depths of melancholia and despair; she scarcely spoke; refused to eat ... refused to believe that she was ill and insisted that her condition was due to her own guilt; at the height of this stage she tried to commit suicide, in the 1895 attack by jumping out of a window, in 1915 by taking an overdose of veronal; in 1941 she drowned herself in the river Ouse.
> (Woolf 1964: 76; my emphasis)

The similarity of this to Rachel's 'mystic' fever in The Voyage Out and to the madness of Septimus need not be emphasised. On page 28 of Mrs Dalloway, for example, we are actually placed inside the mind of the 'madman':

> Men must not cut down trees. There is a God. (He noted such revelations on the backs of envelopes.) Change the world. No one kills from hatred. Make it known (he wrote it down). He waited. He listened. A sparrow perched on the railing opposite chirped Septimus, Septimus, four or five times over and went on, drawing its notes out, to sing freshly and piercingly in Greek words how there is no crime and, joined by another sparrow, they sang in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk, how there is no death.
>
> There was his hand; there the dead. White things were assembling behind the railings opposite. But he dared not look. Evans was behind the railings! (D: 28)

The passage is redolent with private symbolism, and, it will be readily appreciated, is a nightmare-view of Virginia Woolf's own private 'message'. Especially significant are Septimus's prophetic judgments that there is no crime or death; evidently, he has repudiated the rules and laws of society, dependent upon the Name of the Father, along with the distinctions and separations of language. The irony (indeed, even the element of mild self-mockery) in the fact that it is a madman who expresses so many of Virginia Woolf's views should not be overlooked.

Just as unsettling as its bizarre content is the form of the passage, its disturbance of ordinary linguistic and logical connections; and yet like Lear's madness it has a non-rational connective structure of its own ... especially so in the way reality is taken as symbolic, as a text by Septimus; and is, consequently, not figured as external to and alien from himself as observer, but as bound up intimately with his life and being. Since language undermines itself among these contradictories, what results is a vision not so dependent on the logocentric: a more unifying, metamorphic world emerges. Though these lines are both comically bizarre and yet contain moments of pure terror, Septimus's is also the language of ecstasy.

Leonard Woolf[18] describes how during Virginia's illness he and she visited three famous Harley Street doctors and secured three different diagnoses. They ignored all, and she consequently 'recovered from three fatal and incurable diseases'. At their last interview, 'the great Dr Saintsbury, as he shook Virginia's hand, said to her "Equanimity - equanimity - practise equanimity, Mrs Woolf" .... I felt he might just have usefully have said: " A normal temperature - ninety-eight point four - practise a normal temperature, Mrs Woolf"' (Woolf 1968: 30). Surely here is the origin of Sir William Bradhaw's 'Proportion'.

Proportion is abandoned in Septimus's ravings: but this is only to open them all the more to a strange kind of truth. However, what Septimus sees and says is not Reality itself, only its more amplified and hence distorted echo. As I have

indicated, the reason for the novelist's identification of the two main characters is that Septimus is representative of Clarissa's inner life: his sensitivity, his insights, are the same as hers, but they are distorted by his delirium. However, the fact that this is delirium and not sanity is a product of Septimus's 'insane' vulnerability, a characteristic Clarissa does not share.

I shall quote from another fragment of Septimus's demented thought-process: he is once again seated in the park, observing the world about him. The reader will see at once that the picture given is of the Bradley-like 'homogeneous' universe, gone haywire:

> But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. The sparrows fluttering, rising and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with black branches. Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds. A child cried. Rightly far away a horn sounded. All taken together meant the birth of a new religion .... (26)

So, despite its absurdities, this is a vision far closer than the everyday to the 'Absolute', the undifferentiated totality, where even distinctions of subject and object become meaningless. Such, then, is the alarming truth about Septimus's 'madness': he has broken part-way through the conventional patterning of experience mediated to us through language. What he finds, half-way to the other side of speech, is still as yet uncontrollable, disturbing. But whatever it is, it is at least closer to a real response to the nature of

things than Sir William's logocentric blindness. Septimus is mad only to the world; the truth is, he is for the first time seeing at all clearly - even if not yet clearly enough. But we understand why this private or supra-private vision might pose a threat to Sir William's world; and why Sir William, with all the authoritarian force of convention, must suppress him.

Indeed, Septimus's clarifying sight has the potential force of a 'new religion' - if its ultimate implications were ever to be recognised. But it is a religion of psychic liberation, unlike Kilman's: a liberation which the public, masculine world cannot bear, and will oppose to the death.

What the novel presents is a parallel vision where, side by side, the sane and insane 'realities' confront each other, and each poses its criticism of its rival. In the middle ground, partaking of both, lies the poetic exploration of consciousness that constitutes the work's artistic style: Virginia Woolf's own poetry of the mind. Her evocation of her various characters' streams of consciousness, with all their semantic compression and multi-layered significance, is itself a prose which has taken the pressure of an alternative Reality to the linguistic, and become transformed by the contact. Unlike Septimus's mad ramblings, however, it recognises still the ordinary world's demands of intelligibility.

The relevant diary entries are informative about these matters, once one has come to appreciate something more of the understandably private context to which they obliquely refer:

> Friday, June 23rd, 1922: If they say this (Jacob's Room) is all a clever experiment, I shall produce Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street as the finished product.
> Saturday, October 14th: Mrs Dalloway has branched into a book, and I adumbrate here a study of insanity and suicide: the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side - something like that ... and to be more close to the fact than Jacob: but I think Jacob was a necessary step for me, in working free.
> Monday, June 4th, 1923: I want to bring in the despicableness of people like Ott. [Lady Ottoline Morrell] I want to give the slipperiness of the soul. I have been too tolerant often. The truth is people scarcely care for each other. They have this insane instinct for life. But they never become attached to anything outside themselves.
> Tuesday, June 19th: In this book I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity; I want to criticise the social system, and to show it at work at its most intense.
> (AWD: 46, 52, 55, 57)

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The social element is inseparable from another element, that of time. In August and October 1924 she records the discovery of two technical innovations which gave great impetus to her progress. Both are 'time devices', and are already present potentially in 'The Mark on the Wall', the short story written in 1917. (Before she had read Proust, Joyce or Dorothy Richardson, so Leonard Woolf tells us. There is no doubt that Mrs Dalloway does owe something to Ulysses, although, as Maria Dibattista[19] convincingly argues in 'Joyce, Woolf and the Modern Mind' [Dibattista 1983], the relationship between the two works is productively contrastive, rather than derivative.)

The first device she describes as the digging out of 'beautiful caves behind my characters ... the idea is that the caves shall connect and each comes to daylight at the present moment' (AWD: 60). She no doubt means by this the movement in her characters' minds from awareness of the world about them to their own thoughts, ruminations, and especially memories, and then back again to the present. In this stylistic acknowledgement of the importance of 'inward' reality over the outer, sometimes physical actuality intrudes only briefly, between brackets. But what is also implied in the idea of the 'caves' connecting together is that the inward world is capable of enlargement and extension into something more than the merely personal; that underlying individual minds is a form of pre-unconscious being that links and binds them - as does, on some interpretations, the Lacanian Real.

The second time-device, as the metaphors suggest, is linked to the first: 'It took me a year's groping to discover what I call my tunneling process, by which I tell the past by instalments, as I have need of it' (AWD: 61). An example of this is the minor incident at Bourton nearly thirty years before, when Hugh Whitbread kissed Sally Seton in the smoking-room. This memory, so out of key with the present-day personality of Hugh, a pompous and reactionary toady, is returned to on several occasions in the course of the novel, each time with a different twist to it. When Clarissa first thinks of it, it surprises us as a deviation from Hugh's accepted creed, and as such it prejudices our view of him. Gradually the incident is filled out for us, until at the

party which closes the book we learn that the reason he had kissed her was to punish her for saying that women should have votes (D: 199). Memory plays tricks, as well. One of Sally's misdemeanours at Bourton was to leave a book belonging to Clarissa's father out on the verandah in the rain, as we learn from Clarissa early on. When she recalls this momentarily at the party (ibid.), in her mind it is in the punt that the book has been left.

Again, all her life the heroine has hero-worshipped Sally, and has been physically attracted to her, because of her outrageous liveliness at Bourton. This vitality itself gains a new dimension when, at the party, Sally admits to herself that going to Bourton had 'kept her sane, she believed, so unhappy had she been at home' (207). The novel abounds in sharp human psychological observations and ironies like these, which add to one another to give depth of field to our view.

What we have here is not simply a demonstration of the way the human mind inevitably changes and shapes the world in order to give it meaning. In addition to this, such complementary recollections make the past 'grow' for us in company with the present, so that the book stands as an emblem of Virginia Woolf's attitude to time (which resembles Bradley's above): the 'past in the present'. Accompanying the heroine for a few hours of a single day, we trace out in the same time her whole past history.

That a more rounded, more unified, less 'linear' treatment of time is an attempt at a distinctly 'feminine'

approach to this narrative dimension, in reaction against the linear chronology and discrete instants beloved of the 'masculine' novel of action, need not be emphasised. However, Virginia Woolf's approach also implies a different attitude to time itself, as a component of Reality.

As the 'Time Passes' section of To the Lighthouse shows, she sees time as humanity's greatest enemy, that which most threatens the ordered creations of human beings, and which dissolves their relationships. The entropy time brings may, however, be held at bay on three fronts: there is the timeless dimension within that Mrs Ramsay contacts in a moment of selfless contemplation in part 11 of 'The Window'; there is the pattern of human affection and relationship which persists in memory; and there is the direct experience of timelessness which is one of the subtle experiences offered by the form of an artwork: 'Life stand still here' (TL: 249) Mrs Ramsay decrees, as an artist whose medium is life; this power over time is a capability somehow within her feminine power.

What this amounts to, in terms of the treatment of time in Mrs Dalloway, is that there is an alternative, feminine approach to time, which is based on an understanding of its ultimate contingency, in the light of the Real. From such a viewpoint, eternity may be contained in an hour and all the past and future be implicit in each instant.

We see how, in this novel, different characters and their approaches to reality may actually be judged in terms of time. Clock time, the 'outer time', is the publicly authorised time of society. It forms a common area of contact for different

people with different individual inner times. In Mrs Dalloway the ever-present clock comes to symbolise a society that in its brutish ignorance and its herd-like conformism seeks to impose its own time as the 'norm': by misunderstanding the nature of the internal it seeks to exclude all temporality it cannot comprehend.

> Shredding, and slicing, dividing and subdividing, the clocks of Harley Street nibbled at the June day, counselled submission, upheld authority, and pointed out in chorus the supreme advantages of a sense of proportion. (D: 113)

Shredding, slicing, dividing and subdividing: these are the operations of the analytic masculine intellect which murders to dissect.

The original title (AWD: 78) for the work was The Hours, and in it on nearly twenty occasions, clocks strike. Almost always they are accompanied by the 'rhythm': 'the leaden circles dissolved in the air'. This reference to the 'ripple' image represents, first of all, the reverberations of the moment in time, and, by extension, the reverberations of individual consciousness in the minds of others through interaction and influence. To some extent, then, the insistent pressure of the moment symbolised by the knelling of the hours is absorbed and rendered ineffectual by the forces which promote homogeneity among human kind. Once again, what begins to be intimated here is an alternative dimension to clock time, one which escapes into the timeless. And yet ultimately, in the novel, this spreading-out of time and self is still ultimately to be identified with death.

Mrs Dalloway's life, we are told, is a succession of 'moments'. Through attention to the nature of these 'moments', we come closer to what Virginia Woolf meant by what she calls her 'moments of vision': 'a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed' (D: 36). Even the way she chooses to define them here - by images, rather than an analytic formula - helps to reveal their essence.

To begin simply by considering the image offered us: perhaps the idea of a match burning in a crocus seems an unwarrantably surrealistic juxtaposition at first sight; if so, it is nonetheless one which does have meaning, albeit of an intangible sort. There is, for instance, the similarity between the bounded and contained leap of the flame, with its lively bright energy, and the life and shape of the petals; again, the stamen-like matchstick seems a masculine force within the enclosing female bowl-like repository of the flower: yet taken together, the one life consumes the other, or defies our expectations by failing to do so.

Yet in spite of all these links and hints, the full meaning continues to elude us, while trembling on the verge of its expression ... all we may say is that, as with Surrealist imagery proper, the mystery and oddness of the juxtaposition seem to turn the handle on a door to a dimension beyond language, or else provide the illusion of doing so.

The case is similar with the 'moment of vision', which achieves the same effect by a sudden and unexpected union of unlikely elements in a meaningful whole, but in this case the conjunction happens at random in the ordinary course of life.

For a very brief while, life seems to take on some of the formal coherence of art - without our being able at the same time to pin down its proffered meaning. It is as if a little of Septimus's madness somehow intruded into the ordinary everyday round of things.

The essence of the 'moment' is thus an entirely unwilled and unanticipated coming together, a crystallization, an ordering ... yet as transitory as the sweep of the lighthouse beam. Yet somehow through it 'Reality' seems manifested to us.

On one notable occasion, the 'moment' comes upon Clarissa, 'collecting the whole of her at one point' (42). For Peter Walsh, too, it starts with the 'drip, drip of one impression after another down into that cellar where they stood deep, dark, and no-one would ever know ... really, it took one's breath away, these moments; there coming to him by the pillar-box opposite the British museum one of them, a moment, in which things came together; this ambulance; and life and death' (167).

Here what is unexpectedly ordered and unified is the binary opposition represented by the passing ambulance and the pillar-box and museum: death and life, symbolically joined; time and utterance linked with the extinction of self. (Is it going too far to see in the 'pillar' and 'box' which represent the sending-on of the letter a hint of both column and coffin? Death as a mobile escape, along with the ambulance, from immurement in the museum-house of life?) For a brief, perhaps infinitessimal, span these apparent opposites seem not so unlike; indeed they appear almost as aspects of each other.

And this is also similar to the vision of the end of the novel, when Clarissa finds death in the middle of her party: death as an attempt to communicate. But true communication - like that the post-box might represent - can only happen when, as here, all the signifiers concerned, even the human ones, are stripped of their conventional content, and take their place in some larger whole.

Septimus, like Clarissa and Peter, has 'moments', but they strike him with an almost horrific force, as on the occasion he sees a representation of the 'metaphysical' forming pattern on the blinds of the dignitary's car: 'upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing together of everything into one centre before his eyes ... terrified him' (18).

This sort of signification, which is both a response to a particular pure form and yet somehow unbounded in meaning, contrasts with the symbols characteristic of society, which are marked by a vacuity rather than a plenitude of underlying significance. Mrs Dalloway's own dilemma, that her outward pose does not express her inner reality, is parodied by two other group-symbols, the mysterious car and the prime minister himself. The mysterious official car which passes down Bond Street with its blinds drawn (the 'Proime Minister's kyar', someone says - but who really knows?), which has such an enormous effect as it passes, is really something comic, because no-one ever sees who or what is inside it - it may only be a royal chambermaid delivering a message or a poodle being taken to the trimmer - and when it passes through the

gates into Buckingham Palace the crowd who have gathered to cheer it, all at the crucial moment have their attention diverted by the aeroplane writing 'toffee' (another displaced and unexplained signifier) in the sky, and fail to do so (D: 23).

Maria Dibattista, in the essay already referred to, remarks cogently upon the sky-writing's effect on Septimus:

> Initially, the letters the aeroplane inscribes in the sky do not form actual words; its writing is illegible, unreadable. Even the letters are indistinguishable in their first outlines: 'A C was it? an E. then an L? Only for a moment did they lie still; then they moved and melted and were rubbed out up in the sky, and the aeroplane shot further away and again, in a fresh space of sky, began writing a K, and E, a Y perhaps?' (23-4). A spectator, Mrs Coates, ventures 'Blaxo'; another, Mrs Bletchley, offers 'Kreemo' - the neologisms of nonsense or commercialism. These comic readings dissolve, however, into the interpretations of Septimus for whom the skywriting is identified, not with the seemingly eternal exercise of temporal power, but with the more fugitive and transient appearances of Beauty. To him the 'smoke words' bestow 'in their inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness, one shape after another of unimaginable beauty ... signalling their intention to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely, with beauty, more beauty' (25). Septimus, the castaway prophet, reads the smoke words not as definite signs linking him to a stable world of referentiality; for him is reserved the message of the world transmitted through the caritas of art, the inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness of the perishable word.
>
> (Dibattista 1983: 108)

Dibattista notes: 'The complicity of writing and established power is the suppressed, never fully realized subtext of Mrs Dalloway, the source of the novel's deep and unresolved ambivalence towards its own representational activity' (109). However, it seems to me that the word is enabled to present itself as a purveyor of what is called 'laughing goodness' only through the 'inexhaustible charity'

of a demented Septimus, not through any of its own; and that the connection between power and logocentric signification - a connection which the style and structure of Mrs Dalloway seek constantly to undermine - is far more than a subtext to the novel: not at all suppressed, and fully realised (though perhaps somewhat disguised), it is the crux upon which the novel is constructed. The dissolution and fading of the 'toffee' sky-writing really provide a remarkably apt symbol of the indeterminacy and instability of the public word - which includes the signifiers of authority and social control.

Both car and aeroplane do also, as we have said, serve as transitional devices - and these linkages of place with place are closely parallel to the temporal unifications of the book, discussed above. There are more connections than these mechanical ones: Septimus's story is linked by common experiences, thoughts, and imagery, with that of Clarissa.

It is important to see that the connectedness does go beyond the merely formal; indeed, the story seems actually to be saying that such separations as we so readily accept are in reality spurious. Hence, the unifying devices are partial aids to conveying this truth that, at the deepest level, we inhabit one world. This fact of Reality's undifferentiated condition is of course fatal to the imaginary divisions which support both self and word, in Virginia Woolf's view.

Another comic instance of an 'empty signifier' is added on the appearance of the revered Prime Minister himself at Clarissa's party. He too is all symbol, all exterior: an object not expressing its content.

> One couldn't laugh at him. He looked so ordinary. You might have stood him up behind a counter and bought biscuits - poor chap all rigged up in gold lace ... they all knew, felt to the marrow of their bones, this majesty passing; this symbol of what they stood for, English society. (D: 189)

On the novel's first page, in memory we meet Peter Walsh and know at once where he stands: 'I prefer men to cauliflowers', he says. He prefers the substance to the object, the symbol. Miss Kilman, Clarissa's enemy, seeks, as her name suggests, to reduce the infinite possibility of human personality to one thing; she seeks to turn men into objects. It is not her Clarissa hates but 'the idea of her': 'one of those spectres who stand astride us and suck up half our life-blood, dominators and tyrants' (15). Conversion is, in this sense, the insistence that human beings be congruent with the categories set out for them, that they impose some form of predetermined conformity in the place of true unfettered selfhood.

Even Rezia, Septimus's wife, a person whose communication is hampered by her inadequacy in English[4], recognises the truth about Holmes, Bradshaw and co. She gains greatly in stature and personal dignity by resisting their blandishments: for her, they were 'men who made ten thousand a year and talked of proportion; who differed in their verdicts (for Holmes said one thing, Bradshaw another), yet judges they were; who mixed the vision and the sideboard; saw nothing clear, yet ruled, yet inflicted. Over them she triumphed' (163). The vision

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[4] This characteristic of Rezia's was apparently inspired by Lydia Lopokova, Maynard Keynes's Russian wife.

pinned down by the symbolic sideboard is another would-be instance of an attempt to fix and control infinitely spreading meaning through the power of words - with the aid of a signifier neither Holmes nor Bradshaw recognises as being utterly inappropriate for the task. (Apparently, to judge by the particular signifier chosen, they hoped to hold the 'vision' firmly down with something heavy and sufficiently material.)

The truth is what Septimus himself proclaims it to be in his delirium: that there is no crime, and so no need of judges. 'Why seek truths and deliver messages', he asks himself, 'when Rezia sat sticking pins into the front of her dress, and Mrs Peters was in Hull?' (157). Existence is enough. Life, Bond Street, 'That is all' (13), Clarissa says to herself, and the only sins are sins against such life; like, for example, the desire to turn people into objects. This even Clarissa refuses to do: 'She would not say of anyone in the world now that they were this or were that' (10).

Yet, ironically, it is precisely in his willingness to become an object - a corpse, in death - that Septimus expresses the height of his heroism. For it is not <u>one</u> object he will become in death, but all. Suicide is seen here as the ultimate willed violation of language, just as it is a violation of personality - an ultimate attempt to break through the limiting signifiers that crowd down existence.

> So there was a man outside; Evans presumably; and the roses, which Rezia said were half dead, had been picked by him in the fields of Greece. Communication is health; communication is happiness. Communication, he muttered.
> (103-4)

4

Here is the heart of the tragedy of Clarissa and Septimus. Imprisoned inside her social facade, her public role, isolated from the encroachment of a philistine society, but also from love, Clarissa has lost the ability to communicate. Similarly, Septimus is cut off from other people by his lack of feeling: 'That was the doom pronounced in Milan when he came into the room and saw them cutting out buckram shapes with their scissors; to be alone for ever' (160). The isolation of the scissors, of a divided existence, pronounced upon him, parallels the nationalism (another act of isolation) which brought on the horror of the war.

In his madness, Septimus cannot dislodge the absurd idea that all men, including himself, are to blame for the calamity in which Evans died. That none of this is his fault is too simple a nostrum for him to accept. Pathetically, when he is in front of Bradshaw's desk, he is tempted to present his 'message': 'But if he confessed? If he communicated? Would they let him off then, Holmes, Bradshaw?' (109). For both the main characters, the outcome moves forward to Mrs Dalloway's realisation in the ante-room: 'Death was an attempt to communicate' (202).

Communication at the deep level which requires no speech or even personal contact seems already to have taken place between Septimus and Clarissa, at least. There is, for instance, the correspondence between the much-quoted scene where Mrs Dalloway is sowing her green dress, and the state of

Septimus, some hundred pages later, shortly before his death. In the earlier passage, Clarissa has likened her sowing to the motion of the waves.

> her needle, drawing the silk smoothly to her gentle pause, collected the green folds together and attached them very lightly to the belt. So on a summer's day waves collect, overbalance and fall; and the whole world seems to be saying 'that is all' more and more ponderously, until even the heart in the body which lies in the sun on the beach says too, that is all. Fear no more, says the heart, committing its burden to some sea, which sighs collectively for all sorrows, and renews, begins, collects, lets fall. And the body alone listens to the passing bee; the wave breaking; the dog barking, far away barking and barking. (44-5)

In a remarkable way, the passage succeeds in embodying the very principles which the work has directed us to; through the medium of language, it begins to evoke a state to which, once achieved, language is all but irrelevant ... just as in the extract personal existence seems all but superfluous to the all-embracing collectivity of the sea. And so in the distance we hear again the strains of 'Fear no more', with its burden of death.

In such a context, a hundred or more pages of the novel, and all the social and geographical distance separating the two characters, count for nothing. Like Rachel in The Voyage Out, Septimus too feels himself 'floating on the top of the waves, while far away on shore he heard dogs barking and barking far away. Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more' (154). As we recognise, the images are somehow appropriated from Clarissa's separate meditation.

One more symbolic link between Septimus and Clarissa needs to be noted. This is that both Clarissa and Septimus must be thought of as artists.

We have seen already how the term may be applied to Clarissa. For Clarissa, her party is her personal work of art. But Septimus, too, is an artist. He too makes a 'form', one which corresponds to Clarissa's party, shortly before his suicide. He decorates Mrs Peters's hat for Rezia: 'Never had he done anything which made him feel so proud. It was so real, it was so substantial, Mrs Peters's hat' (159).

His sacrificial offering once made, Septimus climbs out on the windowsill of his Bloomsbury flat; finds 'the sun hot'; but presumably he has nothing further to fear from it. 'Only human beings?' he asks himself (165). This simple question can be read with several variations of meaning, all of them significant. He may be asking, for example: 'Is it only human beings who make so much commotion in the world, who have combined to drive me to this point?' But especially important is an alternative sense: 'Are we only human beings; are we limited to the facts of our individuality?'

Then he throws himself to his death on the area railings ('railings' which once obscured the ghost of his dead friend Evans) with the symbolic and ironic words 'I'll give it you!' (165). The words of this common threat open out to convey to us that Septimus - like the Christ-figure he is compared with on page 29 - has offered to Reality the ultimate possible gift. If Clarissa's party is her own 'gift', then Septimus's generosity is more total than hers: he offers up his self and

his personal existence in order to break through the 'railings' which divide human actuality from the alternative world of death.

At the party, Peter Walsh, watching Clarissa, is moved to think that she looks as if she must in a moment leave the world altogether; 'being on the very verge and rim of things, and take her leave' (191). She goes for a moment into the anteroom where she can be alone, and in fact her time there - in a way her Gethsemene - is so connected by imagery with Septimus's suicide that it forms the counterpart for this suicide in her own life. But Mrs Dalloway returns from the room, the Messiah-figure, Septimus, in a special way resurrected in her. Henceforth Mrs Dalloway and Septimus are indeed, as Virginia Woolf has told us, 'one and the same person' (Woolf 1928: vi).

Clarissa's moment in the room is sufficiently intricate and vital to the book to warrant examination by itself. First of all, she recalls the image of throwing a shilling into the Serpentine - recalling the widening ripples of individual consciousness in others - and she realizes that Septimus, too, had 'thrown it away':

> A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death.
>
> But this young man had killed himself - had he plunged holding his treasure? 'If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy', she had said to herself once, coming down, in white. (D: 202-3)

Corruption, lies and chatter: in terms of the values of this novel, these three amount to the same thing.

Like Richardson's Clarissa, Mrs Dalloway finds herself alone in a male-dominated external, conventional, 'public' environment. The counterpart of the brothel in her own life is the world of society and politics; her other self, Septimus, is 'raped' by that society, yet like herself and Richardson's heroine, somehow remains superior to it all; and thus gains the victory, because of what he retains morally. However, when Clarissa speaks of Septimus's 'treasure', it is surely the form, Mrs Peters's hat, she is referring to, the counterpart of the gift of the party in her own life:

> the words came back to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him - the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away while they went on living. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. But she must go back. She must find Sally and Peter. And she came in from the little room. (204-5)

She has not forgotten her task. She goes back now to 'assemble', to create. She goes back, too, to other people: Sally and Peter. But the walls between living and dead have grown thinner.

The dedicated reader of Virginia Woolf's work will be used by now to her habit of attaching special significance to the last words of her novels. We might of course have expected something like the final line presented here - 'For there she was' - in a novel given a personal title at the start like 'Mrs Dalloway'. In this case we might well have received it as the triumphant and appropriate conclusion to an accomplished

piece of character-drawing. Whereas Jacob in Jacob's Room was the missing centre of his own novel, represented at last only by his shoes, Clarissa Dalloway is firmly in place, or so we might judge.

We are now, of course, in a position to understand the line somewhat differently. The declaration 'For there she was' which closes the book, refers not to her portrait, but to her 'place', her position in her society, her social and personal environment and the conditions which surround her - and her importance for others. All of these have been detailed in the preceding pages of the novel: their combined force culminates in this final phrase.

But there is an irony. All those who have understood Virginia Woolf's points about the insufficiency of verbal signification and the instability of our ideas of the self will have realised that the line is a concealment. If it is meant to suggest that Mrs Dalloway is inseparable from her social role, then the words hide the truth. As such readers will by now readily have recognised, the declaration should properly read: 'For there she wasn't.'

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Chapter 7: FERNANDO PESSOA'S ENGLISH POEMS : THE POET AND HIS PERSONAE

Both T.S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf are sceptical, as we have seen, of the claims of individual identity. In both cases it is possible to relate this scepticism to the mystical leanings which are evident in their work, for the loss of the sense of self is one of the characteristics of mystical experience (see 'Introduction', section 2ff.).

A Modernist writer whose work is also profoundly orientated towards mysticism and who carries the dissolution of personal identity to unusual extremes in his verse is the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa. Although Pessoa is widely thought of in Portugal as that country's major modern poet, it might seem strange to include a chapter on his poetry in a thesis whose examples are mostly drawn from English literature.

However, Pessoa is an appropriate choice for a variety of reasons. Firstly, not even in Yeats's poetry is it possible to find so extensive a use of the idea of 'masks' or <u>personae</u>. Pessoa seems to have elaborated his own version of the concept quite independently of Yeats or Pound: his first exercises of the sort are his schoolboy poems written at the turn of the century. Since he is also an overtly mystical poet, fascinated by Rosicrucianism and the like, he provides an unusually marked instance of the connection between mysticism and the poet's self-dispersion into multiple poetic personalities.

Secondly, this thesis is being written in South Africa, and Pessoa offers me the opportunity to introduce at least one local connection with my main theme. For, although he was born in Portugal, he spent his childhood in Natal and completed his schooling there. This fact relates to my third reason to choosing Pessoa for my purpose: Pessoa did in fact write in English, as well as Portuguese. Indeed, all his earliest attempts at verse are in the English language, composed before he left South Africa for Lisbon in 1905.

Although in his late 'teens Pessoa defected to Europe and to the European sources of his culture, he continued all his brief life to write English verses, and the little he published in those years was predominantly in English. It is clear that in his circumscribed and self-defeatist lifetime Pessoa cherished the wilful dream of an international reputation, based on the other culture he had imbibed in the foster-country of his youth. Ironically, in view of this, his reputation rests entirely on his Portuguese poems, most of them unpublished before his premature death from hepatitis (or cirrhosis of the liver) and alcohol abuse in 1935. The English work, in contrast, rests largely unknown and unvisited in manuscript libraries; it will, however, be a principal focus in this chapter.

Although he barely stirred from Lisbon after 1905, the bulk of his work seems to specify no particular place or location (apart from Mensagem, the only complete book of Portuguese verse he published during his lifetime, which lauds the Portuguese sailor-explorers and the spirit that inspired

them; and there are also references to certain Portuguese historical figures who especially fascinated him). Though one does imagine Iberian equivalents for the rivers, valleys and flocks that figure in his works, the settings of these poems are most often really a landscape of the mind.

Some of the few references to events in a specific modern time and place that I can find appear in the early English verse. In a poem called 'Liberty', composed on the 20th June 1905, presumably in Durban, Pessoa writes:

> Ireland and the Transvaal, you are a shame
> On England and a blot! Oh, shall we see
> For ever crushed and held who should be free
> By human creatures without human name?[1]

Pessoa was seventeen at the time: strong feelings for a young man who could have claimed the immunity from concern his Portuguese birth and home entitled him to; and whose adopted culture was English-speaking. The day before, he had written, in a piece called 'To England (when English journalists joked at Russia's disasters"', the lines:

> ...Ill scorn becomes us, men of war and trick,
> When groaning nation poured her fullest might
> To take the freedom of a farmer race.

These poems are signed, one ought to point out, not by Pessoa, but by one Alexander Search. Whatever the historical Fernando's real feelings were on these matters - and there is no evidence to suggest that Search has failed to express them - he left for Lisbon two months later, never to return.

These strong anti-English views over the conflict between England and the Boers should be set against the enormous

influence that English literature had on the young Pessoa; of this there can be no doubt. Although as withdrawn, introverted and difficult to know at school as he was to be for the rest of his life - except with a few very close friends - at Durban High School Pessoa proved to be a rewarding pupil, with English as one of his best subjects. He won his form prize at least twice during his six years there; and in 1903, for the English essay he submitted as part of the entrance or Matriculation examination of the then University of the Cape of Good Hope, he was awarded the Queen Victoria Memorial Prize, out of a field of 899 candidates. This was the first time the prize had been given, and it consisted of a choice of books. The titles Pessoa selected are instructive about his literary tastes at this time; the complete works of Ben Jonson, Keats, Tennyson and Edgar Allen Poe, and Johnson's Lives of the Poets.

But it is a writer not mentioned in the sources - Browning - who must surely be looked to as an influence on the development of the heteronymic theory. One can envision an easy development from 'dramatic monologue' to complete heteronymic independence. It is important to realise that it was as a Durban schoolchild of fourteen or fifteen that Pessoa began writing his poems under assumed names, long before his contact with Futurism or the French Symbolists; and stories of his childhood mention invented playmates, endowed with characters and attitudes entirely of their own.

It is clear that the two most important early heteronyms, Alexander Search and Charles Robert Anon (the names have a

certain melodramatic flourish about them, reminiscent of Algernon Blackwood's 'Doctor John Silence') are already something more than mere noms-de-plume. Each is already distinguished by style and subject matter. To Anon are attributed, for example, many of the anti-religious poems that the always deeply mystical Pessoa was, paradoxically, then writing. Though Pessoa was to continue signing English poems with Search's name until well into the Portuguese period, these two early English-speaking heteronyms are by no means as carefully characterised as the later Portuguese figures Pessoa was to invent: nor are they given the same kinds of extended biography as are Caeiro, de Campos and Ricardo Reis, the most famous of his surrogates-to-be. Anon and Search are still covers for their author's stylistic experiments and imitations, rather than independent personalities in their own right. And yet it is curious how the import of their names, highlighting the aspects both of searching and of anonymity, have predictive value in relation to the later figures; it is as if their names represent the bare and opposing psychic forces which give birth to the more concrete personalities of the later time; just as Chronos and Chaos belong to a first generation from whom the Olympian gods arise; a little less elemental, more real.

There is something less than ingenuous then, in the unstated implication in Pessoa's account that the apparition of his four major heteronyms coincided with the discovery of the heteronymic approach; that Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, Alvaro de Campos (and Fernando Pessoa) all entered his

consciousness nearly at one blow, together with the poetic method that sanctioned their existence on this mortal plane. Pessoa's description of this - clearly apocalyptic - moment comes from late in his life (a letter dated January 13th 1935), more than twenty years after the event (cf. Griffin[2] 1971: 4). In about 1912, Pessoa recalls, he attempted some verses of a pagan kind and failed, yet retained 'a vague portrait' of the man - someone other than Pessoa himself - who had been at work on the lines: 'without my knowing, Ricardo Reis had been born' (Pessoa[3] 1971: 4).

Nearly two years later, as a joke to play on a friend, he tried to invent an unconventional kind of bucolic poet...

> On the day when I finally desisted - it was the 8th of March, 1914 - I went over to a high desk and, taking a sheet of paper, began to write, standing, as I always write when I can. And I wrote thirty-odd poems straight off, in a kind of ecstasy whose nature I cannot define. It was the triumphal day of my life, and I shall never be able to have another like it. I started with a title - 'The Keeper of the Sheep'. And what followed was the apparition of somebody in me, to whom I at once gave the name Alberto Caeiro. Forgive me the absurdity of the phrase; my master had appeared in me. This was the immediate sensation I had.
>
> (Pessoa 1971: 4-5)

At this comment hints, it is deeply significant that Caeiro was the first of the triumvirate of 'other' poets. The reasons for Caeiro's importance I will explain shortly; they do, I believe, reveal much about the sources of Pessoa's very individual inspiration. For the moment, it is worth noting that a kind of instant revulsion against his own violation by

the annunciating spirit intervened between Caeiro's birth and the arrival of the next of the brood:

> I immediately seized another sheet of paper and wrote, also straight off, the six poems that make up Fernando Pessoa's 'Chuva Obliqua'. Immediately and completely.... It was the return of Fernando Pessoa himself alone. Or better, it was the reaction of Fernando Pessoa against his own non-existence as Alberto Caeiro. (1971: 5)

This respite over, but with the initial stream of inspiration still in flood, the full form of Ricardo Reis came at last into view:

> I jerked the latent Ricardo Reis out of his false paganism, discovered his name, and adjusted him to himself, because at this stage I already saw him. And suddenly, in a derivation opposed to that of Ricardo Reis there arose in me impetuously a new individual. At one go, and on the typewriter, without interruption or correction, there arose the 'Triumphal Ode' of Alvaro de Campos - the Ode along with this name and the man along with the name he has. (Ibid.)

It is clear from what Pessoa is saying that none of these poets was ever a mere literary persona and nothing more: from the start they led a life apart from their literary creations and from their author; they were invested, almost spontaneously, with their own tastes, opinions, histories and eccentricities. Once given such frenetic life, they could hardly be further restrained by him: they began, almost immediately, to spar, to conflict, to interact:

> I graded their influences, recognised their friendships, heard, inside me, their discussions and divergencies of criteria, and in all this seemed to me that I, the creator, of it all, was the least thing there. It is as if it all happened independently of me. And it is as if it still happens like that... (Ibid.)

It is obvious that this coming-into being of the heteronyms made available to Pessoa abundant resources of new vitality. On one of their important gifts Jonathan Griffin comments:

> The emergence of the personae set him free. Free to develop divergent styles, as readers will quickly notice. Free to stay in Lisbon while Caeiro did his living in deep country for him, and Campos his travelling. Free, above all, to explore, to pursue with sincerity, different religions. What he wrote as Caeiro, Reis and Campos, as he explains in another letter (January 19th, 1935, to Armando Cortes Rodrigues), 'is written dramatically, but is sincere (in my grave sense of the word) like what King Lear says, who is not Shakespeare, but a creation of his....Into each of them I have put a profound concept of life, different in all three, but in all of them gravely alert to the mysterious importance of life.' (Griffin 1971: 6)

The mysterious importance and important mystery of life are always Pessoa's centre of focus. It is as if these objects were too imposing for Pessoa to confront as one person, too large for single human comprehension. To begin to encompass them he must needs diversify his resources.

One answer is to split and diversify into other selves. But these selves cannot, then, be parted from the truths they reveal: they and what they are, become part of the equation. If a person's 'truth' is determined by who they are, then this is also to say that the mystery of truth, of Reality, is bound up for the modern mind with the mystery of human identity.

2

The question of identity was of course not just Pessoa's own concern: it seems to have been one of the chosen centres of

attention for that critical, questioning, irreverent concentration of intelligence that was Modernism. The idea that each of us possesses a fixed identity only began to be seriously challenged, even as a literary strategy, at the end of the nineteenth century: a kind of foreshadowing of the threat to the whole Newtonian universe and its contents. In Britain it is with Oscar Wilde's essay 'The Truth of Masks' that the case is put; it is Wilde who ushers the subject into literature in its recognisably modern form. (Although Pater's Marius the Epicurean, even in its title, seems to herald much). Wilde was in many ways prophetic for British Modernism; Yeats's dispersion of himself into his 'masks', into his hero and fool, his Michael Robartes and Owen Aherne, must surely derive, although at several removes, from something in Wilde. It is not entirely dissimilar impulse which must have led Pound to call his early collection Personae. As we have seen, in his critical essays T.S. Eliot praises the impersonality of the artist, his continual extinction of himself in the service of the artistic tradition; personal identity, a passe romantic obsession, is subordinated to the demands of the individual work of art, or of Art as a suprapersonal entity in time.

What I have sketched in very fleetingly, above, are the major moments in the development of an important idea as it affected parts of English literature. It would be foolish to suggest that as a phenomenon it is always in some way implicated with mysticism. Many would be satisfied simply to group these doubts about identity along with all the

questionings of accepted certainties and absolutes that belong to the age of 'Relativity' and 'Uncertainty'. They are of a piece with the reaction against Victorian valorisation of 'great men' and their biographies, as in Carlyle; or the emphasis in the Victorian novel on 'character' as fixed and comprehensible. Nonetheless at least in Hesse, Rilke, Yeats, and, as we have seen, in Woolf and Eliot, these doubts about the dependability and givenness of human personality <u>are</u> indeed underpinned by mystical beliefs.

Pessoa probably did read Wilde; it would be surprising if he had not. But it is as a European, not an English writer, that we must initially see him. In Europe Wilde was also read. But other sources than Wilde are also indicated, and these must presumably have been equally or more important for European variants of the identity question or theme, of the sort we find in Gide, Hesse, Frisch, Rilke and Pirandello.

Virginia Woolf, another writer for whose art, as we have discovered, this topic is central, and who once spoke of this 'vast insanity of personal existence' (Woolf[4] 1953[b]: 57), identifies one of these sources[5]:

> People, like Arnold Bennett, say I can't create, or didn't in <u>Jacob's Room</u>, characters that survive. My answer is .... the old argument that character is dissipated into shreds now; the old post-Dostoievsky argument. (<u>AWD</u>: 57)

So we find Dostoievsky's influence also at work; the pessimism of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer may also be implicated. Whatever its origins, we can see how Pessoa's examination of the meaning of his own individuality through

the method of dispersing it among other and opposing selves, is a plan not out of accord with the spirit of literary Modernism. But few writers have taken the experiment so far.

F.E.G. Quintanilha[6] indeed identifies some nineteen different names used by Pessoa in his work at one time or another (Quintanilha 1973: xix). For Fernando Pessoa[7], the greatest writer is

> the one who gives away his affiliations the least and the one who will write in the greatest number of literary genres, making use of paradoxes and dissimilarities. No artist should have only one personality. On the contrary he should have several, each one from like states of mind which would discard the fiction that personality is one only and indivisible. (tr. Quintanilha 1973: xxiii)

Such conceptions, given direct expression by himself in his Trilogy of poets (Caeiro, Reis, de Campos), do, I think, bear out the identifications I have suggested with the thought of other Modernist writers. But such identifications in thought and aesthetic attitude only begin to unravel the problem of Pessoa. (How much cosmic laughter lies behind the fact that his name in Portuguese means 'person').

It is true that the mysterious complexity of human personality - the fact that being at all means being as something, and yet not necessarily one thing - is the subject of so may of the limpid and yet delphic poems, tightly rhymed, that have been given Pessoa's own name; many of the English poems too, touch on this theme. But the heteronyms seem to have freed themselves from this conflict at least on the surface.

For them, some of the contradictions and ambiguities of being a person - together with any conscientious reluctance to take up a position, or adopt a 'truth' - have been laid, with relief, aside. Pessoa sometimes portrays himself as a prince with an unknown quest; if his problem was anything like Hamlet's the heteronyms have freed him from it. By standing grandly aloof from contradiction, they have given him back the names of action.

A first impression might be that another feature, his intense mysticism, is also absent from the work of the heteronyms - though still found in the 'Fernando Pessoa' (and many of the English) poems; but rather, one should see mysticism as the main quality common to Pessoa and his surrogates. The difference is that they claim to discover, in their entirely different ways, the mystical in the actual (or in an attitude to the actual); in Pessoa it is discoverable principally in the vague adumbrations that reach this life from an alternative world. These are found especially in the borderland between two regions; somewhere between the intense complexity of the structure of the self and that other alternative world, the complex structure of the poem.

3

A comparable picture of the human self is, as we have seen, a feature of the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan. Although after the Oedipus event, the search for its identity will occupy the child throughout life, the quest for self is in truth a hopeless one. The goal of identity, can, in these

conditions, never be finally achieved: the search is never-ending, its object always elusive and ambiguous.

So it is that both language and identity stand between the child and the 'Real world' from which it emerged. We see how in Lacan's system identity and mysticism are linked. This is especially so if we interpret the mystical search for the Real as a desire for return to psychic origins. Only in a deconstruction of these primary entities, identity and language, can we hope for some distant approximation to a Real state of being.

In such a radical situation, Pessoa seems to be saying (though he would not have conceptualised it in exactly Lacan's way), let us dissipate identity again so far as we may; let us reconstitute the paradox of truth in terms of its binary oppositions. Let us divide ourselves according to the contradictions that sustain us. Such exercises, though provisional and limited, may offer us hope of glimpsing once again, somewhere between the terms of the exercise, the Reality, the mystic totality, from which we have strayed. The effect is rather like that of the ko-an offered by the Buddhist teacher as an aid to contemplation. Fernando Pessoa's division into his selves is, in its way, the sound of one hand clapping[1].

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[1] Indeed, a similar trope appears in a poem of 1916, 'Taedium Vitae', in which Pessoa imagines a woman playing a harp, and explains: 'Could I but kiss/The movement of your hands, without the hands themselves' (tr. Rickard 1971: 19).

As I have said, Pessoa may not have expressed the matter like this, but that his thoughts ran along some such lines is revealed in another remark attributed to de Campos:

> All true emotion is false at the intellectual level, because that isn't where it happens. All true emotion therefore has a false expression. Expressing oneself means saying what one doesn't feel. (tr. Rickard[8] 1971: 19)

In a note to be found amongst his English writings[2], Pessoa states: 'Sincerity is the one great artistic crime. Insincerity is the second greatest. The great artist should never have a really fundamental and sincere opinion about life. But that should give him the capacity ... to be absolutely sincere about anything for a certain length of time - that length of time, say, which is necessary for a poem to be conceived and written' (ibid.).

Does this not even sound like Wilde, like a Wildean epigram? For that writer, too, the truth was best expressed in terms of paradox. In 'The Decay of Lying' Wilde argues, in Niezschean fashion, that the only knowable truths are the pretend truths of art. Only in the fictional reality of art can one take one side of a paradox and affirm it with 'sincerity'.

Thus Pessoa's view is that the truly sincere - as opposed to the merely opinionated poet - is necessarily 'um fingidor': a faker, a mountebank. Only the fictional can be really true, since it alone does not confuse fact and truth. For anyone to

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[2] The title is rendered into Portuguese as Páginas intimas e de auto-interpretação. The quotation appears on p. 210.

suppose that mere 'facts' are the same as 'the Real' would be worse than paradoxical, it would be downright misleading. The poet's fabrications are truer than fact.

Then again, if paradoxes are the only possible verbal intimation of the true, then the sincere poet attempting to say something inevitably wrestles with paradox. It is not simply that paradoxes are to be brought openly into the substance of his poem. He himself - to be truly authentic - must lead his life as a living paradox, as disturbingly different from what he 'seems'. This is the main burden of the poem 'Autopsicografia', which I have translated below. It demonstrates all the play of paradox, the deceptive, almost child-like simplicity, the elusiveness, of the best Pessoa verse.

	AUTOPSYCHOGRAPHY
O poeta é um fingidor Finge tão completamente Que chega a fingir que é dor A dor que deveras sente.	The poet is a counterfeit; One whose feigning's so complete You will find he even feigns When pains he fakes are <u>real</u> pains.
E os que lêem o que escreve, Na dot lida sentem bem, Não as duas que ele teve, Mas só a que eles não têm.	Those who read the lines he's written, As they read, are sharply smitten Not by his doubly unreal cares, But by one which can't be theirs.
E assim nas calhas de roda Gira, a entreter a razão Esse comboio de corda Que se chama o caraçao[15]	And so it runs round its toy track Diverting sense, it doubles back Uncoiling the line a toy train charts; That wind-up clockwork called the heart.

(Pessoa[9] 1980: 237)

A poem illustrating the concern with identity to be found in the Pessoa poems is the beautiful and delphic 'Entre e Sono e o Sonho'. I have translated this too, below, to give some further sense of the Portuguese work:

Entre o sono e o sonho Entre mim e o que em mim E o quem eu me suponho, Corre um rio sem fim.	Between my sleep and deeper dream Me and the me I comprehend The future who, like whom I seem, Flows a river with no end.
Passou por outras margens, Diversas mas além, Naquelas várias viagens Que todo o rio tem.	It flowed past the land-margins Myriad but aloof That flank the thousand thoroughfares By which all rivers move.
Chegou onde hoje habito A casa que hogo sou. Passa, se eu me medito; Se desperto, passou.	My own abode, that's where it lapped: That vast bare house I am today. Slips past, if with myself I'm wrapped; If I awake, it's slipped away.
E quem me sinto e morre No que me liga a mim Dorme onde o rio corre- Esse rio sem fim.	He I think I am, have been; He who me to me mends - Sleep bends beneath the waving stream Of a river with no end.

(1980: 175)

In its density and elusiveness this poem is typical of its creator: it sees the mysteries of individual being depending finally on some purpose beyond the self. The image of the river implies a continuity of essence that underlies the personal variations that everyday demands impose on the

human personality. Something larger than self is there as an ultimate controlling presence, something from which personality nonetheless arises. In all this, the poet's conception of his own identity is the least valid of its many manifestations.

Not many of the English poems have the spareness and depth of the Portuguese. It is interesting for the translator to compare the effort above with a manuscript piece Pessoa himself wrote in English, coincidentally using some of the imagery and indeed some of the meaning of the Portuguese work. Appropriately, it is called 'Rivers'.

Many Rivers run
Down to many seas.
All my cares are one:
On what river of these
Could my heart have peace?

Two banks to each river.
None where I may stray
Hearing the rushes shiver
And seeing the river ever
Pass, yet seem to stay.

Maybe there is another
River, but far in Me.
There may I meet the Brother
Of my eternity
In what God will this be?[10]

In the English poem, the 'many rivers' are distinguished from the 'one river', which, when found by the poet, will reconcile him to his 'Brother', by which he appears to mean his missing 'self': all he is not, the other parts of himself. It is clear that there is a relation between the 'one river' of the English poem and the 'river without end', which is also the infinite source of personality, and personal being, in the

Portuguese. To distinguish oneself, to raise oneself out of the undifferentiated flow of the current, is clearly a painful exercise. It sets up a binary tension between the poet and all he leaves aside, for the moment, in order to be himself. He is lost, inevitably, in paradox, in order to survive under adult exingencies; but there is still the thanatos, the longing in him for ease from the tension of paradox, for return to the stream.

That the mystical 'one river' of the English poem may be identified with the so-called 'Real world' of Lacan (in other words with the experience of undifferentiated being that for the child precedes its acquisition of language and perception of difference) is revealed by another of the little-known English poems: one titled, significantly, 'Anamnesis'.

> Somewhere I shall never live
> A palace garden bowers
> Such beauty that dreams of it grieve.
>
> There, lining walks immemorial -
> Great antenatal flowers
> My lost life, before God, recall.
>
> There I was happy and the child
> That had cool shadows
> Wherein to feel sweetly exiled.
>
> They took all these true things away
> O my lost meadows!
> My childhood before Night and Day![11]

Hubert Jennings[12], relying on the dating (May 12th 1901) given in the Obra Poetica[13] collection (Pessoa 1965: 103), would place this, somewhat reluctantly, among the poet's first works (Jennings 1986: 33-4). Internally it is very unlike what Pessoa was producing at the time. Even Jennings is moved

to wonder 'how could a young boy, living in a largely philistine environment, get hold of this essentially learned word "anamnesis"?' (ibid.).

Indeed, I find the dating extremely doubtful: my own source is the manuscript (admittedly, typewritten) of The Mad Fiddler, most of the work for which was done in 1913. His acceptance of the dating leads Jennings into conjectural misinterpretations of the content: 'reflections by the young poet on his childhood in Lisbon' in combination with Platonic pre-existence. The one word that differs in the two versions - Jennings's has, awkwardly, 'soul' for 'God' in line 6 - serves to emphasise that these may well be inadequate renderings; unless 'soul' is meant as the equivalent of 'self'. We see how the introduction of the Lacanian model is not mere romancing, but can help to elucidate matters of provenance and interpretation.

4

Though the Portuguese poems of 'Pessoa himself' are sometimes more complicated of idea, more fragmented, more elusive, and more original in style, they share a great deal in common with many of the English poems in the matter of feeling. In particular, the dissatisfaction with the present, and a mystical yearning for other 'selves' and states of being.

Pessoa's poetry is not always, however, so overtly mystical; his 'other poets' seem in reaction against the other-worldly tendency in him, perhaps more than against any other of his traits; they all attempt to ground their

respective visions firmly in this present physical existence. In a subtle and perverse way, their work somehow remains mystical, for all that.

Despite Ricardo Reis's posture of enlightened detachment from the world, his air of watching the downgoings of cosmogonies, the falling-off of things, from the refined bulwark of his chiselled verse, and aesthetic, world-weary epicureanism ('Ah love, let us be untrue to one another', he might have said), there is in his conscious paganism more than a hint of Pessoa's longing for a prior, better place. This link between them is revealed by a comment on them both de Campos allows himself in his essay called Notes in Memory of My Master Caeiro:

> My master Caeiro was not a pagan; he was paganism. Ricardo Reis is a pagan. Antonio Mora is a pagan, I am a pagan. Fernando Pessoa himself would be a pagan if he was not so balled up inside himself.... (quoted Green[14] 1976: ii)

It is in the odd verse or line that the metaphysical drift of Reis's poetry surfaces: 'Let us use existence/As the place in the country which the gods concede us' he writes, for example (Griffin[15] 1971[b]: 17); and again: 'Christ is one god more,/Perhaps one who fell short' (1971[b]: 8). I quote two verses below from a work also presumably dedicated to Caeiro, this time by Reis, called 'Master, Serene' in Jonathan Griffin's translation (3-4).

> There are no sorrows
> Nor joys either
> In our life.
> Thoughtlessly wise,
> Not to live it.

....
Sunflowers ever
Enjoying the sun,
From life let's go
Tranquilly, not have
Even the remorse
Of having lived.

Alvaro de Campos rejects both Reis's pagan quietism and Pessoa's mysticism; instead he throws himself into a worship of the movement, noise, and orgiastic variety of the modern city. Physical reality is, with a vengence, the object of his venereation; his work is thus more than Pessoa's homage to Futurism. The sexual undertone to his frenzied enthusiasm, the sycophantic imitation of the city's most banal noises - and the masochistic desire for self-immolation amid metal, glass, concrete, noise and steam, of self-dispersal into the chaos and buzz that passes for life at an extreme - all these are to be found in the 'Triumphal Ode', written in the sprawling free verse that is characteristic of early de Campos. But his masochism is really, beneath it all, Pessoa's own: the masochism of the temporarily defeated mystic, forced to feel to the full the moment when his desires for transcendence can proceed no further, but are stopped by the immanent and all too imposing reality of the city's fabric.

I include a few lines of 'Triumphal Ode' (Ode Triunfal) below, in my translated version. The poem begins in adulation of a modern factory:

Bits of an Alexander of the fiftieth century,
Atoms that will go on to inflame the mind of
the Aeschylus of 10,000 A.D.
Run through these fan-belts and pistons and fly-wheels
Roaring, grating, scraping, thundering, ringing:

An excess of caresses to my body making just one caress
to my soul.

Ah, to express myself as utterly as engines can!
To be complete like a machine!
To be able to breast life triumphantly as the newest
model car!
Or at least, be able to penetrate myself physically with
all this,
To rip myself open, expand completely, acquiescent
utterly
To all the perfumes of oil and of heat and of coal
Of this stupendous flora: artificial, black and
insatiable![3]

It has always been asserted that Pessoa made no translations of his own Portuguese works in English. One of the most exciting discoveries I made when exploring the extensive manuscript collection of his work in the Lisbon National Library in 1982, was that translations which may well be by Pessoa himself do exist among the papers: all of them are of work by de Campos. Of particular interest is the one long poem: a shortened form of the famous Ode Maritima , a poem Roy Campbell[16] once called 'the loudest ever written' (Campbell 1957: 156). It is to harbours and ships what Ode Triunfal was to the city and noise. While the original did contain English, in the form of snatches of sea-shanties, our entirely English version, 'Naval Ode', does not continue so far. Nonetheless, it is especially intriguing to have one of the famous works in what is probably the author's own English form.

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[3] Dated 'London - June 1914'. Although Pessoa never visited England, de Campos studied in Glasgow. This poem, together with Opiário appeared in the first number of the magazine Orfeu in April 1915.

A further fascinating point is the fact that Campbell, in ignorance of the existence of an English version by the poet's hand, attempted a translation of a part of the Ode (1957: 158ff.). Although, in Campbell's own words, in its full version 'for a hundred pages it is a series of deafening foghorn blasts', the section he chose to translate by coincidence overlaps with the Pessoa fragment. The consequence is a situation perhaps unique in the history of letters, and a perfect battleground for controversialists over the matter of translation. Most inflammatory of all, it is undeniable that the Campbell version sometimes has the better poetry.

NAVAL ODE

Alone, on the deserted quay, this summer morning,
I look towards the bar, I look towards the Indefinite,
I look and find pleasure in seeing,
Little, black and clean, a steamer coming in.
It is very far yet, distinct and classic after its own fashion.
It leaves on the distant air behind it the vain curls of its smoke.
It is coming in, and morn comes with it, and on the river
Here, there, naval life awakes,
Sails arise, tugs advance,
Small boats just out from behind ships in the port.
There is a vague breeze.
But my soul is with the things that I see least,
With the in-coming steamer,
Because it is with Distance, with Morn,
With the naval meaning of this Hour,
With the painful softness that rises in me like a qualm,
Like a beginning of sea-sickness, but in my soul.

I look from afar at the steamer, with a great independence of mind
And a wheel begins to spin in me, very slowly.

The steamers that enter the bar in the morning,
Bring to my eyes with their coming
The glad and sad mystery of all who arrive and depart.
They bring memories of distant quays, and of other moments

Of another kind of the same mankind in other ports.
Every 'arrival', every departure of a ship,
Is - I feel it in me like my blood -
Unconsciously symbolic, terribly
Threatening metaphysical meanings
That startle in me the being I once was...

Ah, every quay is a regret made of stone!
And when the ship leaves the quay
And we note suddenly that a space is widening
Between the quay and the ship,
There comes to me, I know not why, a recent anguish,
A mist of feelings of sadness
That shines in the sun of my mossy anguishes
Like the first window the morning strikes on,
And clings round me like some one else's remembrance
Which is somehow mysteriously mine.

Ah, who knows,
If I did not leave long ago, before Myself,
A quay; if I did not depart, a ship in
The oblique sun of morning,
From another kind of port?
Who knows if I did not leave, before the hour
Of the exterior world as I see it
Dawned for me
A large quay full of few people,
Of a great half-awakened city,
Of a great city commercial, overgrown, apopletical,
As much as that can be outside Time and Space?

Ay, from a quay, from a quay,
The Absolute Quay on whose type, unconsciously imitated,
Insensibly evoked,
We men have built
Our quays in our harbours,
Our quays of actual stone overlooking true water,
Which, once built, suddenly show themselves to be
Real-Things, Thing-Spirits, Entities in Stone-Souls,
At certain moments of ours of root-sentiments
When it seems that a door is opened in the outer world
And, without anything changing,
Everything reveals itself to be different.

Ah, the Great Quay, whence we embarked in Ship-Nations!
The Great Father Quay, eternal and divine!
Of what port? Over what waters? And why do I think of this?
A Great Quay like all other quays, but the Only One.
Full, as they are, of murmurous silences in the fore-dawns
And budding with the dawns in a noise of cranes
And arrivals of goods-trains
And under the black, occasional light cloud
Of the Smoke of the chimneys of the near factories
Which clouds its ground, black with small shining coal,

As if it were the shadow of a cloud passing over dark water.

Ah, what essentiality of mystery and arrested senses
In a divine revealing ecstasy
At the hours coloured like silences and anguishes
Is the bridge between any quay and THE QUAY!

Quay blackly reflected in the still waters,
Bustle on board the ships,
Oh wandering and unstable Soul of the people who live in the ships,
Of the symbolic people who pass and for whom nothing lasts
For when the vessel returns to the port,
There is always some change on board!

Oh continual flights, goings, drunkenness of the Different!
Eternal soul of navigators and of navigations!
Hulls slowly reflected in the waters
When the ship leaves the port!
To float as soul of life, to depart as voice,
To live the moment tremulously on eternal waters!
To wake to more direct days than the days of Europe,
To see mysterious ports over the loneliness of the sea,
To double distant capes and see sudden great landscapes
Of unnumbered astonished slopes!

Ah, the distant beaches, the quays seen from afar,
And then the near beaches and the quays seen from near.
The mystery of each departure and of each arrival,
The painful instability and incomprehensibility
Of this impossible universe
At each naval hour ever more deeply felt right in my skin.
The absurd sob that our souls spill
Over the ever-different tracts of seas with islands afar,
Over the distant lines of the coasts we merely pass by,
Over the clear growing-clear of ports, with their houses and their people,
When the ship nears the land.

Ah, the freshness of the morns when we arrive,
And the paleness of the morns when we depart,
When our entrails are gripped up
And a vague sensation resembling a fear
- The ancestral fear of going away and leaving,
The mysterious ancestral terror of Arrivals and New Things -
Grips our skin and gives us qualms
And all our anguished body feels,
As if it were our Soul,
An unexplainable desire to feel this in some other way:
A regret at something,

A perturbation of tenderness towards what vague
fatherland?
What coast? what ship? what quay?
That thought sickens within us
And only a great vacuum remains in us,
A hollow satiety of naval minutes,
And a vague anxiety that would be weariness or pain
If it knew how to be that...

The summer morning is, nevertheless, slightly cool,
A slight night-dullness lies yet on the shaken air.
The wheel within me quickens its motion slightly.
And the steamer keeps on coming in, because surely it
must be coming in,
And not because I see it moving in its excessive
distance.

In my imagination it is already near and visible
In all the extent of the lines of its portholes,
And everything trembles in me, all my flesh and all my
skin,
On account of that creature that never arrives in any
ship
And whom I have come to await to-day on this quay,
through an oblique command.

Responding to my initial publication of this poem, Professor Tony Voss[17] points out that the landscape described resembles Durban far more closely than Lisbon (Voss 1991). If Durban is, indeed, the imaginary site of the Ode, then the lines which especially seem to hark back ('what vague fatherland?') to the 'Absolute Quay' of our earliest awareness, 'before the hour/Of the exterior world', have a special significance. Since Durban is Natal's main port-city, could it be, Voss asks, that Pessoa is influenced by the double meaning of the provincial name 'Natal'?

Campbell, another exile who hailed from Natal, may have responded unconsciously to the connection. I include below a short extract from Campbell's translation of the Portuguese version of the above lines. Comparison between the two

versions is a fascinating exercise, but I must leave those interested to look up the rest of the translation in Campbell's travel-book. His rendering begins at the start of our fourth verse-paragraph, and follows the text for a further forty-five lines.

> The whole quay is a memory in stone.
> And when the ship leaves it, and suddenly
> One sees the space widen
> Between the quay and the ship,
> I feel, I know not why, a recent anguish,
>
> A haze of mournful feeling,
> That shines in the sun of my grief
> Like the first pane on which the morning shimmers.
> It clothes me in the memory of another being
> Whose person was mysteriously mine.
>
> Who knows? Who knows if I have never
> Embarked, before myself, from such a quay?
> As a ship in the oblique rays of the morning sun, who knows
> If I have not sailed from a different kind of port?
> Who knows if I have not left (before the time
> Of this exterior world as I behold it
> Striping itself with colours for my sake)
> A great Quay filled with the fewness of the people
> Of as vast, as distended and apoplectic a city
> As can exist outside of Space and Time.

Campbell's wording slightly underplays the reference to a primal state of awareness in the final line above; Pessoa, on the other hand, imagines a city which is overgrown and commercial 'As much as that can be outside Time and Space': for the mental port-city he is building is not, finally, in time and space at all - even if it does seem paradoxically to have particular physical characteristics.

The second work under de Campos's name published alongside Ode Truinfal in the momentous first edition of Orfeu, in 1915, was Opiário, written in rhyming four-line

stanzas. A few manuscript verses of this poem (unrhymed) are extant in translated form. It is largely autobiographical (on de Campos's part), and the full poem expresses a kind of world-weary cynicism. Even the fragment we have in English conveys something of this, and could be allowed to stand by itself.

> Life tastes to me like golden tobacco.
> I have never done anything but smoke life.
>
> After all of what use was it to me to have
> Gone to the East and seen India and China?
> The earth is similar and little
> And there is only one way of living.
>
> I pretended to study engineering.
> I lived in Scotland, I visited Ireland.
> My heart is a poor grandmother who goes about
> Begging at the doors of Joy.
>
> I am unfortunate by primogeniture.
> The gypsies stole my luck.
> Perhaps I shall not even find near death
> A place to shelter me from my cold.
>
> And I was a child like other people.
> I was born in a Portuguese province,
> And I have met English people
> Who say I speak English perfectly.[4]

Despite the sprawl of de Campos's verse, his Portuguese work is by no means easy to render faithfully in English, especially when the translator lacks Pessoa's authority for the choice of the right word in the right order: hence the extreme interest of the surviving English pieces above. In addition to these 'translations' there are existing English poems which, while lacking de Campos's signature, bear the

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[4] MSS. 49B 1-19, National Library, Lisbon. Since both the de Campos MSS are in typewritten form (as are, indeed, many of the authenticated Pessoa MSS) their provenance is, hypothetically, not beyond dispute.

hallmarks of his style and could be attributed to him. The following, for example[18]; though it is perhaps to be exempted on account of its rhymes.

> Oh for a less meaningless horizon than the land and the sea!
> Oh for a rest from places and a lapse from the sense of times!
> Waves over waves, to and fro... Ever waves roll, and we
> What do we want, what do we seek, what do we pause for and flee?
> What in us lusts for more round us than the stretch of minutes and climes?
>
> Ah, and no bark to bear us towards 'the' Impossible, and that a real place,
> An attainable place, full of the depths and crests of the Unattainable!
> But ever the sea, and the sea runs a restless and half-hearted race
> Towards not the shore,. nor the land, but what? Who can measure or tell?
> No ship to bear us homeward, past earth and sea and the sky!
> None to spread sails to a breeze blowing but not with weather!
> And ever, like a lost meaning, the sea never passing by,
> Ever the measurable sea, sad as a formless cry,
> And the most hearts can be is to be two and sorrow together!
>
> To-morrow will tire us of all! But we lack heart to be tired indeed
> The purpose our souls came for is lost and never stared at...
> Let us at least by the shore construe our aches for a deed
> Into a meaningless ache and a desolate and purposeless greed...
> Become we one with the sea's lost purpose and dream and wish nothing but that ...

Here again it is to a kind of 'oceanic consciousness', to an ultimate, anterior Lacanian Reality, that the physical sea draws us. In this case it is the longed-for goal of the voyage as well as its beginning.

It is perhaps not so much a loss as it might be that there are no translations of Caeiro's poems by Pessoa's own hand. On the whole, Caeiro translates easily. This is fortunate since in many ways Caeiro is the most interesting of the heteronyms, largely because he provides the most compelling opposition to all that Pessoa himself is and thinks. It is no accident that both Reis and de Campos acknowledge Caeiro as their 'master', as we have seen: such is the monolithic simplicity and assurance of his poetic stance, he invites discipleship, or rejection utterly. Indifference to him is impossible.

He is the strong and simple - we imagine untutored - 'bucolic' poet who appeared to Pessoa on that fateful eighth of March 1914. His principal collection is entitled The Keeper of the Flocks; but, the first poem in the collection suggests that, whatever his occupation, his 'flock' is his 'thoughts'. His philosophy - on the face of it, strongly anti-metaphysical - may be summed up in his own approval of a few untypical lines of Wordsworth which de Campos once translated for him (cf. Rickard[19] 1971: 29):

> A primrose by the river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him
> And it was nothing more.[20]

This approach is in stark opposition to Pessoa's own. The poems by Pessoa himself show him very clearly to be a poet for whom effects are important: the whole poetic stock-in-trade of evocative technical mannerisms, of figures, tricks, poeticisms and word-play, are marshalled by him with deliberation of an almost over-conscious kind. This is, of

course, understandable in a situation where the poet is counterpoising the reality of everyday with the reality of the poem, as he is. In contrast, for Caeiro such poetry is based on a false metaphysic, on a failure of attention to what is. Our failure comes, in a sense, from our being human: from our attempt to humanise nature in philosophy and in poetry alike. By comparing them, by seeing them our way, we fail to see them as they are; and that is a kind of sickness - the sickness of the metaphysical - from which only the right kind of seeing can save us.

There is considerable similarity in aim, and some in method, between the poetic oeuvre of Alberto Caeiro and Ludwig Wittgenstein's Tracatus[21], both taking shape at roughly the same time. If the Tracatus has the aim of rendering philosophy unnecessary, then Caeiro's poetry aims at rendering poetry unnecessary: if it has any function, then it, too, is a kind of ladder to truth which can be kicked away when the novitiate has arrived...or perhaps we should say that this elimination of poetry would be Caeiro's achievement had Pessoa no other personae. It is the other, different, authors who keep Caeiro in being; who render him necessary.

Poem XX of The Keeper of the Flocks (tr. Rickard 1971: 125), for example, inveighs specifically against simile and comparison, ordinarily the poet's stock-in-trade:

> The Tagus is fairer than the river flowing through my village,
> But the Tagus isn't fairer than the river flowing through my village
> Because the Tagus isn't the river flowing through my village. (ll. 1-3)

Though to both men, to philosopher and to poet, 'the world is all that is the case', Wittgenstein's tone in the Tractatus is triumphant, confident, and even dogmatically insistent; Caeiro is pedagogic, too, but behind the assurance of his pronouncements lies a pervading sadness. It is sad that what appears is all - sad, because human beings are incurably Platonic in their outlook: they foolishly desire more. Their desire to find an underlying pattern is no more than a sign of man's misguided (to say 'tragic' is too portentous) nature.

True, Caeiro admits that he, too, is human: '. . . I lack the godlike simplicity/Of being nothing but my outward self', he says (1971: 125). But he justifies his human sadness by giving it an almost aesthetic dimension (I, ll. 14-18; tr. Green[22] 1971: 5):

> In my sadness there is calm
> Because it is both natural and right
> And is what there should be in the soul
> When it is thinking it exists
> And the hands are picking flowers, not noticing which.

For all this, he is entirely uncompromising in his rejection of metaphysical or poetic re-interpretations of the world. As regards poetry not only simile, but rhyme too, is rejected, as in Poem XIV (XIV, ll. 1-3; Green 1971: 12). Hence it is no accident that Caeiro's versification is among the freest employed by Pessoa's poets: excessive form is a falsification.

> I don't care about rhyme. One seldom finds
> Two trees alike, standing side by side.

Yet poetry is clearly necessary to Caeiro, perhaps surprisingly. He gives various justifications for this. For example, in Poem I (ll. 28-30; 1971: 5) he suggests that his poems have only a private importance:

> I have no ambitions or wants.
> To be a poet is no ambition of mine.
> It is my way of staying alone.

Later he sees poetry much more in the light of Wittgenstein's ladder, to be kicked away: an 'apprenticeship in unlearning'.

> POEM XXIV
>
> What we see of things, are the things.
> Why should we see one thing if another were there?
> Why should seeing and hearing, be deluding ourselves,
> If seeing and hearing are seeing and hearing?
>
> It is essential to be good at seeing,
> Good at seeing without always thinking,
> Able to see when one is seeing,
> And not think when one is seeing
> Not see when one is thinking.
>
> But that (poor us who carry our soul fully clothed).
> That demands a thorough course of study,
> An apprenticeship in unlearning
> And a sequestration into the liberty of that convent
> Of which the poets say that the stars are the eternal nuns
> And the flowers the passionate penitents of one sole day,
> But where in the end the stars are nothing but stars
> And the flowers nothing but flowers;
> This is why we call them stars and flowers.
> (1971: 13)

'Don't think, look' was Wittgenstein's maxim by the time he wrote the Philosophical Investigations[23]. Emotionally, at any rate, this continuing parallel with Caeiro points to a constant in Wittgenstein's attitudes, no matter how his doctrines changed over time.

Some of the poetic appeal of Wittgenstein's writing, especially in the delphic early work, lies in the way it uses a spare aphoristic style to alert the reader, through formulation and tight reformulation, to concepts for which there can be no one expression - to concepts which, when understood, dispense with the necessity for the expressions themselves. This mixture of elusiveness and clarity lies at the heart of the appeal of both philosopher and poet alike.

> To be fulfilled, existence is enough.
>
> I've written several poems.
> No doubt I shall write many more.
> Each of my poems says this,
> And all my poems are different,
> Because each thing that exists is one way of saying this.
> (tr. Rickard 1971: 139)

Ultimately, the positions of both philosopher and poet are untenable. Wittgenstein tried an alternative approach in Philosophical Investigations, contradicting some at least of the Tractatus conclusions. (In a sense, his two works were also in their way separate philosophical personae.) Alberto Caeiro, for all the homage paid to him as their 'master' by Reis and de Campos, cannot in the end dominate. The human need to pattern life is too insistent, too 'natural' to be unlearnt. In some sense trees do repeat, in order to be trees. Then again, even Caeiro's own poetic activity and desire - however reluctant he is - to communicate, bely their subject-matter. His verse does after all offer a pattern - even though it is a pattern of negation, one Pessoa himself ultimately found untenable: he attempted to invent the 'death' of Caeiro in 1920. However, the demise was evidently not

final: the fascination remained. According to J.C.R. Green, poetry Pessoa composed close to his own death 'can only be attributable to Caeiro' (Green 1971: 3).

The problem, the origin of Pessoa's uneasiness, lies then in the very absolutism that Caeiro's status as <u>persona</u> allows him. Even for Caeiro that absolutism is not perfect: often he worries that his own human vulnerability will let him down. Musing on the nature of beauty, Caeiro is driven to reject it as no more than a name for a non-existent entity 'which I give things in return for the pleasure they give me' (ll. 11-12; 1971: 15); nonetheless, his own seduction by the concept makes him aware of how much he, too, is dependent on 'the lies men tell' (XXVI, ll. 14-18; Rickard 1971: 129):

> Yes, even to me, who live just by living,
> Come all unseen the lies men tell
> When faced with things,
> When faced with things which simply exist,
> How hard it is to be oneself and see only what is there.

Not only hard, but impossible, in Caeiro's sense. And this is what Caeiro does not realise. Even 'flowers and rivers' (Poem XXXI) are known only as each of us individual human beings know them, and cannot be known otherwise. The 'truth' Caeiro so extols - what is really there - can be in reality neither part of, nor synonymous with, the common, objective world. That we never directly experience. (Even Wittgenstein's ideal objective forum, the public world of our shared language, is here suspect.) How distinguish a being like ourselves, whose whole mode of consciousness is interpretation, from the data such a being only knows through interpreting it? And

indeed, Caeiro cannot even refer us, properly speaking, to the so-called realities he wants us to look at. His poems use not the things themselves, but certain words, words like 'flowers' and 'rivers'. What these words convey, and what the human eye sees when it distinguishes rivers from flowers, is not the 'things in themselves' but entities roughly defined by human discourse. In other words, even the language Caeiro uses to make his points is part of the human act of interpretation, and ultimate Reality escapes it. This is the flaw in Caeiro's position, seductive though it is.

In the end, Caeiro's existence only serves to strengthen Pessoa's own poetic identity. Caeiro's failure to disperse mysticism affirms Pessoa as a mystic poet. We remember that mysticism returned upon Wittgenstein too, even in the Tractatus.

Caeiro is unrepentant. Yet there is something testy and defensive in his bluff dismissal below, his last words to be reported here. They are from Poem XXVIII, a comment on a specific unnamed 'mystic poet' (ll. 4-5; Green 1971: 16); it is Pessoa himself that Caeiro must surely have been reading:

> Mystic poets are sick philosophers,
> And philosophers are mad fools.

6

In spite of what I have said of the greater openness of some of the English work about the sources of Pessoa's mystical inspiration, it would not be fair to imply that readers might easily respond to the English work as a bolus with unmoderated

enthusiasm. Truth to tell, the standard of Pessoa's English poems varies enormously. It would be too easy to suggest that being cut off from the living language was detrimental to his ear as a poet; but certainly it is unfortunate that he was not more exposed to specifically English Modernism. Some interesting writing of his is marred until very late by the poeticisms and archaisms of the Romantic decline: it is as if Pessoa could not escape from what was considered poetic in his Durban schoolroom. The departure for Lisbon seems to have put an end for a time to the linguistic development of his poetry along the lines of a more modern natural diction; and one often yearns to translate not merely Pessoa's Portuguese, but also his English, into a more workable idiom, closer to that of his native poems.

Indeed, to take the liberty of erasing an archaic word or two, or correcting an intrusion, often unexpectedly brings to light an interesting result, reminiscent of the Portuguese work. This is an especially worthwhile exercise where modern and archaic registers are in conflict, or there have been misjudgments of idiom, as is too frequently the case. Pessoa, with his desire for flight from himself, is drawn to the artificial and the literary as yet another mask: and in English, where his ear for register is not perfect, the result is sometimes unhappy.

Perhaps the strangest of all his masks is his Shakespeare impersonation in the collection 35 Sonnets (1918), one of the few volumes to be published in his lifetime. In these he

imitates and exaggerates the convoluted literary 'figures' of the Elizabethan age, even to the point of parody. It is clearly the potential for masque and disguise, of concealment within these intricate Elizabethan mazes, that draws him there. But for an uncomfortable archaism or two, a very small handful of these sonnets come painfully close to the elusive, elliptical power of the Portuguese verse; the remainder are an exercise in the antique, no more.

And yet there are appealing moments even among Alexander Search's early poeticisations. Perhaps the best place for comparison is alongside early Yeats: as I have intimated, there are may affinities with that other poet of masks. 'The Giant's Reply', printed below, is a good example of this type.

THE GIANT'S REPLY[5]

I met a giant upon my way;
He looked more wise than Nature.
'Tell me some truth': so my tongue betrayed
My soul to that more than creature.
'There is but one', in an old voice strange
He cried: 'things are more, I say,
Than Time in which they seem to change
And than Space that seems more than they.'
A.S. 1908?

Another work which reminds strongly of Yeats is 'Epigram', below; it is likely that the Yeatsian echoes are a result of similar preoccupations, rather than a matter of direct influence, however.

'I love my dream', I said, a winter morn,
To the practical man, and he, in scorn
Replied: 'I am no slave of the Ideal,
But, as all men of sense, I love the Real.'
Poor fool, mistaking all that is and seems!

---

[5] Emendations: l. 3: 'thus my tongue did betray'

I love the real when I love my dreams.
A.S. 1909?

The later Lisbon period of his English work does produce one or two really fine poems - rather more than most critics have admitted. The two long erotic poems that saw publication, Antinous (1915) and Epithalamium (1913)[24], are, again, competent enough exercises in the Romantic antique, but are empty works apart from their lubricity. The best pieces still remain in manuscript; some of them hidden within The Mad Fiddler, a collection unsuccessfully offered to an English publisher. This is no case of publisher's short-sightedness; the rejection of the volume was just. But one or two of the poems are of the highest standard. 'Horizon II', printed below, probably for the first time, is very fine.

HORIZON II

Already the sea is a whitening line
Along my wish,
And the wind is coming shadowy and fine
With its eerie reach

To touch my common despair and pain,
My wonder and night,
The subtle sense of the coming rain
And my lost delight.

The missing reason for having love
Is quiet with these,
The secret vision, the shining grove
And the final trees.

1912-13

Perhaps the greatest single find of my time among the Pessoa manuscripts was the discovery that there had been a

remarkable resurgence of English writing close to the poet's death. Deciphering the hieroglyphic scrawl of these rapid jottings on scraps of paper was a painstaking process, but with a unique reward. From the near unintelligible lines and dots gradually took shape complete poems that had been read, in all likelihood, only by myself and Pessoa. It is rare that one can share, in even a proximate way, a jot of the emotion felt by the first scholar of the Codex Sinaiaticus or the Dead Sea Scrolls; even though this is to judge of the great by the comparatively limited.

Nonetheless, the poems that resulted were a surprise, not only to me, but to Portuguese scholars of Pessoa to whom I showed them. They are far from his greatest works, but they do have their special interest. Although there are hints of their style in earlier poems, they are unlike any other of his works. A very free versification which is also tightly rhymed, humorous in tone yet painful in feeling, these are love-poems with a difference. Their language is entirely modern; social, polite, wistful on the surface, their dancing lines chronicle sad, unresolved love-affairs in the offhand manner of a latter-day Laforgue. So uncharacteristic are they that the suggestion was made to me by one noted academic, Dr Yvette Centeno, that they must in fact be translations of unlocated works by a fellow-poet[6]. If they are translations, they must be extremely free: sometimes almost every other word rhymes, and one sees Pessoa trying alternative possibilities

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[6] She suggested Eliezer Kamenetzky as a candidate. If such poems exist, they are locked away in private manuscript stores (cf., however, Alma Errante [Preface by Pessoa] Lisbon, 1932).

in the margins. Occasional gaps are left, where inspiration fails. They are also rapidly written, which is untypical of translation; but then, Pessoa is a unique poet. If, on the other hand, Pessoa's own experience is implicated in these lines - and even if it is not - they justify by their very existence the precise sense of Stephen Gray's lines (in 'Fernando Pessoa'; Gray[25] 1976: 53):

> once the persona had gone/he cast a dozen
> others in his point of focus/the metaphysical
> the patriotic the sceptical/and always the lover.

At least some, perhaps all of these <u>personae</u> are visible in the English poetry.

The example below, untitled but marked 49 A7-11 in the National Library collection, is characteristic of the kind in question:

> Was it just a kiss?
> Was it more than this?
> Was he just too kind?
> Were you just too blind?
> Anyhow
> I want to know:
> I am not jealous
> No, I am just zealous
> That you should not fall.
> And I think I'll forgive,
> Oh, I'm sure I'll forgive
> If only you'll tell me all.
>
> Was it just a touch
> On your arm? Was it more?
> Was it just a kiss
> Or something more than this?
> Tell me, tell me, although
> It may pain me
> To know.
> Did you smile? Did you kiss? Did you fall?
> I really shall forgive,
> If only you'll tell me all.
>
> I know nothing about

What happened, but say
What happened. You may
Don't leave me in doubt.
The worst may make smart
Or break my heart,
But I shall have the better part,
I'll really forgive,
If only you'll tell me all.

28.4.1935

Interesting variant among Pessoa's many imaginary personae as this is, what really concerns us here is not social poetry, however elegant, but his mystical inspiration. As we have found, the English poems are, if anything, more open and direct about his mystical longings than the Portuguese. I shall close with two works which dramatise this preoccupation in different ways. The first, not really surprisingly, tells us that Fernando Pessoa, the poet of the multiple heteronyms, is not after all interested in 'things in their many selves/But the being there of things.' Interestingly, what begins as a love-poem rapidly moves on to a yearning for Being itself: for a Reality beyond the personal and contingent, by which even romance is overshadowed.

FLASHES OF MADNESS II

When you see me spend hours
Holding in a too-local glance
Your mouth or teeth, or your hand
And note how my soul devours
With a sleep-like trance
The commonest things that stand,

And ask me what in them I see
Since in to each my spirit delves
As if each had a mystery,
You err in your conjecturings,
For whatever obsesses me
Is not things in their many selves
But the being there of things.

1905?

The final poem is characteristic of Pessoa's nostalgia for the infinite, as it expresses itself in his English work. Here what we may understand as the pre-linguistic Real is figured as a 'home beyond the hills'; one whose memory etiolates and destroys the actual. Finally, as in the reversal of stanza three, it 'kills' even the hills which hide it from view. In Pessoa's eyes, linguistic actuality is drained of life by the greater presence it attempts to replace. Pessoa's window onto this Reality, once broken open, can never be satisfactorily mended.

THE BROKEN WINDOW

My heart is silent as a look.
There is a home beyond the hills.
My heart is silent as a look.
My home is there, beyond the hills.

I bear my heart like an old curse.
There is no reason for regret.
I bear my heart like an old curse.
Why should we reason or regret?

My heart dwells in me like a ghost.
Beyond the hills my hope lies dead.
My heart dwells in me like a ghost.
Beyond my hope the hills lie dead.

They took away my heart like weeds.
It was not true that I should live.
They took away my heart like weeds.
I could not think it true to live.

Now there are great stains in my heart.
They are like blood-stains on a floor.
Now there are great stains in my heart.
And my heart lies upon the floor.

The room is closed for ever now.
My heart is now buried alive.
My heart is closed for ever now.
The whole room is buried alive.

1912-23

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PART FOUR: HEAVEN AND HELL

Chapter 8: FANGS FOR THE MAMMARIES: MEMORY, DESIRE AND THE FEMININE IN DRACULA AND THE EDWARDIAN OCCULT TALE.

This chapter has two main aims in view: firstly, it sets out to understand some of the deeper motives behind fictions dealing with the horrific and the eerie. To do so it will enlist the help of contemporary psychoanalytic insights about what we normally see as outcast and repulsive. Secondly, it attempts to isolate a distinct moment and period in the evolution of the supernatural horror story, one which I choose to title 'Edwardian Occult Fantasy'.

I prefer the new term 'Occult Fantasy' to the more usual 'ghost story', 'supernatural tale', 'horror story', etc., for the following reasons. For a start, in practice most examples combine several of these kinds, and to treat them as distinct is quite artificial. Also, where we are mainly looking for psychological motives, it suits our purposes well enough to treat all varieties of the 'fiction of fright' as effectively one.

A more important consideration is that none of the traditional labels apply well to a work as strange as William Hope Hodgson's The House on the Borderland, or even to 'The Willows' by Algernon Blackwood: here it seems right to use a less confining term like Occult Fantasy, even if Blackwood and Hodgson too - in Carnacki the Ghost-finder and in his novella The Ghost Pirates - could sometimes write ghost stories of a recognisably traditional kind.

As a further factor, the term I have chosen highlights the link between these inquiries and the broader project of research into Fantasy at large. It helps to keep this fantasy element clearly in mind, especially when it comes to assessing the functions and purpose of such work.

Finally, as the description 'Edwardian' indicates, my principal quarry is the site of that extraordinary flowering of the ghost story and related forms which belongs to the turn of the twentieth century; although at first glance the 'Edwardian' label seems to disregard plain facts and dates, for stories with much the same characteristic qualities can arguably be found as early as the 1880's and as late as the Second World War. What justifies the label here, I feel, is that the two decades after 1890 saw the appearance of many classic models of the kind; and what came before and after can in a sense be taken as leading up to or else depending upon their achievement.

But perhaps what matters more is that the years of Edward's reign are those that almost all the writers concerned share in common, whether they were then at their prime or simply beginning their craft. And, as I shall argue, there is a particular potency and affinity between Occult Fantasy and the ethos, values, and contradictions of the brief age between Victoria's demise and the Great War - a link which I believe is worth emphasizing and exploring.

Because of popular myths which these works themselves helped to foster, their late-Victorian and Edwardian 'period' dress has become, over time, a positive advantage to them. The

Edwardian and late-Victorian gaslight world has become something like a "myth" in the Barthesian sense: a ready-charged ready-made catalyst to understanding and atmosphere, which now feeds back into and intensifies our reading of the very works which originally set the myth going. One of my first purposes will be to analyse the nature and contents of this period factor; but of course to their original readers the settings of these works were 'modern' and not period at all. Their quite self-consciously 'modern' and even 'local' element needs to be kept firmly in mind; in my view it offers one important point of difference between much Edwardian supernatural writing and the Gothic which preceded it. For the Gothic, in contrast, exotic settings and a mediaeval or at least antique atmosphere were prerequisites. Whereas after the 1890s horror came home to roost.

As will be seen, I concentrate here on exposition and analysis of short works, particularly short stories. Except in the case of that indispensable and seminal book, Bram Stoker's Dracula, nothing longer than novella-length will be discussed. The reason for this goes further than mere critical convenience. Despite the fact that some of the writers mentioned did also dabble in the novel, it seems to me that the short story is the generic form par excellence for the Edwardian tale of occult fantasy. It can be no accident that it is the preferred medium for the most famous work of the mature masters of the genre, such as Algernon Blackwood, M.R. James, and later, H.P. Lovecraft - who is both the direct heir of the writers mentioned and a transition figure between the

Edwardian and the contemporary horror tale. And the reason for this preference is, I suspect, that force, sharpness and point are the special virtues of the short-story form; hence its dramatic and its structural dimensions make it especially well-fitted to relay the 'supernatural visitation', which is also of brief and intense duration, or so tradition tells us.

Even the best longer works are essentially compilations of short individual experiences, even if these unfold to some unifying end. Dracula itself is obliged to remove its villain/hero from its foregound for four-fifths of its length; and this must surely be at least partly because the explosive intensity of the Count's malignant presence may be sustained only for short bursts of narrative.

In preferring the short story and novella, Edwardian Occult Fantasy contrasts with contemporary horror fiction, which is often very lengthy. This is one clue that a fundamental change has occurred in what interests contemporary twentieth-century readers in the supernatural, as I will argue shortly. However, historical divisions are not my main theme; they are important here only as far as they allow me to concentrate on the specific area which interests me most: the works which belong to the middle-ground between early and new, and which consequently are already, in some sense, 'literature'.

Admittedly, this is not a literature which everyone would accept by that name. But perhaps this state of affairs is as it should be. These tales are created, one might say, to speak from the margins; it is part of their nature to do so. To an

extent there are actual dangers - dangers of distortion and imbalance - in attempting to import them into the dignified mainstream of literary discussion, to a milieu which they have never courted: they are resisted there, and they themselves resist the importation.

Even in their own day, these classics of the horror and occult genres often presented themselves as marginal, by deliberate self-conscious choice. In the wider sense, they could be experimental and even transgressive. From the chosen standpoint of their supposedly lowbrow popular readership the authors of the best of these works could speak with the freedom of the marginal. But what they addressed was, of course, the traditional centre. Though they often took positions of deliberate opposition to orthodoxies, both cultural and social, it was the existence of that centre that gave them their being. So much so, that in the end the differences collapse; the kinds - and even the underlying attitudes - intermix, as we shall see.

So, since the occult tale was a curiously unappropriated - even intellectually disdained - area of literary culture, it could actually offer all the more freedom to the imagination of a certain kind of creative artist. In the event, it could even be the site of real (if sometimes unrecognised) innovation. Hence it seems no accident that important essays on literature by Barthes, Lacan and Derrida have chosen to centre themselves on stories by Edgar Allan Poe[1], who is a crucial transitional figure between Gothic and gaslight forms. Admittedly, Poe's status in France is different; there -

through Baudelaire's translations - he looks considerably more 'central' than he seems to us. Nonetheless, it is surely his reputation for deviant originality and daring innovation - and for a suspected 'marginal' stance towards moral issues - that are the prime source of his appeal to these equally innovative thinkers. 'Insidiously learned' was how Valery thought of Poe, and in France at least the judgment has stuck.

2

The vast territory of the supernatural story has few definitive maps. H.P. Lovecraft's essay 'Supernatural Horror in Literature'[2] remains the primary conspectus of the genre up to his time, but its nature is mainly evaluative (it is to Lovecraft's insight, incidentally, that we owe the survival of Hodgson and others. Lovecraft's assessments are generally to be trusted, especially his recognition of the pre-eminence of Blackwood).

Where there are so few guidelines available, I have preferred to follow a hint of Stephen King's[3] and to make a threefold division in the material: to distinguish the Romantic Gothic on the one hand from Edwardian Occult, and these from Contemporary Horror in turn. King has performed a notable service in identifying the characteristics of the present-day form, and in perceiving that there is a distinct divide between his own style of horror and its equivalent in the first half-century. Along the way, he manages to provide a useful diagnosis of the general ethos of contemporary culture.

In his view, what distinguishes the present-day resurgence of horrific fiction from its predecessor is that

> its trappings no longer symbolize sexual interests and fear of sex but interest in the self and fear of the self ... the rise of horror fiction and horror films in the seventies and early eighties and the rise of such things as Rolfing, primal screaming, and hot-tubbing run pretty much in tandem ... most of the really popular examples of the horror genre, from The Exorcist to Cronenberg's They Came from Within, are fine examples of the new American gothic, where we have, instead of a symbolic womb, a symbolic mirror. (316)

King sees the contemporary culture of secondary narcissism as the defining characteristic of our present times, where people who no longer feel responsible either for themselves or for the acts they perform turn obsessively inward only to confront a void: 'And in an American society that has become more and more entranced by the cult of me-ism, it should not be surprising that the horror genre has turned more and more to trying to show us a reflection we won't like - our own' (316).

As King indicates, the Edwardian equivalent to his own work was in contrast more concerned with trans-personal matters, relating primarily to sexual issues in the largest sense, and to the human relation to its unconscious. This is a hint to pursue in what follows; but it is still necessary to differentiate the Edwardian occult from the Gothic proper.

Certainly, in their reaction against aspects of modernity itself our Edwardian writers do betray their ancestry in the Gothic: Dracula's journey from Transylvania to London in a sense encapsulates a move from Gothic to a later model. For a

great deal had happened since Monk Lewis and even Mary Shelley (whose Frankenstein is itself sometimes thought to be offering a new model [cf. Jackson[4] 1981: 101]) to make the new work significantly different, by force of necessity. Its authors belonged to a world where science and materialism had triumphed to an extent even Shelley could not have anticipated. Consequently the battle they were waging against these forces was no longer romantic in essence, or not significantly. This is visible in their style, which can frequently tend towards the clinical, and substitute an odd kind of deliberate rigour for Shelleyan extravagance and rhetorical flights.

This tells us that the Edwardians had re-grouped, had taken the measure of science and assimilated its findings (items like Dr Seward's phonograph diary in Dracula show this appropriation; transfusion and the telegraph play as large a part in the evil Count's subjugation as do hypnotism and ESP). Almost paradoxically, in view of scientific advances, there is a much greater conviction of the real validity of the supernatural alternative: which is, in effect, a metonomy for 'all that escapes scientific explanation but is none the less real'. While the Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1882, hoped to investigate the occult with scientific methods, the view of these writers was that there was 'more in heaven and earth' than science could dream of. Perhaps demons of some unknown kind still existed after all, unheeded by Edwardian orthodoxy; the writers desired, at least, to keep the possibility open.

In consequence, their attack on the well-cushioned but still less than secure surfaces of Edwardian life was sharper and more focussed, more aggressive, adversarial and deliberate, than anything in the Gothic.

Van Helsing in Dracula[5] is both a medical doctor and a 'metaphysician'; with regard to the real existence of the supernatural phenomena which surround the Count he admits that 'at first I was sceptic' (1981: 250); but true rationality, he implies, consists in the unprejudiced 'open mind' (the 'all-believing open mind', as Mark M. Hennelly [1977: 16] aptly terms it[6]); earlier Van Helsing has hinted at the reconciliation between reason and faith that is demanded by the experiences he and his comrades undergo: 'I heard once of an American who so defined faith: "that faculty which enables us to believe things we know to be untrue". For one, I follow that man. He meant that we shall have an open mind ...' (1981: 202). In other words, what Van Helsing advocates in his broken English is a greater rationality than the rationalists themselves exercise, one which eventually incorporates faith too. 'A year ago which of us would have received such a possibility, in the midst of our scientific, sceptical, matter-of-fact nineteenth century?' Van Helsing inquires (252). The kind of nineteenth (and twentieth) century anatomized here is the real opponent in the novel, far more than the evil Count. In a way he actually represents what ought to be conserved.

> Do you not think that there are things which you cannot understand, and yet which are; that some people see things that others cannot? ... Ah, it is

> the fault of our science that it wants to explain all; and if it explain not, then it says there is nothing to explain. (200)

And Van Helsing's sentiments above are echoed in different words by many of the other authors whose works will be considered in the next chapter.

In her wide-ranging and pertinent book, The Erotic World of Faery[7], Maureen Duffy offers a useful encapsulation of some features of the spiritual temper of the times:

> That 'whole sensible appearance of things', which had caused the early Christian fathers such pangs in case it should keep men's minds from the supernatural with its strong magic, had so lost its power that twentieth-century man inverted the problem. Now it was the spell of the supernatural he hankered after to turn his mind from the dreariness of everyday, rushing even into the wholesale death of the First World War out of boredom and because his fantasy life had broken down in the endless labouring of industrial capitalism, backed by technology which ensured that he could go on working even when it grew dark, and all the year round, and that his life would conform as nearly as possible to that of the next man so that they could be satisfied in bulk. Monotheism had led to the monopolizing monolith of uniformity. The eccentricities of the Edwardian period are 'the iridescence of decay' before the wasteland. (294)

Strangely, the Edwardian fantasists saw themselves as ministering to revivification rather than to decay. Duffy's hint, however, at T.S. Eliot's coming indictment of society in his poem The Waste Land prompts a new question. The kind of popular writing we are talking of occupied much the same span of years as did the High Modernist movement of the early twentieth century. Could there be any relation at all between this neglected 'lowbrow' literary phonomenon and the elevated and exclusive world of literary Modernism?

In so far as Modernism was itself a reaction against surface realism and the representational in circumstances which were unpropitious there are certain obvious links to be drawn. But a few even closer parallels emerge. Though Eliot could, in the work mentioned, subject his clairvoyant Madam Sosostris to disdainful satire, and in 'The Dry Salvages' pour scorn upon the urge to 'converse with spirits ... Describe the horoscope, horuspicate or scry', or else to

> evoke
> Biography form the wrinkles of the palm
> And tragedy from fingers; release omens
> By sortilege, or tea leaves, riddle the inevitable
> With playing cards, or dissect
> The recurrent image into pre-conscious terrors -
> To explore the womb, or tomb, or dreams; all these are
> usual
> Pastimes and drugs, and features of the press;
> And always will be, some of them especially
> When there is distress of nations and perplexity
> (ll. 185-197)

yet his own decision to use the Tarot pack as an organisational device in The Waste Land is not merely satirical; the capacity of occult material to dredge up with itself a treasure of subconscious accretion and association is certainly of poetic value to Eliot. Yet beyond his formal experimentation lies Eliot's religious questings, and his interest in Buddhism and the Upanishads. It would probably be wrong to divorce these two sorts of experimentation and questing entirely; any more than in Yeats's case, where the remaking of his verse was accompanied by the development of his own brand of occultism and theosophy. If all the old faiths and certainties had been exploded, then all faiths and unfaiths were equal again. Implicitly, too, the authority of

the viewpoint of physical science was being challenged by the poets' views, as just another among faiths.

To this limited extent, then, the new fantasists shared in the common psychic and spiritual experimentalism. From Stoker and Stevenson onwards there is something genuinely disturbing about the vision of reality the best stories offer: a sense that Frankenstein's monster is already within the house, and disrupting the settled scene. As a number of very divergent recent studies of supernatural fiction[8] have, in their different ways, concluded, the remarkable openness in these tales towards some, perhaps undiscovered, 'occult' as a real option, has a near-theological quality. The revelations their writers hint at are thus perhaps, in the end, of a religious nature.

3

Julia Kristeva, the French psychoanalyst and theoretical critic, has defined the 'powers of horror'[9] in ways that are extremely suggestive for literary criticism, and her insights will be employed as my major model in what follows. This section will be given over, then, to as concise an account as I can manage of her views, difficult to summarize as they are.

Kristeva coins the word 'abjection' to specify her subject area. She means this term to include all that is normally repulsive, horrific, revolting, repellent ... even impure and dirty. (One might feel that 'the abhorrent' or 'the

objectionable' would have been better choices in English than 'the abject'; but Kristeva means to set up an opposition in kind between 'objects' - even those we object to - and the real subject of horror, which is the essentially unnamable.)

In short, what we truly find nauseating and terrifying is not any one 'thing' as such, but a dread possibility the objects which excite our disgust suggest to us. What causes our gorge to rise in the emotion of 'abjection' is always, in effect, '[w]hat does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite' (1982:4).

Were this everything that distressed us - the inability of the monstrous and the repugnant to fit our stereotypes and expectations - its effects would be managable: susceptible to a good talking-to with oneself, perhaps. The problem is, our encounter with what is intrinsically unreasonable and unclassifiable raises in us earlier and regressive fears which are much more difficult to control, since they threaten us and our being so completely. In a true case of the horrific, the upheaval actually challenges our whole rational ordering of the world, based as it is on words and hence classes of things. The abject does this by evoking primal infantile memories, memories of a time we were without the means of control that words provide.

> What is the demoniacal - an inescapable, repulsive, and yet nurtured abomination? The fantasy of an archaic force, on the near side of separation, unconscious, tempting us to the point of losing our differences, our speech, our life; to the point of aphasia, decay, opprobrium, and death? (107)

This confirms Stephen King's intuition that terror 'often arises from a pervasive sense of disestablishment; that things are in the unmaking' (King 1987: 22).

Accordingly, we would be right to see the chimerical monsters of Edwardian fiction as signs of horror specifically because they are essentially no one thing, and hence non-things, non-objects, no-natures. Hodgson's swine-creatures, Blackwood's willows, and even the man-bat Dracula himself - whose fangs hold in store the very threats Kristeva specifies above - all accord with this prescription. There is also Lovecraft's Cthulhu, where the very name seems designed to prevent its pronunciation as a regular word. Rosemary Jackson calls these Lovecraftian names, like Azathoth and Nyarlathotep, 'signifiers without an object' where the signifier 'begins to float free' (cf. Jackson 1981: 40).

But what is especially disturbing is the wave of archaic feeling these figures bring in their wake. Fear of everyday danger - of physical hurt or capture - there may be in plenty in these stories; but they only become truly horrific, can only induce a real feeling of the 'occult' and 'uncanny', when they are intermingled with that less explicable and more primary terror Kristeva speaks of (although all fear, according to her, retains shades of its deeper and earlier counterpart): 'the fear of which one can speak ... assumes all earlier alarms of archaic, non-representable fear. Spoken fear, hence subsequent to language and necessarily caught in the Oedipus structure, ... turns out to be a substitute for another ... that conglomerate of fear, deprivation and

nameless frustration, which, properly speaking belongs to the unnamable' (1982: 35). (One of Lovecraft's stories is actually titled 'The Unnamable' [Lovecraft, 1985: 226]; other titles, like 'The Nameless City' [129] or 'The Thing in the Moonlight' [417], seem to point directly to this failure of the possibility of description.)

Kristeva refers above to the central importance of the Oedipus structure, and hence to the moment when the child's world breaks from one in which self and other are merged and indistinguishable into the triad of self-mother-father. She suggests that part of what we fear - the dreadful hint in all these unnamable and repulsive non-objects - is our own being dissolved back beyond that point when our sense of <u>personal</u> identity originated. If verbal boundaries are helpless in the case of this particular repellent object that confronts us, may not our entire linguistic structure be untrustworthy? Hence the (animated?) corpse, or the death we fear in the horror story, represents just as much and more the obliteration of the self and language as it does physical extinction pure and simple. The former condition is perhaps even more intensely dreadful for us than the latter, because, in a sense, <u>we can remember it</u>; or, rather, we could, had we not repressed such knowledge. What gives rise to our 'occult' wave of anxiety is the dimly-grasped potential for failure of that repression:

> The abject shatters the wall of repression and its judgments. It takes the ego back to its source on the abominable limits from which, in order to be, the ego has broken away .... Abjection is a resurrection that has gone through death (of the

> ego). It is an alchemy that transforms the death drive into a start of life, of new signifiance. (1982: 15; 'signifiance' is Kristeva's term)

So, in a culture where religious law has collapsed and is unable to restrain us from the abhorrent plummet we anticipate, the artist, like Orpheus, makes the journey fictionally on our behalf (although in this case we ourselves are a Eurydice who fears to look back and must, subtly, be persuaded to do so):

> the aesthetic task - a descent into the foundations of the symbolic [i.e. verbal] construct - amounts to retracing the fragile limits of the speaking being, closest to its dawn, to the bottomless 'primacy' constituted by primal repression. Through the experience ... 'subject' and 'object' push each other away, confront each other, collapse and start again -inseparable, contaminated, condemned at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable: abject. Great modern literature unfolds over that terrain: Dostoevsky, Lautreamont .... (18)

We see how central and utterly implicated our sense of self-identity is for the whole experience of the horrific and repulsive, and how much more than mere hygiene is involved in our sensations of disgust and loathing. The real point is that the 'I' itself is menaced. As Kristeva insists, the 'abject has only one quality of the object - that of being opposed to I' (1). She means, of course, 'opposed' in two senses: both conceptually outside of and a threat to the identity. Waste, mucus, sputum, excreta, decay - or the fictive monstrous - whatever is rejected, addresses the indignant or nauseated 'self' directly, producing

> A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque

> and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A 'something' that I do not recognise as a thing .... On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. (2)

The characteristic psychosomatic reaction of vomiting is so clearly symbolic of these facts: it voids the very nutriment which should be incorporated into and contributing to the physical self, a part of 'me': 'I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish myself .... it is thus that they see that "I" am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death .... I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit' (3):

> refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being .... the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. It is no longer I who expel, 'I' is expelled .... How can I be without border? That elsewhere ... is now here, jetted, abjected, into 'my' world. Deprived of world, therefore, I fall in a faint. (4)

What Kristeva's vivid language and extreme instances inspire in us is the perception that, if the revulsion we feel comes like an intrusion from the Other into our being, then where the Other challenges us is through the dimension of our moral and aesthetic feelings - indeed, through that ambivalent mental region where the two are so mixed up together as to become conjoint. We say, for example, that we find this or that event tasteful or distasteful (indicating through the

reference to food and orality that something visceral, the body envelope itself, is at issue; however much our judgments may dress themselves up as pure, detached, aesthetic ones).

The Edwardian horror story begins its life during the period of the Aesthetic movement and the 'Decadence' at the end of the last century. The few comments above may help to explain why some of the Aesthetes themselves where drawn to the horror tale or else the horrific denouement (as in The Portrait of Dorian Gray and Salomé) - as were also in fact their contemporaries, the Naturalists; witness, for example, Zola's Nana. Since both Aesthetes and Naturalists believed in the separation of art and morality, their desire to affront us in that area where conscience and the sense of beauty and ugliness are mixed is perhaps intended to make us aware of our own foolishness in so confusing them.

The horror tale proper also plays on the paradoxical attractiveness of the repulsive. In the 'violent, dark revolts of being' produced by exposure to the horrifying there is also something compelling, forbidden, fascinating; 'just the same, that impetus, that spasm, that leap is drawn toward an elsewhere as tempting as it is condemned' (Kristeva 1982: 1). The effect of this 'rape-like intrusion from outside', arising 'from the source of all that is radically different', and which 'draws me toward the place where meaning collapses'(2), can be a troubling kind of attractiveness, once my disapproval has been overcome. (The protective sense of disapproval and disgust Kristeva ironically counts among the 'primers of ... culture' [2].)

Where the emotions of horror ultimately lead us can be, in fact, through a strange moral (or immoral) freedom towards a kind of jouissance, tinged with an antinomian 'sublime'. ('The abject is edged with the sublime', Kristeva tells us [11].) In terms of my general thesis, we are permitted to see this promised experience as inherently 'mystical'. Though Kristeva does not say so directly, this is what her words imply:

> the time of abjection is double: a time of oblivion and thunder, of veiled infinity and the moment when revelation bursts forth ... Jouissance, in short .... And, as in jouissance where the object of desire, known as object a (in Lacan's terminology), bursts with the shattered mirror where the ego gives up its image in order to contemplate itself in the Other, there is nothing either objective or objectal about the abject. It is simply a frontier, a forfeited gift that the Other, having become the alter ego, drops so that 'I' does not disappear in it but finds, in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence. (9)

Before I apply these Kristevan formulations of the horrific first to Bram Stoker's Dracula and later to other examples of Edwardian occult fiction, there are two consequences of Kristeva's argument that need to be considered.

The first is that the religious conception of sin (of 'evil', in other words) - she shows this through analysis of religious formulations down the centuries - derives much of its force from an appeal to intellectual dread of these 'archaic resonances that are culturally prior to sin' (18).

The threat here is one inevitably posed to all systems of law and verbally-encoded rules of religious conduct by the

mere existence of a forbidden primal region which passes beyond them and their devices of control. Evil, to the traditional ritualistic upholders of such 'masculine' and 'logocentric' ideas of religious life, has its true source here. Wrongdoing is identifed with any sort of real or imagined traffic with this proscribed dimension. And - what is particulary striking - this region is traditionally associated with 'the feminine'.

Because it was out of a union between self and mother that the individual being was first startled into existence - by, according to Freudian thought, the intrusion of the father and his rule - it is, in a sense, the feminine essence that lies on the other side of the Oedipal divide. Hence reabsorption by this powerful primitive female ethos is what the fragile individuality most fears, and castigates as 'evil' from the insecure redoubt of his acquired 'civilisation', his self-conferred 'purity'.

And here we have an explanation of one of the most regular features of the fictional genre I have chosen to examine, a feature that unites many otherwise diverse works and authors. The association between woman and evil is one of the most surprising atavisms that the Edwardian Occult Fantasy persists in clinging to. For it, 'woman' and 'the formless' are one.

Nor does this fiction ever escape the ambivalence of its stance - its peculiarly Edwardian stance, which returns us always to the well-padded and upholstered trappings of high Edwardian civilisation, its book-lined libraries and smoking-

rooms, its weighty and dignified prose. These tales reveal to us that beyond the security of those shelves, those ivied walls, that rounded and evocative English, the boundless feminine stalks and threatens. To the last, writers of occult fiction are uncertain whether they should exorcise the beast or open the sash windows and allow her in. But that would be submission to a kind of suicide, however languid and delicious the prospect might sometimes even come to seem.

Not simply suspect by her association with the mysteries of life and biological motherhood, her 'witch-like' link - to the popular view - with all that is intuitive, unstated, and wordless, the female is not forgiven for her original act of nurturing. 'The abject,' according to Kristeva, 'confronts us ... with our earliest attempts to release the hold of maternal entity even before ex-isting outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language ... a power as securing as it is stifling' (13). This drama is played out both in the prose style and the content of occult fiction.

It is clear by now that there is an unstated assumption behind all these comments: that, whatever else it is, the supernatural that occult fiction directs us to is also and always the human unconscious. This is not really to disparage these authors' ideas about possible supernatural forms of existence. It is just to say that no matter what 'other dimensions' there are, the unconscious is always deeply implicated in them.

The ghost story is both the oldest and the most widely circulated form of the occult story. It is uncertain just how

old it is in its oral form, but it probably goes back at least to the days of campfires and ancestor worship. Both Homer and The Epic of Gilgamesh include journeys to the underworld, the land of the dead. Few of the best examples of Edwardian Occult are ghost stories proper, but the spirit of this form continues to haunt the kinds derived from it. Even here extrapolation of Kristeva's model provides useful insights.

It is possible to interpet the ghost as simply the fading trace of an 'identity' once real and concrete. As something closer to the vacant abstract form of identity itself, the ghost thus passes symbolic comment on the selving process. He is like one of its spectral and discarded 'shadows ': the possibilities the emerging self throws off like skins in order to survive as a coherent being.

Perhaps in the end the ghost in fiction is really that of Barthes's deceased author, whose self-possession has itself become threatened in the face of his multiplication and dissolution through his characters and narrator. On the verge of the occult unknowable that threatens his being in the act of writing, he throws up this ghost as an illusory and fading index of his vanishing 'self'. The legend that Shakespeare performed the role of the ghost in Hamlet offers some support for this idea: after all, Shakespeare is a no less real father to Prince Hamlet than he was to Hamnet, his physical son. In a sense, he was Hamlet; but he could only be Hamlet at the cost of his own 'death' - the death of what it meant to be that 'open and free nature', the man Shakespeare.

If Hamlet is neither of the men his fathers were, then to some extent the power of 'the Name of the Father' collapses at the threshold of the play; and this may be Hamlet's true problem. By writing his own play - in imitation of his author/father - he can perhaps command, in fantasy, the names of action; but only at the cost of becoming there an absent presence, his own ghost.

What this tells us is that since the ghost hovers at the edge of an otherworld where signification collapses, perhaps its fate in fiction is always secretly to mark the place of its author's death - a death through the mystical immolation of writing. In this sense, all the ghosts of Hamlet senior are played by Shakespeare.

What Kristeva says of the borderline patient in analysis can be made to apply here to the author's haunting of his own work. She sees an

> ego, wounded to the point of annulment, barricaded and untouchable, [who] cowers somewhere, nowhere, at no other place than the one that cannot be found. Where objects are concerned he delegates phantoms, ghosts, 'false cards': a stream of spurious egos and for that very reason spurious objects, seeming egos that confront undesirable objects. (47)

This makes the doppelgänger the double of us all, and the Jungian 'shadow' not so much a pre-existent archetype as the echo of a stage in every human development.

When Jung[10] speaks of his Collective Unconscious, the terms he uses are surprisingly broad. We may if we prefer suppose him really to be speaking of the Occult Feminine, which is also, in quite another sense, 'before time'. It

> is a strange something that derives its existence from the hinterland of man's mind - that suggests the abyss of time separating us from the pre-human ages, or evokes a super-human world of contrasting light and darkness. It is a primordial experience which surpasses man's understanding and to which he is in danger of succumbing. The value and the force of the experience are given by its enormity. It arises from timeless depths; it is foreign and cold, many-sided, demonic and grotesque.
>
> (Jung, 1933: 180-181)

If at times I use Jungian suppositions and terms (such as 'the anima') in the analyses which follow, they must be understood as fitting more appropriately within the scheme of understanding which Kristeva has outlined for us. What Kristeva shows is that what is collective about the unconscious is established not by the prehistory of the race but by the traumatic archaeology of the individual mind. Its archetypes and shadows are themselves ghosts: ghosts projected forward into the imaginative life by the complex and awesome events that attended our coming into personality and into language.

4

When Jonathan Harker, now aware that he is effectively a prisoner in Count Dracula's castle, concludes a vital page of his diary just as the dawn breaks, he likens his compulsive nocturnal scribbling to the 'Arabian Nights' (where each new day is hostage to the past night's stories); or else, he adds, it is 'like the ghost of Hamlet's father' (Stoker 1981: 31), who must disappear as the new day arrives.

What is not said here is that writing, even more than garlic and the eucharistic host, is a kind of desperate talisman against the Count's evil influence (a Jungian would see the host as a symbol of the 'integrated self'; the negative effect of garlic on sexual interest is well known). Everyone in the story (except, significantly, the Count himself) indulges in a positive orgy of writing. There is no omniscient narrator, and consequently we only know of any character's sayings or doings through some text or document: his own or another's. The exemplary Mina Harker seems under a compulsion to turn every event - even Dr Seward's spoken phonographic record - into readable documentary evidence, aided by her skill on the still new-fangled typewriter. It is almost as if a law case is being assembled against the Vampire, with no piece of paper too insignificant to count for his conviction. Dracula seems to agree with his opponents' estimate, since he wastes valuable time in destroying a copy of their copious file - in the evident belief it is the only one. All this in spite of the fact that when, on the last page of the novel, Harker scans their assembled 'mass of typewriting', he knows 'We could hardly ask anyone, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story' (400). Van Helsing's enthusiastic riposte might seem a little belated, in the circumstances: 'We want no proofs! We ask none to believe us!'

The truth of the matter is that the writing is of therapeutic, rather than documentary, value: it serves to fix and make seemingly concrete in words realities which appear

too insubstantial and untrustworthy to be left as simple unrecorded happenings. Words themselves are treated here as 'proofs' of unlikely events, more telling than unwritten testimony, it seems. The 'night-time' setting of much of this activity (as of Dracula's own antics) shows that whatever this verbosity is meant to hold at bay belongs to that unspeakable world which lies below words and on the other side of sleep. And yet, paradoxically, words figure as an ultimately fragile recourse, unregarded and forgotten by the end.

Dracula's affinity with the doings of the night means that in daylight his abilities as a shape-shifter are lost. During these hours of full consciousness he is, like others, susceptible to the domination of the word and must retain whatever form - whatever identity - he has when the sun's rays light upon him.

> The sun that rose on our sorrow this morning guards us in its course. Until it sets to-night, that monster must retain whatever form he now has. He is confined within the limitations of his earthly envelope. He cannot melt into thin air nor disappear through cracks or chinks or crannies. If he go through a door, he must open the door like a mortal. And so we have this day to hunt out all his lairs and sterilise them. (309)

In his own chosen realm, the night, Dracula is free of limitations of personal identity, and can take what shape he will. This unusual liberty helps us to uncover the true location of his proper realm: before the onset of the Oedipus complex and the determination of the self through language.

As Rosemary Jackson points out:

> Dracula is a symbolic reversal of the Oedipal stage and of the subject's cultural formation in that stage. In relation to the theories of Lacan ... it could be claimed that the act of vampirism is the most violent and extreme attempt to negate, or reverse, the subject's insertion into the symbolic.
> (Jackson 1981: 120)

Like the Count himself, Transylvania is only directly present at the beginning and end of this novel, otherwise set in Britain. But in another sense it is present throughout. It represents the night-side, the foreign (Other) underside of London itself (cf. Hennelly: 14-15). That Transylvania is really identifiable with the unconscious and its powers is revealed by attention to the words of Van Helsing's description of it:

> The very place, where he have been alive, Un-Dead for all these centuries, is full of strangeness of the geologic and chemical world. There are deep caverns and fissures that reach none know whither. There have been volcanoes, some of whose openings still send out waters of strange properties, and gases that kill or make to vivify. (338)

Improbably, the passage echoes Jung's description of the Collective Unconscious quoted above. As the name (Demeter) of the ship which brings Dracula up from Transylvania to Whitby seems to signify, some emergent elements from this underworld of the unconscious may actually be of creative and therapeutic benefit; even a wary and temporary descent into this proscribed ('evil') territory might be 'vivifying', to a degree - productive of fertility, at least.

And yet the ship that takes the vampire away again from English shores has another name - it is named after the

monarch Catherine of Russia, a woman infamous in popular legend for her excessive sexual exploits. And, as George Stade notes in his introduction to the Bantam Classic edition, the 'prevailing emotion of the novel is a screaming horror of female sexuality' (Stoker 1982: viii). Not all is well in relations with the underworld, clearly. And of course Transylvania is also the province of that disturbing company, 'the Un-Dead', as Van Helsing calls them above.

The relation between sexuality and death in this novel is a complex one, and yet most central. Stephen King's account of the sexual ethos of the work sets things out vividly:

> Count Dracula (and the weird sisters as well) are apparently dead from the waist down; they make love with their mouths alone. The sexual basis of Dracula is an infantile oralism coupled with a strong interest in necrophilia ... It is also sex without responsibility ... This infantile, retentive attitude toward sex may be one reason why the vampire myth ... has always been so popular with adolescents still trying to come to grips with their own sexuality. The vampire appears to have found a short-cut through all the tribal mores of sex ... and he lives forever, to boot. (King 1987: 84-5)

What King's last comment, in particular, helps us to realise is that the vampire myth keys directly into the ancient superstition that death has power over us only after the advent of sexuality and procreation in our lives: that men, in particular, are 'immune' to death until they traffic with the things of the female (cf. Luke 20, 34: after the resurrection men and women 'do no longer marry because they can no longer die'). The influence of this prejudice (that untried male genitality is also immortality) may be shown by the hint of its presence in Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale

(I, ii, 64-86). Polixenes and Leontes view their boyhood friendship as preserved and preserving against the depredations of time and change - until the arrival of the feminine, in the person of Hermione, pollutes their innocence and gives the pair over to death. Indeed, Leontes' attempt to deny the force of the feminine and to freeze time - as would be the case in a way if Hermione's metaphoric 'petrification' into a statue were real rather than feigned - is an impossible and unhealthy longing, as the play demonstrates. In indulging at last his own feminine side (admitting to his guilt, loneliness and pity) Leontes accedes to the onward movement of time and season, procreation and death.

In Dracula's case, he too has dammed up time by avoiding procreative sex; hence he too belongs to the pre-genital, pre-Oedipal era of infantile sexuality. The 'woman' Dracula compulsively devours over and again is the sexual mother. Drinking out her powerful vital essence from the throat he wounds her in the fundamental region of speech; he prevents that dread act of <u>speaking</u> coming into being and so 'heads off' his own separation and independence from her. By so cheating adult sex and language, by 'getting the jump on them', Dracula also cheats death. Through his symbolic and repetitive violation of the incest taboo he enables his own perennial stasis on the far side of the Oedipal crisis. His retribution for guiltless incest is to remain forever outside the world of maturity, daylight and full rationality, lying prone in the effective cellar of the subconscious, housed in a symbolic coffin - which is also, of course, a womb. For indeed

the half-life he has chosen is a kind of death (though a 'living death'), proof against possibility and change.

Women are Dracula's predestined victims, not men. He punishes them for their female maternal power by a kind of contemptuous and compelling fang-rape: Dracula's bite removes them forcibly back to his world, the world before procreation, where continuity is ensured only through the child's oral grasp (here transferred from breast to neck, mammary to voice-box).

What Stoker, as opposed to Dracula, may be punishing women for (as we may easily deduce from his biography) is the threat of a - literally - devouring maternal sexual presence, which threatens to absorb her child's identity into her own without ever setting him free into productive adulthood. As revenge against her engulfing voracity Stoker opposes the compensating fantasy of a perennially devouring child, who assimilates and repudiates her power by a form of cannibalism. Significantly, as George Stade points out, many of Stoker's later books like Famous Impostors are about transvestitism; in Lady Athlyne (1908) one of his characters, a suicide, speculates upon the fact that '[a]ll men and all women ... have in themselves the cells of both sexes' (Stoker 1981: xiv). Nonetheless, in uniting evil and the feminine in an occult relation, Stoker is drawing upon psychic drives far larger and more universal than any of his merely personal history, as Kristeva has denonstrated for us.

If Stoker was himself a kind of Hamlet, then his real father (Abraham Stoker) was the mere 'ghost of himself',

playing a decidedly subordinate role in the face of the ravening feminine, represented by his wife, Bram's mother. In contrast, Dr Abraham Van Helsing, Dracula's intrepid opponent, represents (as Orson Welles claimed [cf. xii]) the 'good father', who perhaps never was. In compensation, Van Helsing is a fitting adversary of the female realm, even though he possesses the name that Abraham Stoker, senior, shared (Hamlet-like) with his writer son.

Van Helsing is all the more formidable for his sympathies with, and hence knowledge of, the feminine occult realm. But he is dedicated to crushing it out of existence, just the same. His pledge to free the world from the vampire curse inspires in his son-like disciple, Dr Seward, a telling prophecy, repeated below in the context of George Stade's judgments of it:

> 'Oh, unconscious cerebration!' says Dr Seward, 'you will have to give the wall [give way] to your conscious brother,' a sentiment that anticipates Freud's famous formula: 'Where id was, there shall ego be.' ... these sons of Hercules track Dracula and his consorts to their lairs and impale them like specimens. (Stoker 1982: x)

And yet the panacea chosen by such hardy disciples of reason and the Word is decapitation and a stake through the heart. So drastic a cauterization of the rational consciousness from its 'lower' sources can hardly be sympathised with. A far better solution would be a balance of head and heart; and there is considerable evidence that the novel is, in a subterranean way, aware of this; for Dracula has an intrinsic relation to the holy: 'this evil thing is

rooted deep in all good; in soil barren of holy memories it cannot rest' (254).

It may come as a surprise to hear that Dracula, who is such a modern byword for rampant masculine sexuality, is really inextricably tangled in his mother's apron-strings. But attention to the structure of the book surely shows that nothing else can be the case. The fact is that by far the bulk of the tale is given up to the exorcism of a woman, Lucy Westenra; and, as the chilling graveyard-scene before her second demise so vividly reveals, it is upon children and babies that Lucy preys, not adults. Her fiancé's often-quoted 'staking' of Lucy in her tomb which finally 'liberates' her spirit is almost universally accepted to be phallic in meaning:

> The thing in the coffin writhed; and a hideous, blood-curdling screech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions; the white teeth champed together till the lips were cut, and the mouth was smeared with a crimson foam. But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it. His face was set, and high duty seemed to shine through it .... (228)

Earlier, Stoker has even had 'sperm' from Van Helsing's candle falling upon Lucy's unopened coffin (207).

The sin which Lucy expiates here is evident in her first gossipy letters to her friend Mina: while she is everything a Victorian lady should be, Lucy displays a mild amount of 'feminine' coquetry when entertaining her three suitors, actually bemoaning the cruel necessity of limiting her choice

to only one of them. The exemplary Mina's fate is different, though she too suffers the Count's bite, presumably as a punishment for being female at all; but her saving grace is that she has 'a man's brain' (248) and 'a woman's heart' (this combination is evidently an antidote against the need for ritual beheading): she leads Van Helsing to rejoice 'that there are good women still left to make life happy'(194) - on male terms, presumably.

In spite of these male eulogies, Mina is still feminine, and confesses the dire truth: 'We women have something of the mother in us that makes us rise above smaller matters when the mother-spirit is invoked' (243). But Mina's mothering-instincts are not devouring or perverted, and the context actually sees her 'mothering' a grown man in distress: the American Quincey Morris, one of Lucy's former suitors ... and, in a way, 'replacing' Lucy's faulty mothering with good.

A few pages later she meets Dr Seward's prize patient in his lunatic asylum, the zoophage Renfield. Renfield's habit of gulping down insects and even birds in order to fill himself with life and immortality is a quite obvious symbol of the all-devouring orality and emotional cannibalism of the novel. In an odd sense Renfield is a kind of counter-mother; though we know nothing of his clinical past, it is as if he is compelled to outdo maternal emotional voracity with his own 'imitative' orgy of eating. He prepares for Mina's arrival in his cell in domestic style by offering to 'tidy up the place'. Dr Seward is surprised to find that his 'method of tidying was peculiar: he simply swallowed all the flies and spiders in the

boxes before I could stop him. It was quite evident that he feared, or was jealous of, some interference' (245). His fear, we may assume, derives from his knowledge that he is about to be visited by a woman. He automatically assumes she will be more omnivorous than he is; and is awed and humbled to discover that Mina's femaleness is not of the devouring kind. (Even without this incident the setting of much of the novel in Seward's asylum-home with its below-floors inmates is enough to alert us to the fact that the human psyche is the real subject of this work.)

Mina's ambivalent status and her suspicious femaleness are eventually of use to the allies: her capacity for ESP and telepathic contact with the Count is invoked by Van Helsing through hypnotic means.

Stoker's strange comments about Dracula's 'child-brain' have generally been taken by critics to indicate the man-bat's identification with the uncontrolled instincts; Daniel Pick[11] sees here evidence of the nineteenth-century post-Darwinian fear of 'degeneration' (Pick 1988). But I believe we should take Van Helsing's description almost literally: 'In some faculties of mind he has been, and is, almost a child; but he is growing ...' (320) says the good Doctor. The fact is that Dracula has by his own efforts escaped ever becoming adult, and so remains untormented by the unnecessary moral feelings adulthood demands. He manages this by his domination of the potential mothers of the world (even Lucy's progress he halts significantly just before she attains the genitality of marriage, in reminiscence of Coleridge's wedding-guest, barred

from the feast; The Ancient Mariner is, incidentally, quoted on p. 81). And now Dracula is growing in another sense altogether: his sphere is expanding and ravening beyond its rightful borders in an orgy of pre-verbal orality.

The excessive and stuffy self-congratulation of Van Helsing's jeer about this link between Dracula and childhood may really be a perverse sign of his sense of the vulnerability, the openness-to-threat, of the adult position:

> I have hope that our man-brains that have been of man so long and that have not lost the grace of God, will come higher than this child-brain that lie in his tomb for centuries, that grow not yet to our stature, and that do only work selfish and therefore small. (359)

What Van Helsing's broken language and his Dracula-like foreigness may give away is that some of his own power comes unrecognized from the same pre-verbal source.

The celebrated scene in which the vulnerable Jonathan Harker, alone in the Count's castle, encounters Dracula's three female accomplices, is only too frequently quoted as evidence for the disguised lubricity of the novel: especially the moment when the most seductive of the vampires 'went on her knees' (39) before him. While the presence of these three ladies is a key to the real dominant gender-orientation of things in the castle, the most telling detail in the scene is universally ignored. It comes when Dracula throws the three 'weird sisters' a wriggling bundle in order to distract them from Harker's person. The bait he has thrown them turns out (47) to be a newly stolen infant, on which they prepare to gorge. This moment identifies for us the true relation of

events: these horrific females that share Dracula's powers of insubstantiality are really inverted mothers who consume back into themselves not only the child's body, but its very identity; they cut it off forever before it has the chance of maturity, genitality, and speaking selfhood. The most obvious physical symptom of maturation is of course 'growing-up'; for his part, Dracula's blood-feasts lead him to grow younger - to approximate more and more in tendency the condition of the child.

So traumatic is Harker's exposure to this thwarting environment that after he escapes from the castle he goes through an extended period of enervation and effective silence; it is as if he forgets his adventure for a time. While this lasts, even his journal ceases to be an important source for the reader. It is as if he were reliving the trauma of primary repression, and experiencing physically the inadequacy of words in the face of what cannot be spoken.

An artistically subtle moment is the minor incident early in the story connected with the old man Mr Swales. In a sense the narrative-within-a-narrative he offers to Lucy and Mina in the Whitby graveyard anticipates and encapsulates many of the psychological themes we have uncovered. Certainly his interpolated story links together the now familiar elements of sonhood, motherhood, and unsanctified death. In convincingly-represented dialect Swales informs us that the legends on the tombstones, these apparently definitive 'texts', are not to be trusted; there is a 'deeper' reality that these symbols hide.

In the course of his story, he quaintly supposes the dead to carry their tombstones with them like references at the Day of Judgment; but these metonymic testimonials will do them no good, he says. For the symbol, the name, the word, is not the reality: interpretation is needed; and even then there is an 'underground' reality the verbal cannot convey. As an example, Swales turns to a grave whose headstone announces its erection by a 'sorrowing mother'in memory of a 'dearly-beloved son'. In reality the grave, though not actually untenanted like so many others here, is unsanctified: Swales tells a story of familial hate and suicide behind the polite appearances the stone keeps up. No wonder Dracula picks out this particular site, steeped in associations of premature death and unnatural mothering, as his favourite nocturnal abode when he first arrives in England!

Swales passes himself off as sceptical of the occult and the afterlife; on a later occasion he confesses movingly to Mina that in reality he is frightened of the meaning of death as it approaches, and that this is the source of his mockeries.

Swales's symbolism suggests that words themselves figure as lifeless tombstones above a reality they are powerless to describe; one which may even be empty. What Swales's previous story of the empty grave hints is that Death in this novel is habitually characterised by an absence, rather than a presence, in relation to its signifiers; and a presence - Count Dracula himself - where there should be an absence (although, as I have pointed out, it is significant that

Dracula's person should be largely missing from the novel which bears his name on the cover, like, of course, an epitaph). This is not simply because the novel is concerned with the conditions of a psychological 'living death', or that it dwells upon the strange 'eternal life' of fictional characters, as in a way it does. The vacancy mentioned is owing to the fact that the Count's physical appearance belies a 'missing self' which is its hidden reality.

The discovery that vampires can throw no images in mirrors is highly symbolic of this absence; Dracula and his cohorts remain on the far side of the Lacanian mirror-stage, and figure only imperfectly in the world of language. Tied to this, of course, is that larger absence from language which these shapes of imagination paradoxically incarnate: the Occult itself, which lies on the night-side of 'things'.

If Dracula himself is 'a present absence, an unreal substance' (Jackson: 118), then so is the land he comes from. Transylvania exists on the <u>borders</u> of what counts as Europe; even more, it is on the borders of the European consciousness. In a way the invasion of London by Transylvanian realities is a rebellion of the margins against the text, absence intermingling itself with presence - to reveal that what we took to be substantial was really streaked with unformed space, with unreality, all along. Finally, such revelations are simply the antinomian side of mysticism.

Hennelly claims that Dracula is in the tradition of the 'Archetypal Rebel' (1977: 23) of English literature, owning Milton's Satan, Manfred, Captain Ahab, and Heathcliff among

his ancestors. While this bears some truth, the fact that Dracula is irrevocably on the other side of an impassable divide - that his evil is 'irredeemable' - prevents him reaching tragic dimensions, of necessity. The catharsis he offers is of 'terror', but not of 'pity': he belongs to the worlds of nightmare and fantasy unmixed with dream. Though his identity is in a sense missing, this does not save him from one-dimensionality; indeed, it demands this condition of him.

The novel he belongs in, in contrast, rests on deep ambivalences - not all of them perhaps known to its creator. At the end we are unsure whether the child the Harkers produce (with Dracula's demise, we note, procreation is at last permitted) is meant to represent a product of opposing forces, as Hennelly (23) suggests - for, unspeakably, Dracula's blood still runs in Mina's veins; or else if the situation is as Carol Senf[12] avers:

> He is born on the anniversary of Dracula's death ... the Harker's son who is appropriately named for all the men who had participated in the conquest of Dracula. Individual sexual desire has apparently been so absolutely effaced that the narrator sees this child as a result of their social union rather than the product of the sexual union between one man and one woman. (Senf 1979: 169)

It is curious to think that Freud was laying the first foundations of his new science of psychoanalysis just as this novel was being written. His period in Paris with Charcot at the Sâlpetrière asylum was now well behind him, and he had largely given up the attempt to use hypnosis as a way of liberating repressed traumatic material. Hypnotism was the

first of the 'royal roads to the unconscious' taken by Freud, and it figures largely in this book. The nineteenth-century cult of mesmerism is supposed by Stephen King to be one of the imaginative models for Dracula's mysterious powers of domination (King 1987: 83). Mention of mesmerism makes room for a passing word here about George du Maurier's Trilby (1894): his impresario Svengali is also a kind of Dracula who uses hypnotism directly. By rendering Trilby as tractable and malleable as Dr Coppelius's doll, Svengali also exorcises the threatening feminine.

Sitting alone at night in his asylum Dr Seward muses about Renfield's case and confides to his diary some strange ambitions of his own about the study of mental phenomena, that 'most difficult and vital' aspect of science: 'Had I even the secret of one such mind - did I hold the key to the fancy of even one lunatic - I might advance my own branch of science to a pitch compared to which Burdon-Sanderson's physiology or Ferrier's brain-knowledge would be as nothing' (75). Unbeknown to Seward, in old Vienna (not too far from Transylvania) the advance he envisaged was in preparation as these very lines were being penned. It is hard not to suspect that his creator might have gleaned some faint foreknowledge of its import.

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Chapter 9: EDWARDIAN SUPERNATURAL AND OCCULT FANTASY: REANIMATIONS AND DISSECTIONS.

In our discussion of Dracula we discovered, with the help of Julia Kristeva, that the book's conception of evil may be psychologically identified with the pre-verbal 'feminine' region of the unconscious memory. The purpose of this chapter is to show that these same findings are as productive when selectively applied to the genre of Edwardian Occult fiction as a whole.

The most famous of Stoker's later novels is The Lair of the White Worm (1911)[1]. Enough has been said here to indicate how Lady Arabella in that work might signify as another monstrous representative of what Freudianism calls the 'phallic mother'. Her affinity is with snakes rather than, as Dracula, with bats; and beneath her stately home, 'Diana's Grove', a vast ancient worm (she is herself an incarnation of this serpent-dragon) lives in its womb-like cave and feeds upon her romantic conquests.

But by far the best of Stoker's work after Dracula is his posthumous collection of short stories Dracula's Guest (1914)[2]. Here too the same concerns emerge: with occult female propensities and with animal transformations. 'The Squaw' (Stoker 1966: 50-66) mentioned in this story's title plays, interestingly, no direct part in the narrative. The only reference to her is to a by-the-way anecdote told by a principal character, the hardy American Westerner Elias P. Hutcheson. He recollects the powers of implacable vengeance

once displayed by an Apache woman against a frontiersman who had killed her child. She tracked the culprit down and enacted horrible tortures upon him. Elias is reminded of this gruesome event while accompanying an English honeymoon couple around the antiquities of 'Nurnberg': he himself happens by chance to kill a kitten playing with its mother below the walls of The Burg. As it turns out, the mother-cat is invested with the same implacable and preternatural spirit of vengeance as the squaw. This is shown when Hutcheson steps experimentally inside a nasty device in the tower's torture-chamber (appropriately nicknamed the 'Iron Virgin': it is a large hinged cabinet set with spikes made in the 'crudely-shaped figure of a woman' [59], and ornamented with 'a rude resemblance of a woman's face' [60]). At the crucial moment the cat leaps and Hutcheson is fatally impaled inside.

The implication of the story is of course that the spirit of motherhood is preternaturally terrible and even animal in its extremes, capable of setting aside all the requirements of common morality. The lesson is an ominous one for the young couple, who are lightheartedly dallying with sex for the first time. On the whole though, the tone is both macabre and comic at once; there is some humorous byplay when the young lady, feeling faint, happens accidentally to sit upon a seat of nails!

As I have indicated, the association between femininity, evil, and the occult that we find so markedly in Stoker is by no means confined to his work, but is a fixed and steady feature of the genre - at least where male writers are concerned. In occult stories by Sherlock Holmes's inventor, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, there are interesting variations of the theme; and Doyle's craftsmanlike if mostly uninspired work is typical enough to allow us to make some remarks along the way about general stylistic features of the genre.

Doyle is, incidentally, the only consistent proponent of spiritualism as such among our writers. His support for the spiritualist cause is now mainly remembered through one instance of his credulousness, when he unwisely gave his support to a series of faked 'fairy' photographs. Perhaps his convictions actually inhibited his powers of free invention in this field, as Lovecraft (1987: 489) suspects of occult believers in general.

While numbers of his occult fictions[3], like 'The Leather Funnel' and 'John Barrington Cowles', have to do with the daemonic woman (the last-named is an especially revealing example of the type), Doyle's most successful story in this vein is probably 'The Captain of the Polestar' (Doyle 1979: 15-42). The value of there being two medical doctors and a lawyer among the main protagonists of Dracula has already been explained: they are representatives of the masculine-rational type. The prominent use of such sober figures is not peculiar to Stoker and Dracula, however; as it happens, doctors, scholars and scientists are widely popular as narrators or

protagonists. This is informative in itself; it shows us that, of all the forms of fantasy, the supernatural tale is under the greatest obligations of apparent realism. Paradoxically, readers of occult stories must be all the more assured of the credibility and authenticity of the world presented. To place characters of impeccable credentials in the principal experiencing or judging roles is an obvious aid to preserving a realistic atmosphere.

That this form of fiction makes stock use of the respect afforded scientists in our culture is somewhat ironic; for their discipline is often the chosen enemy in these tales. The scientific outlook is opposed as the greatest hindrance to an open-minded awareness of the occult (and a useful symbol of those logocentric mental habits which ignore unseen - or unspoken - realities). Invariably the sceptical man of science is gradually convinced as the narrative unfolds - against his better judgment. Dr Seward is a high example of the type.

Doyle's advantage here is that he himself was an ex-doctor, and experienced the transition in his own person. This gives him a special authority in the fictional portrayal of this process of awakening. John McAlister Ray, the participating narrator of the Polestar story, is a ship's doctor on a whaler, as Doyle had once been. He is also highly sceptical at first; his scientific habits are shown in his meticulous recording of facts in his personal log, which happens to be our source, too: he prefaces all entries with precise times and positions of longitude and latitude.

All this is part of what Barthes would have termed the 'code' of the dependable and the objective, the documentary or 'scientific code'[4]; we find its almost absurd proliferation in the case of Dracula, which is entirely a compilation of notes, entries, bills and letters. But the truly interesting thing, as Barthes himself was quick to point out, is the actual helplessness of these spurious codes: they are of course part of a work of 'fiction', and so can never be absolutely believed in. Were we literally to credit the fiction, we would be 'mutilating the real of its symbolic supplement' (Barthes 1988: 179), and so ignoring the verbal construction of reality; a mistake which 'involves refusing the other scene, that of the unconscious'.

What Barthes seems to me to be suggesting is that these codes act not to convince as such: they are more like a ritual, which induces a kind of voluntary hypnotic trance in the reader, reminiscent of Dracula's or Van Helsing's more engulfing mesmerism. Their (conventional) presence is like the one or two words the hypnotist may use on a hardened subject to invoke in him - in this case - the 'fictional disposition', the temporary and imagined condition of belief.

Be this as it may, everything about the tone of Doyle's narrator betrays Scottish canniness and practicality - qualities which are on the face of it entirely at odds with the mounting supernatural atmosphere of the story. His journal entries play down the increasing danger to the ship and its crew posed by its remaining so late in arctic waters, long after the ice has begun to build. Only the occasional terse

aside serves to enlighten us: 'No whaler has ever remained in these latitudes till so advanced a period of the year' (Doyle 1979: 16).

Every day we note in the log the dissipating or encroaching state of the ice-banks, dependent on the weather. There is a real threat of the vessel being ice-bound forever in this spot: the source of the terrible risk is the apparently arbitrary will of the ship's master, Captain Craigie. This strange man is impulsive, fiery, and unpredictable: a typical 'other' character, though sharing more of Van Helsing's human canniness than Dracula's uncanny. In other words, although a Scot like Ray, he is more vulnerable to his lower emotional nature; though Ray, we learn, is no complete iceblock himself: he has a fiancee waiting for him back in Scotland.

Here we see a notable example of a recurrent feature of the genre: the settings of these tales are almost invariably isolated, removed from the ordinary everyday world of humans; and especially from their speech, the clichés and reiterations of which help to maintain the customary realities. This is the point, of course: the topography both symbolizes and helps to induce the 'altered states of mind' which are conducive to occult experience. Strangeness and foreigness are always the keynote, however presented. Transylvania or Poe's mid-European settings remove us from the familiar; the arctic wastes of Frankenstein's conclusion are a more extreme case. This frozen and tortured white expanse is a landscape devoid of life and

colour; and nothing could more repel the sense of the human than its corpse-like cold.

Secondly, in the relations of Ray and Craigie we meet a common phenomenon - the 'bifurcation' of the experiencing centre of the story into two figures: sceptic and convert, novice and initiate, dullard and 'sensitive'. It turns out that the plain Doctor and the Captain with the mysterious past are closer than they first knew, for Craigie too has been engaged to be married; but his fiancée has died in some accident. Ray happens by chance to catch sight of the woman's portrait:

> No artist could have evolved from his own mind such a curious mixture of character and weakness. The languid, dreamy eyes, with their drooping lashes, and the broad, low brow, unruffled by thought or care, were in strong contrast with the clean-cut, prominent jaw, and the resolute set of the lower lip .... That anyone in the short space of nineteen years of existence could develop such strength of will as was stamped upon her face seemed to me at the time to be well-nigh incredible. She must have been an extraordinary woman. (30)

The shock of this impression is an essential ingredient in what follows. We need to remember that the world of the ship is essentially a male one; and the quality of this intrusive female element is emphasized the more in consequence. The portrait displays a mixture of sensuality, indomitable will and lack of relective faculties which is disturbing in its own right.

Meanwhile, as if its physical dangers were not tension enough, the superstitious crew reports an outbreak of supernatural phenomena around the ship. This meets with the

doctor's scorn: 'I sometimes think that I am the only really sane man aboard the vessel' (33). The manifestation takes the form at first of an odd non-verbal vocalisation: 'plaintive cries and screams in the wake of the ship, as if something were following it and were unable to overtake it' (20). It can sound human ('sometimes like a bairn crying and sometimes like a wench in pain' [21]) and also animal: 'like a bit lambie that hae lost its mither' (32).

Inevitably Ray himself at last hears the horrific sound. At moments like these the device of the journal becomes most effective, enabling the narration to skip over intervening time and so directly contrast moods and states of mind - to shocking effect, as upheavals occur. The preternatural and impossible quality of the sound is emphasized: 'beginning, as it seemed to me, at a note such as prima donna never reached, and mounting from that ever higher and higher until it culminated in a long wail of agony' (34). And yet, in the midst of pain, even more unnervingly, 'there was an occasional wild note of exultation'. The hint of an irrational and animal-like predatory force is unmistakable.

Ray has reached the moment of his own crisis and consequent recantation:

> The fact is, that I have gone through a very strange experience, and am beginning to doubt whether I was justified in branding everyone on board as madmen because they professed to have seen things which did not seem reasonable to my understanding .... I have experienced that which I used formerly to scoff at.
> (33)

Visual sightings of the paranormal entity follow. It appears to a crewman as 'a sort of white figure moving across the icefield in the same direction that we had heard the cries' (21). Tantalisingly, this figure has all the lineaments of the unnamable - it defies verbal classification altogether: 'I don't know what it was. It wasn't a bear, anyway. It was tall and white and straight, and if it wasn't a man nor a woman, I'll stake my davy it was something worse'.

The elemental and primitive force which dogs the ship is of course meant to be the psychic residue - it is hard to call it more than that - of the Captain's former sweetheart. Craigie alone seems to recognise the fiancée he knew in this 'dim nebulous body, devoid of shape, sometimes more, sometimes less apparent, as the light fell on it' (39). At last he leaves the ship in its pursuit, and is found white and dead by the search-party on a narrow spit of the vast ice-floe. Over his form hovers momentarily a 'vortex' of 'tiny flakes' (a chance uniting of physical nature and spirit, we wonder?) which looks, for some of the crew, like the departing woman.

The tale comes back to the everyday with a final documentary flourish: an appended testimonial from McAlister Ray's father, attesting to the honesty and reliability of his son's account.

Doyle has found a (literally) chilling medium for the evocation of the occult-feminine and its association with death (of the self) in this white waste of nothingness. But Captain Craigie - as Ray's less controlled alter ego - acts as a kind of propitiatory sacrifice to this half-inhuman or pre-

human 'natural' force. The ice melts and the ship returns home to prosaic normality.

With Doyle even more than with Stoker, or with Stevenson too, one is made aware of the force of Stephen King's insistence upon horror story as being, when all is said and done, on the side of 're-integration' (King 1987: 28) and the status quo, despite its extensive flirtations with their opposite: 'We love and need the concept of monstrosity because it is a reaffirmation of the order we all crave as human beings' (55). Nonetheless, one sign of greatness in an occult writer is perhaps the courage to problematise reality without any compensating reassurance at the close. Of all our authors, it is only Blackwood who is prepared to risk such final ambivalence - and even then, usually by offering half-explanations, or two or more contradictory explanations, for the same occult phenomenon. We may take up the fragment of understanding he offers or disdain it if we can.

In the example above the occult is both feminine and animal; sometimes it is animal alone, but always the 'monster' indicates the archaic and pre-verbal reaches of the human personality. In other stories the occult atmosphere - really an intimation of our own personal psychological 'pre-history' - is displaced onto the fact of antiquity alone ... as in those tales which have to do with ancient relics or Egyptian remains, or with other forms of the return of the ancient past, as in for example Doyle's 'Lot No. 249'.

A story, partly comic in tone, which combines the Egyptian and the feminine elements, is found in the same

author's 'The Ring of Thoth' (1979: 202-222). The story contains its own internal narrative, the story of Sosra, an ancient Egyptian priest who has found through chemical experimentation the secret of (like Dracula) living forever. He takes the elixir, but his beloved dies before she is made immune to death. A rival priest discovers an antidote to the elixir, but hides it maliciously in a ring on the woman Atma's body before embalmment. Desiring to join her in death, Sosra spends millennia searching for the mummy of his former love, uncovering it at last in the Louvre collection. There he is momentarily interrupted by a young archaeologist, who hears his tale.

The story has a number of morals. Sosra belittles modern Egyptology for failing to understand that it was the occult mystic and hermetic philosophy of Egypt that was the true centre of its life; and as a kind of scientist himself, he too has suffered for insensitive curiosity about 'the workings of Nature' (213). Once again, we encounter the theme of the insufficiency of merely rational knowledge.

More important symbolically is Sosra's story and its details. Jungian interpretation would have no difficulty in finding in the museum a representation of the Collective Unconscious, in Atma the personification of Sosra's neglected Anima, and in her restorative ring an emblem of the healed and 'integrated self' which is desired - all of this being an object lesson to the overdeveloped intellectuality of the restless scholar who hears the tale. Such an account has its force; but the problem lies in the fact that the reward of the

ring is death. What is initially denied and then achieved through the ring is really the realm of the occult-feminine which is indistinguishable from death of the self. Only with the poison antidote within the gem will Sosra return to the now 'deeply buried' world, obliterated by the sands of time, from which he came. He is enabled thus to move from a 'living death' the opposite of Dracula's, one cut off from this Other dimension, to a true completion of life in death.

3

Even among our self-consciously 'marginal' authors, perhaps no reputation has suffered so much from time as that of Arthur Machen. When Martin and Secker brought out the signed limited edition of his complete works in 1923 his fame was at its zenith. Despite his chosen subject-matter, he was an established and respected literary figure. The public at large knew him, at the very least, for his part in a cause célèbre: as the author of 'The Bowmen', the story which, taken as fact, had inspired the wartime legend of the 'Angels of Mons'[5]. Lovecraft reserves his most fulsome praise of all for Machen's work, both for its style and content, ranking him on a par with or above Blackwood, and, in a veritable fanfare of appreciation, reprints a poem by Frank Belknap Long written in his honour (1987: 495).

Certainly, there is often an intriguing colouring to Machen's work, and his powers of 'occasional' evocative description - though somewhat Pateresque and nineties-ish, perhaps - lead to memorable passages, particularly when he is describing goblinesque visions of a distinctive and alien kind. It could be that Machen is due for a revival - to my knowledge, none of his major works have been in print for some considerable time. I suspect, however, that his curiously bodiless characterisation and rather casual and quirky narrative construction are not readily appealing to modern tastes: he is the one author to suffer from an abundance of period qualities. Daring in their time, his works edge now upon coyness and whimsy.

Machen was unusual in creating his own haunted fictional landscape out of the Monmouth area of Wales through the course of many separate stories - in a way that reminds of Hardy's Wessex and of Lovecraft's own New England fantasies. The Roman relics that occur in the area were of particularly sinister and archaic significance for him; presumably with much the same symbolic meaning that Medieval times or ancient Egypt commonly have for other authors, like Doyle in the instance above - recalling, finally, the deep uncanny prehistory of the individual mind.

The Roman presence is felt in the background of his most noted early fiction, the novelette The Great God Pan (1894)[6]. The story can be simply stated. A young woman of a simple and loving disposition is subjected to a peculiar brain-operation by the ruthless hyper-rational scientist who raised her. This

is performed in the presence of one witness, a friend of the surgeon's. Redeemingly, this friend at least has occasional misgivings about endorsing such a curiously heartless and immoral act of human vivisection, but both men are caught up in the experimental temper and the operation goes ahead. Its purpose is to alter human perception out of its customary socially and verbally constructed bounds, so that something closer to reality, to the ding an sich, may be perceived. The scientist terms this 'seeing the great god Pan'. When the woman wakes from the anaesthetic her facial expressions indicate first a moment of rapture and ecstasy, followed immediately by horror, babbling idiocy and - some painful months later - death.

These events take up the first chapter only. Most of the remainder of the story is the apparently unrelated attempt of two men-about-town to track down and expose the doings of a mysterious socialite woman, whose beauty and fascination enable her to move freely in sophisticated society. And yet she appears somehow responsible for a wave of suicides among her debonair, overprivileged and aristocratic male guests. This trail of destruction extends from London to South America, and is hidden behind a collection of assumed names. Hints of Satanic orgies and a double life in the red light district of Soho attach themselves to her in the course of the investigation. The friend and observer of the first chapter is later enticed into the hunt: he adds horrifying information to the dossier about her teenage years, spent in Wales; stories of woodland indulgences close to Roman remains that end in

idiocy and death for the youthful participants. Eventually, under the threat of exposure by our sleuths, the woman is blackmailed into committing suicide.

This social vampire was, it turns out, the daughter of the human guinea pig of the first chapter, conceived in some supernatural and monstrous fashion following on the operation. The unknown and absent father was, presumably, 'Pan' himself - whether in the guise of god, demon, or Satan, is not made clear. It may even be that the foetus was immaculately generated - in an inverted 'virgin birth'? - by the orgasmic and awful exposure the young woman underwent. At any rate, the growing child itself was often caught umawares by its foster-father in company with some unspeakable playmate - whether mythological or supernatural is not revealed.

For our purposes here, we need note only a few salient points. Most obviously, the bulk of the story is again devoted to the exorcism of the demonic woman, a testimony to the 'feminine' character of the occult powers. We see in the first chapter how it is through a woman that 'ultimate reality' - which is also, it appears, the occult dimension - is to be contacted; and the offspring of this contact is feminine in form as well. Females are clearly identified as psychopomps of the occult realm. And through them, 'evil' - especially of a sexual character - is transmitted to the upper world.

In this instance especially, we might feel they have a justifiable case for behaving demonically. The feckless moneyed dandies upon whom Helen Vaughan (or Beaumont) preys deserve what they get. Here the 'death' associated with sex

seems a just return for vapid uselessness: these men, after all, themselves intend to 'prey' upon Helen sexually, though this form of exploitation is not condemned by the narrative. The male hypocrisy of our detective, Villiers, who is able to track Helen down by means of his own 'contacts' in the sexual underworld, is patent enough to a modern reader. And the moral dubiousness of the culminating 'blackmail' leading - somewhat improbably - to Helen's suicide hardly helps to compensate for the appalling circumstances of her entry into the world. The scientist who experimented on her mother (rather terrifyingly named 'Mary', as her daughter is named Helen) believes that since he 'rescued Mary from the gutter ... I think her life is mine, to use as I see fit' (Machen 1923: 8).

Such blatant and thoughtless chauvinism <u>is</u> to an extent moderated by the doctor's more hesitant friend Clarke, who only goes ahead when he is persuaded that the operation will be harmless. But this element of condemnation is not very firm; no heavier retribution is extracted from the main perpetrator of everyon's ills himself than a mild final regret; whereas the demise of the woman Helen, his own effectual creation, is spectacular indeed.

Behind the chauvinism, what we have here again is the intrinsic opposition of the scientific mentality and the occult realm: our neurologist intrudes in the name of science upon areas for which his mental set has not fitted him. In essence the theme is as old as Faustus; what is far more interesting, for our purposes, is the <u>nature</u> of the occult that his meddling exposes. Especially significant is Mary's

double response to possession of her new super-senses: she feels ecstasy as well as horror at what she sees. This is a sign that the 'otherworld' may reach us in two distinct ways: as the rapturous and mystical sublime; or else as the abject and horrific.

This double aspect of visionary experience - its heavenly and hellish sides - is plainly laid out in the tale. Before his experiment, Dr Raymond explains his view of reality to Clarke quite explicitly, as hard scientific fact. Yet it is clear that his conceptions run parallel to those of mystics:

> You see me standing here beside you, and hear my voice; but I tell you that all these things - yes, from that star that has just shone out in the sky to the solid ground beneath my feet - I say that all these are but dreams and shadows: the shadows that hide the real world from our eyes. There <u>is</u> a real world, but it is beyond this glamour and this vision ... beyond them all as beyond a veil .... the ancients knew what lifting the veil means. They called it seeing the god Pan. (4-5)

Clarke is able to understand this updated Neo-Platonism <u>emotionally</u>, at least, because he has had comparable experiences of his own to draw on, mostly in childhood. These are clearly of an authentic mystical (rather than Pan-ic) character; and, as reminiscences, they are tellingly evoked through the rhythms and imagery of Machen's prose.

> Above all there came to his nostrils the scent of summer, the smell of flowers mingled, and the odour of the woods, of cool shaded places, deep in the green depths, drawn forth by the sun's heat; and the scent of the the good earth, lying as it were with arms stretched forth, and smiling lips, over-powered all. His fancies made him wander, as he had wandered long ago, from the fields into the wood, tracking a little path betweeen the shining undergrowth of beech-trees; and the trickle of water dropping from

> the limestone rock sounded as a clear melody in the dream ... (10-11)

This has the stamp of authentic nature mysticism; but it is also highly symbolic. Clarke's entry to the wood in the positive and inviting context of a smiling and maternally personified nature signifies submersion in his own 'natural' unconscious process. The recurring word 'dream' gives this away. The experience is indeed trance-like, sustained as it is by the trickling and regular sounds of the womb-like forest.

> Clarke, in the deep folds of a dream, was conscious that the path from his father's house had led him into an undiscovered country, and he was wondering at the strangeness of it all, when suddenly, in place of the hum and murmur of summer, an infinite silence seemed to fall on all things, and the wood was hushed, and for a moment of time he stood face to face there with a presence, that was neither man nor beast, neither the living nor the dead, but all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of all form. And in that moment the sacrament of body and soul was dissolved, and a voice seemed to cry 'Let us go hence,' and then the darkness of darkness beyond the stars, the darkness of everlasting. (11)

This shows many typical features of the 'mystic' and cosmic moment. Away from 'his father's house' - with the influence of the logocentric 'masculine' vision of things abated - he comes upon the essentially unnamable (and hence unseparated and indistinguishable): 'all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of all form'. Beyond lies the darkness of the ego's death.

But of course this ecstatic moment is only the other side of a coin that could just as easily reveal horrific dimensions, as in Mary's vision. For any unprepared or too 'masculine' mind, all the sublime cosmic content of this

vision could change character utterly, and appear to be of the quintessence of evil. Pan, as source of the horror, is also 'devoid of form', after all: he is 'an exquisite symbol beneath which men long ago veiled their knowledge of the most awful, most secret forces which lie at the heart of all things; forces before which the souls of men must wither and die and blacken .... Such forces cannot be named, cannot be spoken, cannot be imagined except under a veil and a symbol ... that which is without a form taking to itself a form' (75-6). When Villiers senses the evil atmosphere of Helen's now empty flat his experience is not entirely unlike Clarke's own presentiment of the extinction of self: 'my eyes began to grow dim; it was like the entrance of death' (49).

Like her supernatural source, Helen too is unnamable, her alias constantly changing. As Herbert comments about her: 'Only human beings have names, Villiers; I can't say any more' (31). Helen's beautiful appearance denies her hidden reality: she is at once 'the most beautiful woman and the most repulsive ... a sort of enigma' (36). During her short marriage to the unfortunate Herbert, he listens to her 'as she spoke in her beautiful voice, spoke of things which even now I would not dare whisper in blackest night .... I have seen the incredible ... and ask whether it is possible for a man to behold such things and live' (29-30).

The most imaginative moment in the story is probably Helen's final dissolution on her deathbed. After death, her beautiful appearance gives way to what it hides - a writhing formlessness that reaches back to the origin of things. It is,

indeed, the 'nameless' incarnate, its connections with its archaic sources (in the mind) laid bare:

> Here too was all the work by which man has been made repeated before my eyes. I saw the form waver from sex to sex, dividing itself from itself, and then again reunited. Then I saw the body descend to the beasts whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go down to the depths, even to the abyss of all being. The principle of life, which makes organism, always remained, while the outward form changed. (81)

This report is composed by our perennial ideal witness, a doctor - though why his tone turns biblical as it does _in medias res_ here, is not clear. Even his impeccable record breaks down and becomes illegible (like most prescriptions) towards the end: language itself fails under such an onslaught. Once the mass on the bed has undergone a complete phylogenetic unmaking in scientific and evolutionary terms, it remakes itself in terms of occult myth - even becoming the satyr-god himself before its human form returns at last. To some onlookers, a likeness of the good, submissive Mary's expression is glimpsed before the close: a prevision of the exorcisms of _Dracula_, perhaps. As with the nature of cosmic reality, mankind cannot bear too much of this: the final admission of Raymond, the scientist-perpetrator of all this woe, is fitting here: 'I forgot that no human eyes could look on such a vision with impunity' (87).

> A feeling of deep resentment filled me, and miserable questionings. Why could I not have gone with my Love? What reason to keep us apart? Why had I to wait alone, while she slumbered through the years, on the still bosom of the Sea of Sleep? The Sea of Sleep! My thoughts turned, inconsequently, out of their channel of bitterness, to fresh, desperate questionings. Where was it? I seemed to have but just parted from my Love, upon its quiet surface, and it had gone, utterly. It could not be far away! And the White Orb which I had seen hidden in the shadow of the Sun of Darkness! My sight dwelt upon the Green Sun - eclipsed. What had eclipsed it? Was there a vast, dead star circling it? Was the Central Sun - as I had come to regard it - a double star? The thought had come, almost unbidden; yet why should it not be so?[7] (Hodgson 1983: 149)

William Hope Hodgson's The House on the Borderland (1908) is certainly one of the most imaginative and visionary works in this or any language. The towering quality of his inventive gifts is equally evident in The Night Land (1912) - but that is fantasy of a different kind, and is a little marred by its incongruous William Morris-style trappings.

Though less than 200 pages, the former book invites comparison with Dante's trilogy: it has a similar (unevenly-apportioned) three-part structure, suggestive of an Inferno, a Purgatorio and a Paradiso. The corresponding elements are more mixed in each section than this idea presupposes, however. Hodgson's own introductory remarks (not included with all editions) hint that he himself saw a religious application for his story, though his heaven and hell are of a kind no clergyman would either envision or tolerate.

I have already suggested that Occult Fantasy was wrought in part to fill a gap left by the decline of religious experience, and Hodgson's own words need to be taken seriously

in this regard. But what the work draws upon is no conventional iconography; instead it plumbs the archaic sources of religious need and feeling in the psyche itself, as its innate symbolism reveals.

The two suns of the extract above encode the fact that Hodgson maintains the double-sided view of the occult we found in Machen. His principal character and narrator, the Recluse, is barred from extended contact with the Anima-like manifestation of his dead beloved in episodes in the central and also the final sections of the book, because to merge completely with his feminine side would mean death - absorption back into the pre-ego that the amniotic Sea of Sleep in the background hints at. Its very name indicates how the unconscious and its workings are implicated here. All the Recluse's doings near the Sea of Sleep are ecstatic in nature - a much-needed balm to his more horrific experiences elsewhere. And yet the coming of the dark sun reveals that there is a considerable danger if he continues in that state, and in consequence he is swept away - despite his incomprehension and resentment. Only in or after his true death will he be able to merge entirely with his Love, the beautiful symbolic 'mother' who both guards and bars the way to pre-Oedipal dissolution. (The Recluse's sister, the cipher-like companion of his waking life, is a wasted and etiolated image of the feminine he craves.) His personal title - he is unnamed in the story - shows not only that he is deeply engaged with the consequences of his own primary narcissistic desires, but also that he is a part of everyman; and, of

course, that the 'self' is fundamentally at issue in this tale.

On the first occasion he meets his dead Love he cries 'strangely to her, in a very agony of remembrance' (101); the memories, of course, go back further than he knows. But this incident and the middle section which records it are brief because a kind of 'static' intervenes. Not only is contact with the Beloved interrupted by some agency, but so is communication with the reader: these pages are damaged or missing from the MS journal. The events they relate are represented by only a few sentence fragments. The meaning of this feature is really that words themselves are helpless before the ineffable - and later diabolical - nature of the experience. The spoiling of these particular pages tells us how central this part of the story is at an unseen level: the reader of course deduces that the Recluse was obsessively scanning these very pages at the point of death, for the damage is caused by the final collapse of his house.

Nonetheless, they are unnecessary to the narrative as such, for much the same events occur again later; on that occasion the Recluse is reminded of the cause of his removal from the Sea - and so tells the reader, at last. He speaks cryptically of a 'Formless Thing that had haunted the shores of the Sea of Sleep. The guardian of that silent, echoless place' (145). This agent of annihilation and silence is appropriately both formless and unnamable. It is, after all, simply the personification of the wordless blankness which

necessarily disintegrates the tale's verbal fabric at the edge of its archaic divide.

As the case of the Sea confirms, the four Empedoclean elements appear with symbolic force. If earth is of the body and the material plane, and, at the last, the fire of the Green Sun purifies the dead Earth of its remaining swine-things, then water, in contrast, is a spiritual essence. It is the diversion of his lake into the cavern beneath his house which similarly frees the Recluse at last of his own haunting by these subterranean creatures. Elemental colours, too, are symbolic. The colours Green and Red are clearly meant to connect with the Occult Plane, but their meaning is ambiguous. The Platonic Form or model of his own strange house which appears, like an echo, in the middle of the Red Plain in his earliest vision is coloured green, which links it with the god-like Green Sun; and yet the evil supernatural arch-swine-thing who comes to claim the Recluse in the final pages also leaves a green luminous trace, that spreads like a disease.

What the mixed colours and the co-presence of the dark and the green suns indicate is, I think, that Hodgson has solved a theological difficulty in the manner of the early heretic, Marcion, and made the universe's first principle binary in nature: dark and light, good and evil, complement each other. In this he is responding intuitively to the close equivalence nature of the mystical and the abject forms of the occult.

Similarly, when the Recluse has lived through the whole history of the universe and comes to its final centre (there

is nothing else in literature like the 'fast-forward' picture of a time-compressed universe in the final section), he discovers that all souls (all 'selves') cluster about the central suns. In essence, these last are together the primal undifferentiated ground of selfhood out of which individual differences rise; and into which perhaps they eventually merge. To be alone in the hereafter, and yet never be lonely!' - that is how the Recluse phrases his ultimate desire of the afterlife (146).

As already implied, the strange house of the title is an equivalent for the self, just as is often the case in dream-symbolism. Houses with cellars or lower apartments invariably suggest the unconscious dimensions of self: as with Dr Seward's asylum in Dracula where the patients are housed below-stairs, or with the crypts attached to Dracula's own dwellings. (Stephen King presents an informative analysis of the front and rear aspects of Dr Jekyll's [or Mr Hyde's] establishment in Stevenson's novel along the same lines [King 1987: 90ff].) In the mysterious house of his title, Hodgson presents us with a picture of the self housed precipitously but unawares on the borderland of the unseen - taken either as the unconscious, the occult, or the spiritual dimension. As the vision of the red Plain of Silence demonstrates, this house is potentially eternal - situated, in its deepest being, beyond the depredations of time and space. But it is also menaced by foul and demonic subterranean swine-creatures, who may be heard scuffling and laughing in the dark below the trapdoor in the cellar floor.

If these swinish beings, Hodgson's chosen monsters, have lost some of their repulsion for us today, it may be that we have got over the shock of Darwinism, a heritage which still haunted the Edwardian imagination. If the archaic and primitive side of the human unconscious presented itself frequently in bestial shape, or disguised as animal transformations or regressions like those of Hyde (King: 91), then this may be Darwin's legacy. What was at least intended is that we experience through these symbols the intrinsically alien character of the deeper aspects of our own nature.

Opposed to these demonic forces stands the religious or spiritual life. But the psychic vestiges of our religious heritage seem hardly less alien than the demonic, as the Recluse's visions present them. From the vantage-point of the green house in the centre of the vast deserted Plain of Silence a circling amphitheatre of mountains comes into view. Careful scrutiny of the upper slopes reveals that they support the petrified shapes of ancient and modern deities. Bathed in the wordless silence of the ineffable, these alien and cyclopean effigies, some of them unknown, gaze unwinkingly down - as if eternally demanding their dues of fear, blood and awe.

> Far to my right, away up among inaccessible peaks, loomed the enormous bulk of the great Ass-god. Higher, I saw the hideous form of the dread goddess, rising up through the red gloom, thousands of fathoms above me. To the left, I made out the monstrous Eyeless-Thing, grey and inscrutable. Further off, reclining on its lofty ledge, the livid Ghoul-Shape showed - a splash of sinister colour, among the dark mountains. (156)

Once again, the virtual equivalence of the mystically awesome and the demoniacally appalling is intimated.

Enough has already been said about the employment of the documentary element in Occult Fantasy, and its attempt, through the fictional multiplication of witnesses, to add both a kind of credibility and variety of perspective to the imagined scene. The MS's editor and the two figures of the framing narrative who come upon the overgrown estate and find the journal have these functions. The measured credence given to the MS and its contents by the non-narrating - and hence, perversely, more remote and authoritative - figure is especially important. However, these two men are more valuable as a transition between our reality and the symbolic occult reality of the narrative proper. They belong to a time closer to that of the novel's writing; and they negotiate the actual journey to this remote area of Ireland where even the speech cannot be understood.

Of course, these levels mask a forbidden truth: one ultimately knows that all the characters and narrating voices are reduceable to the resources of an author-figure; and this is a little like the way all the monadic 'selves' of the Recluse's final vision are collapsible back into the universal undifferentiated selfhood of the central sun.

5

With the help of Kristeva's insights into the horrific and its connection with pre-Oedipal intimations of the 'feminine', it

has been relatively easy to demonstrate that writers who perhaps believed they were dealing with a supernatural otherworld were really treating of an Other harboured by the mind itself. But in the case of Algernon Blackwood, who is indubitably the most accomplished artist of the sub-genre we are dealing with, there is some overt recognition of a directly psychological element. At the same time, it is necessary to pay more respect, in its own terms, to the genuine metaphysical element in his vision.

Of all the authors so far discussed, it is Blackwood especially who asserts that his 'interest in psychic matters has always been the interest in questions of extended or expanded consciousness. If a ghost is seen, what <u>is</u> it interests me less than what sees it?' (Blackwood 1973: xiv)[8]. Again, he relates the 'supernatural' subjects of many tales to certain 'shocks' he was dealt in coming to terms with life as a young man (xiii) - rather than to ghostly presences as such.

And yet the subject-matter of many of Blackwood's best-remembered stories is not, loosely-speaking, 'personal' at all, but revolves upon a confrontation with what is supernatural about nature itself. Nothing, in one sense, can be more 'natural' than nature, as the adjective itself proclaims; and yet in certain moods - moods which may possibly be far closer to the truth of things, who knows - nothing can be more strange. It is this special 'shock' that Blackwood's occult draws upon: when our customary modes of apprehension no longer support us and we seem to lay bare something unutterably strange in our familiar environment, something we

had known of but which civilisation and its verbal discourses had helped us to suppress.

Simpson, in the notable story of the vast Canadian wilds called 'The Wendigo'(158-207), senses almost from the start of his exposure 'that other aspect of the wilderness: the indifference to human life, the merciless spirit of desolation which took no note of man' (169). In revealing an intrinsic alienness in all we feel most assured of, Blackwood has found and tapped an irreducible source of quite genuine terror. Part of the descriptive and dramatic power of his writing comes from his ability to extend the same unrelenting sense of cosmic strangeness into every part of his narrative - even into the verbal texture itself.

Clearly what Blackwood learned most from the 'shocks' of his development - his young manhood was colourful and diverse - was the force of revelation in the moment of shock itself, its power suddenly to make us see things anew. He has an unerring instinct for the touches which, laid together, convince us that 'things are in the unmaking', as King put it.

I would like to quote an extended passage near the start of 'The Wendigo' to illustrate how skilfully Blackwood goes to work. His small hunting party - some of them tried, some untried by the wilderness - turn into their sleeping-bags, leaving the field to the Canadian night. Blackwood's description does not retire with them, however; released of human domination, the forests return to their alien character - and reveal the secret scent of their inmost denizen, the Wendigo of Indian legend.

Though this ahuman spirit figures in the story as a real being of sorts, one able to shift its shape and - imperfectly - imitate humans, it is, nonetheless, a manifestation of the unnameable; and, though no individual statement has authority in the story, its real character may well be as the sceptical Dr Cathcart asserts: 'the Wendigo is simply the Call of the Wild personified, which some natures hear to their own destruction' (196). Indians who go mad are said to have seen the Wendigo (in this, it is clearly not unlike the great god Pan). Blackwood's idea of it depends a lot on the less precise, more primitive senses of smell and sound: 'the Voice, they say, resembles all the minor sounds of the Bush - wind, falling water, cries of animals, and so forth.' So much, indeed, it is like nothing tangible at all. Its being is pieced together from atoms of the sphere it influences.

> Deep silence fell about the little camp, planted there so audaciously in the jaws of the wilderness. The lake gleamed like a sheet of black glass beneath the stars. The cold air pricked. In the draughts of night that poured their silent tide from the depths of the forest, with messages from distant ridges and from lakes just beginning to freeze, there lay already the faint, bleak odours of coming winter. White men, with their dull scent, might never have divined them; the fragrance of the wood-fire would have concealed from them these almost electrical hints of moss and bark and hardening swamp a hundred miles away. Even Hank and Defago, subtly in league with the soul of the woods as they were, would probably have spread their delicate nostrils in vain....
>
> But an hour later, when all slept like the dead, old Punk crept from his blankets and went down to the shore of the lake like a shadow - silently, as only Indian blood can move. He raised his head and looked about him. The thick darkness rendered sight of small avail, but, like the animals, he

possessed other sense that darkness could not mute.
(163-4)

'Motionless as hemlock-stem' at the water's edge, the native American cook sniffs the air. The scent he dimly divines comes closer and troubles the tree-tops about the camp only after he also has finally retired. Then, 'too faint, too high even for the Indian's hair-like nerves, there passed a curious, thin odour, strangely disquieting, an odour of something that seemed unfamiliar - utterly unknown' (164).

The combination of coldness, vast spaces, the one restless character (who is also the least verbal) - and the linguistic tact which unsettles the lulling description with words like 'pricked' and 'electrical' - all do their work upon us. Intuitively we grasp that there is something annihilating in this apparent harmony of things.

And indeed, so it is. Defago, the half-breed guide, is lured away by the Wendigo, who returns to impersonate him to his helpless and unbelieving friends, and then, when all hope seems lost, deposits him back in the camp, the mere ailing inarticulate shell of his former self. The exposure to these more than human realities which Defago undergoes results in a kind of death - first of the self, and then a physical demise. Which of course alerts us to the fact that Blackwood's occult is not after all so different from those we have encountered; the danger of extended immersion in the mystical is just this - that it demands the sacrifice of self, as well as of the distinctions among things that uphold the sense of individual identity.

While the great woods are hardly a feminine reality as such, they are a reality opposed to the logocentric, exclusively male order the human characters represent. Dr Cathcart, like Van Helsing, is a somewhat ambivalent scientist-figure; rationalist as he is, he has an amateur's curiosity about the things of the mind - yet he grinds all mysteries through the same intellectual mill. In the face of the terrible events, his rationalising tendencies are strained to the utmost: 'Like many another materialist, that is, he lied cleverly on the basis of insufficient knowledge, <u>because</u> the knowledge supplied seemed to his own particular intelligence inadmissible' (191). After Defago's disappearance, he and Hank talk wildly together, for words are their medium of control over experience: what they 'dreaded more than anything else was - silence' (197).

Simpson, the young man who shares Defago's exposure to the Wendigo, has greater proof against its harmful effects because of his youthful lack of preconceptions (188), and also because his religious vocation has opened some reaches of his mind to possiblities such as the Wendigo presents. Among the various (insufficient and incompatible) explanations offered at the end, through the mouths of varied characters, Simpson's realisation is that there were 'Potencies lurking behind the souls of men, not evil perhaps in themselves, yet instinctively hostile to humanity as it exists' (205). He it is who alone in Defago's company is sensitive to the character of the natural scene: '<u>Other</u> life pulsed about them - and was gone' (171). From an expression on Defago's face he is

suddenly brought to realise 'that in a hinterland of this size there might well be depths of wood that would never in the life of the world be known or trodden' (174).

Once his guide is abducted, his attempts to control his panic are finally defeated, and what breaks through has the force of revelation:

> Behind the screen of memory and emotion with which experience veils events, he plunged, distracted and half-deranged, picking up false lights like a ship at sea, terror in his eyes and heart and soul. For the Panic of the Wilderness had called to him in that far voice - the Power of untamed Distance - the Enticement of the Desolation that destroys. He knew in that moment all the pains of someone hopelessly and irretrievably lost .... A vision of Defago, eternally hunted, driven and pursued across the skiey vastness of those ancient forests fled like a flame across the dark ruin of his thoughts....
> (187)

It is above all Blackwood's psychological approach which lends credibility - through details such as, for example, Simpson's self-frustrating lapse into the ordinary modes and limits of polite speech when he re-encounters the others. For in other circumstances credibility might easily be wanting; Blackwood's vision of the occult is a mass of incompatibles: the massive, bleeding stride of the monster's snowy footprints, the mysterious cry of Defago from overhead, the degrading travesty of the monster's imperfect human imitation. But this is exactly the point: there is no way of rationalising these elements together into a whole; any more than we can imagine why the dialect-speaking Defago should suddenly break into perfect, and incongruously poetic, English from overhead. His pitiful words, repeated like a kind of

incantation - 'Oh, oh! This fiery height! Oh, oh! My feet of fire! My burning feet of fire...!' (203-4) - are pure surrealism, signalling the defeat of language and of reason before the occult.

In another of his stories, Blackwood has an elderly man who is fascinated by the life of trees gradually succumb to their alien charm and their ahuman awarenesses; he leaves his human society and is spiritually and physically absorbed into their life and being. This conception of the Other life of nature clearly has nothing Wordsworthian about it - and not much Darwinian either. In this Blackwood is even more radical than Hardy, who is his only comparable predecessor in portraying the essential strangeness of nature.

I have preferred initially to deal in detail with 'The Wendigo' rather than with Blackwood's justly most admired tale, 'The Willows' (1-52), even though this traverses much the same ground, at least thematically: the isolated setting is this time the marshy lower reaches of the Danube. Blackwood's preference for foreign locations is typical of his genre since its origins in the Gothic, but his reasons are more realistic, I think: he wishes to capture as a starting-point that mild dislocation and disorientation that all holidaymakers experience away from home. A favourite beginning involves also some sort of physical transition - the train journeys which open 'Secret Worship' and 'Ancient Sorceries' are apt examples. What is involved here is really the reader's own movement into a different and unsettling reality - which is also the reality of the tale.

The ordinariness of at least one of the main participants (the silk merchant Harris in 'Secret Worship', the insignificant Vezin in 'Ancient Sorceries', or the hearty Swede in 'The Willows', are cases in point) may be there to provide easy identification for the reader; though Blackwood's treatment of these roles is rarely stereotypical. Invariably, he suggests that the ordinary is not what it seems.

Gradualness and the cumulative injection of unease is one key to his magic - hence the length of his stories. The Danube river itself provides the necessary slow transition in 'The Willows', being described in light and sunny guidebook fashion at the start and then taking on an alien and disturbing vitality (3) as the central and remote location is reached.

There, as the pair of youthful canoeists decamp upon a little island of sand and willows, the unrelenting wind in the leaves suggests applause (3). Familiarity with this wilderness of pliant and etiolated trees brings a different impression. From being a magic kingdom one might need a passport to enter (2), the willows become 'antedeluvian creatures' sopping up the water (7). The island itself is unstable; it alters shape and shrinks under the rush of the flooded river, and vague sights are seen in the uncertain glare - a peasant crossing himself, and a dead body turning in the current (or is it an otter?). This supposed body is, in fact, like an obscure previson of the corpse which will wash against the bank and provide the sacrifice of 'self' at the end - so rescuing our heroes from having to share its fate. Blackwood is very good at conveying the fallibility of human senses in such

situations (the increasing familiarity to Harris of the terrifying and hearty monks who insistently entertain him in 'Secret Worship' is a chilling instance).

All in all, the island behaves like a symbol of man's insecure grasp upon the reality of his cosmos, or even upon his own senses. Through argument, rationalisations, and refusal of their own perceptions, our susceptible narrator and his 'unimaginative' Swedish friend are led at last to acknowledge that '<u>The willows were against us</u>' (15).

The narrator has been relying on the 'otherness' of his stalwart companion to preserve his own sanity; his greatest shock comes when even his preconceptions about the Swede have to be abandoned - along with all the other mental safeguards which limit his vision. At night he seems to witness great forms writhing upward through the blown leaves on the larger trees.

> They were interlaced one with another, making a great column, and I saw their limbs and huge bodies melting in and out of each other forming this serpentine line that bent and swayed and twisted spirally with the contortions of the wind-tossed trees. They were nude, fluid shapes, passing up the bushes, <u>within</u> the leaves almost - rising up in a living column into the heavens. (18)

The horror here is again the perception of an essential formlessness, denying categories and escaping the power of language - as do the other incompatibles and paradoxes of the experience. When a floating, untracable gong-like sound reaches their ears, inexplicably connected with funnels that form in the sand, the Swede describes it as 'a non-human sound: I mean a sound outside humanity' (37).

The powerful drama of the piece is really within, and has the participants wrestling by every means to deny what they must slowly and reluctantly acknowledge, in spite of the 'dim, ancestral sense of terror' that engulfs them: that they have '"strayed", as the Swede put it, into some region or some set of conditions where the risks were great, yet unintelligible to us; where the frontiers of some unknown world lay close about us ... we would be carried over the border and deprived of what we called "our lives", yet by mental, not physical processes' (37).

It is because this place is 'unpolluted by men, kept clean by the winds from coarsening human influences' (38) that it has become itself a borderland, at the edge of a '"beyond region", of another scheme of life'. The various odd and incompatible elements of their ordeal, the narrator realises, combine to change reality, to give it a new aspect reflective of what is across that border; 'this changed aspect was new not merely to me, but to the race .... It was a new order of experience, and in the true sense of the word unearthly' (38). And its actual location is within, not without.

It must be apparent by now that the 'new' reality Blackwood has in mind is in truth a very old one, founded in the same psychic sediment plumbed and sifted by mystics down the centuries. But this does not alter the fact that in one aspect - its annihilation of the rational constructs humans impose upon reality - it can be terrifying in the extreme, especially when its intrusion is imperious and unbidden.

In these circumstances it might seem surprising that the allusions to the daemonic feminine we have found elsewhere are missing in these tales. So far they describe an exclusively masculine world - an odd enough feature in itself. But this exclusive masculinity is deceptive. The Danube, for example, is transcribed as feminine in 'The Willows', and the narrator fancifully imagines a troop of Undines fleeting below its surface (5). And in a story like 'The Glamour of the Snow' (137-157) we have one of the clearest evocations of the deadly anima-figure the genre possesses, albeit as a personification of nature in its cold, snowy guise.

In this story an inhibited lonely man, significantly a writer, sojourning in an Alpine resort, becomes obsessed with an other-worldly skater he meets one day upon the ice. Before her final disappearance she lures him nearly to his death among the snowy heights. The terms in which the narrator describes his fascination for the elusive girl (an attraction which, one suspects, shares its 'fatal' and annihilating quality in common with almost all extreme passion) are especially revealing of the hidden psychological sources which animate her, especially

> the half suggestion of some dim memory that he had known this girl before, had met her somehere, more - that she knew him. For in her voice - a low, soft, windy little voice it was, tender and soothing for all its quiet coldness - there lay some faint reminder of two others he had known, both long since gone: the voice of the woman he had loved and - the voice of his mother. (143)

The final typographic dash is especially illuminating. But the maternal 'tenderness' of this woman is deadly, as the hero's

intuition tells him; he connects it with the 'light and tiny' snowflakes which, as a mass, are 'able to smother whole villages ... cold, bewildering, deadening effort with its clinging network of ten million feathery touches' (143).

The trouble is, he is drawn to her glamour, called by something remote in his own nature; he knows he has an affinity, like Defago, with the environment she is so much part of: 'He belonged so utterly to Nature and the mountains, and especially to those desolate slopes where now the snow lay thick and fresh and sweet' (148). Blackwood's evocation of this writer's narcotic but suicidal self-seduction is masterly; for ultimately the woman means death of all that he is as a human being. When, at last, he is almost overcome in the snow and ice, he calls upon her to return home. 'Our home is - here!' she answers demoniacally, meaning the inhuman natural scene (154). The plural is itself a shock; does she refer to the pair of them, or to other companions of her own kind? The final seduction begins:

> The snow was to his waist....She kissed him softly on the lips, the eyes, all over his face. And then she spoke his name in that voice of love and wonder, the voice that held the accent of two others - both taken over long ago by Death - the voice of his mother, and of the woman he had loved. He ... sank back into the soft oblivion of the covering snow. Her wintry kisses bore him into sleep. (155)

In what they represent for this man, the two departed women are now on the side of Death. Their condition means they can only amplify the deadliness of this girl as incarnation of the

occult feminine, not mitigate her force. Now dead, they are in a sense inevitably her sisters.

There are other prominent occult themes which I have negelected in the pursuit of this same demonic figure: lycanthropy; shape-shifting; the ancient past; and especially childhood and its perceptions. But this is because they all are relatable to my main theme. Animal transformation is a symbol of the solvent effect of the archaic drives on identity and verbal classification; the ancient past reflects the individual's own psychological history; and childhood brings its fabled freedom of imagination, its untried openness, and corresponding nearness in time to pre-Oedipal psychological conditions.

There are superlative instances of all these kinds in Blackwood's work. 'The Camp of the Dog' involves lycanthropy; it features his Holmes-style psychic detective, John Silence - whose very name is a negation of the verbal. Blackwood's late Egyptian stories are some of the finest of their sort. And 'Ancient Sorceries' combines the lure of the ancient past together with cat-transformations and the witch-like power of its feminine seductresses; indeed both regal mother and sensual daughter here are feline witches, avatars of the two kinds of feminine power - as represented also by the mother and wife in 'The Glamour of the Snow'. Blackwood's cat-story effects its most telling transformation simply through the power of his own prose: in metaphor, the ancient and sleepy French village of its setting turns into another cat, its twin mediaeval steeples forming the pointed ears. His ability to

make event and setting co-operate is probably his most potent artistic spell.

6

In 'The Other Wing' (208-227) Blackwood has an appealing child-character. The wing of the house mentioned in the title is a seemingly immaterial one, known only to this child. It represents of course his unconscious, and through his privileged contact with this haunted region the young hero can actually bring about changes in his 'real' world.

But the child-story to which I wish to pay attention here is 'Lost Hearts' by M.R. James, another highly regarded representative of the craft.

James was provost of Eton, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge from 1913-15, and a theological scholar. His anthology of Christian Apocryphal scriptures[9] is still a standard work. Accordingly, James adds real and bogus scholarly references to provide authenticity in his stories. His version of the occult is both supremely Edwardian and almost medieval in character: his 'ghosts' arise out of the forbidden and pagan reaches of scholarly research, suggesting surprisingly that James as a Christian felt the dangerous attractions of all that the Church throughout its history most chose to suppress - and exorcised this in his fiction. His 'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad' (James 1984: 75-91)[10] involves a wavering ghoul with a face of crumpled bedlinen invoked through meddling with

a ruined chapel of the Templars. As we see, in his hands the unnamable is almost comically Edwardian, redolent of chambermaids and hotel bedmaking as much as of the forbidden past.

Terseness and brevity remove some of the taint of cliché and melodrama in James. His villain-scholar in 'Lost Hearts' (21-9) is immersed in Mithraic, Hermetic and Neo-Platonic texts. Somehow - improbably - from these sources he conceives the idea of prolonging his life by eating the hearts of children whom he entices into his mansion. The youthful hero of this tale manages to evade these foul rites, aided by the wailing animal-like spirits of two past victims - a low-class Italian boy and a wasted girl - who exact their own bloody revenge. As may be apparent, the evil scholar is an embodiment of the false and inadequate parent; a cold and demonic <u>father</u>, in this rare instance, who, like Chronos or Saturn, gobbles up his children - or, at least, feeds upon their emotional life, turning them in consequence into mere 'ghosts' of themselves. The cause of his malady is no doubt his intellectual neglect of the child in himself. In this instance of failed parenting there is a strange echo of the situation in <u>The Turn of the Screw</u>, product of that other, more famous James. The governess in Henry James's celebrated story is an emotional vampire just as the scholar is here; but of course in James's hands the psychological bearings are only too overtly elaborated.

One last story involving both children and the feminine deserves a place here - which is hardly to do justice to the range, stylistic elegance and skill of its author, Walter de

la Mare. De la Mare is often thought of as a Georgian; but the Edwardian supernatural continued on to lead a somewhat moderated life in the 'Georgian' world, too. De la Mare, as it happens, was an eventual, though sceptical, reader of Freud; he was certainly aware of a 'psychological' dimension to the supernatural. (What he objects to is a diminishing and reductive element in Freud's thought[11]: 'That a Blatant Beast, with virtues of its own nature, is confined in the cellar known as the Unconscious, of which it is advisable as far as possible to keep the key, is undeniable; there is also a caged bird in the attic, and one of a marvellous song' [De la Mare 1931: 81-2].)

Just as in Henry James's novella, it may be there are no real ghosts at all in Seaton's Aunt (de la Mare 1983: 74-108)[12]. What is certain is that it contains the mental 'haunting' of a schoolboy, Seaton, by the dominating personality of his aunt and guardian. The power of this aunt's character is masterfully dramatised by de la Mare, who communicates her force mainly through her own speeches. This subtle and possessive woman, who may 'affect the occult' a little, is perceived by her nephew as a spiritual vampire draining away his lively essence. Seaton is an orphan like the children of 'Lost Hearts'; he has clearly transformed his aunt into the equivalent of the antinomian 'wicked mother' who desires to absorb her child back into her womb - or into the occult region of the pre-ego. Revealingly, he believes her to have murdered his true mother. Under this obsession, it

remains impossible for him to gain any independent sense of self or to act effectively in the world.

The real state of affairs remains problematised, for the narrator is - or was, at least, at the time of the events - another schoolboy, Withers, who displays all the conventional prejudices of a 'good sort', and is pretty sure he despises Seaton as a faintly foreign-looking outsider, in spite of being inveigled into paying a visit to see his home and aunt. De la Mare's knowledge of all the needful blindnesses that are survival-equipment for an English schoolboy produces another convincing impersonation here - of schoolboyishness this time; but Withers's resolute conventionality means he misses the depths and heights - and is more ripe for the shock of the final encounter, when it comes.

Seaton dies near the end of the tale - just before his marriage, significantly. It is as if the aunt will not permit this demonstration of independent adult genitality (her manipulative powers are conveyed despite - or because of - Withers's wilful imperception). The engagement seems a vulnerable thing, doomed from the start; for the denigrating and belittling aunt is Seaton's real lover, on the 'occult' inward plane. In the final lines, Withers is moved to the revelation that, for him at least, Seaton truly always <u>had</u> been among the dead: 'he had never been much better than "buried" in my mind' (108).

De la Mare's richly subtle story, beautifully contoured in its impeccable and evocative English prose, betrays an understanding of the literary 'occult' in its this-worldly (as

much as other-worldly) senses, for it redirects attention from the 'ghosts' themselves to the human participants in a ghostly experience. As the close of 'All Hallows' (288-324) and his considerable output of supernatural children's poetry indicate, he values and cultivates the connection between childhood and that endemic waking dream-state which is supernatural in the widest sense: 'If ... one ventures down to the sea of childhood ... the further one wades the greater the danger of drowning, and the more the ocean deepens and widens, spreading out its waters at last towards the illimitable horizon of human life' (de la Mare 1935: xx)[13].

It would be unjust to call H.P. Lovecraft an 'Edwardian' by any objective standard, both as an American and as a writer whose first efforts did not appear until the end of the First World War. Nonetheless, it is through Lovecraft that the spirit and style of British Occult Fiction was imitated and united with the native American 'supernatural' strain with its ancestry in Bierce and Hawthorne. As a symbol as well as an artist, Lovecraft has received perhaps relatively more than his fair share of attention, particularly on the Continent, where he has suffered the same ambivalent fate as Poe: to be more highly-regarded by intellectuals abroad than at home. In France critics of no less standing than Bachelard have paid him the compliment of extended studies. He is mainly interesting in the present context as the channel through which the British tradition was tansmitted to America. For better or worse, the genre was invested in the process with

new qualities of excess, earthiness, and bizarre sensationalism, to produce the up-to-date variant of the form.

His contribution to this was probably unintentional on Lovecraft's part, and speaks more of his limitations than his gifts; indeed, he seems really a misplaced aesthete at heart. If he has a creed, then it is that even the most grotesque of emotions are fit material to fan the unreal and exotic 'gem-like flame' of artistic experience. If he marks the outside boundary of the 'Edwardian Occult', he inherits much of its secret motivation. We need not search too far to understand the real nature of his 'mythos' about the aeons-old Cthulhu and his gods. Together they represent the lurking ahuman force that ruled the Earth before the rise of humans - and which now slumbers Kraken-like beneath the sea, waiting to intrude upon our rational conscious world when it may.

The essence of all this is spelled out baldly enough by Stephen King, who comments on the fact that 'sex will almost certainly continue to be a driving force in the horror genre; sex that is sometimes presented in disguised, Freudian terms, such as Lovecraft's vaginal creation, Great Cthulhu. After viewing this many-tentacled, slimy, gelid creature through Lovecraft's eyes, do we need to wonder why Lovecraft manifested "little interest" in sex?' (King 1987: 85).

Sex appears nowadays in its more blatant fleshy guise, however; and with this recent surfacing it has ceased to operate as the deep, cthonic centre of a supernatural tale. In a sense it has turned male in consequence; so that the desires of its fantasies are for power, not experience.

Lovecraft was aware - perhaps more than anyone since Wilde - of the essential artificiality of the supernatural fiction: of its power to create, rather than to reproduce, a world. This comment is seemingly belied by his 'Pickman's Model' (Lovecraft 1985b: 44-60)[14], however, where a brilliant painter of demonic half-animal forms that crawl and tunnel beneath the earth and honeycomb the mantle under graveyards, is proved to be drawing not on his imagination, but on life. He has access to the denizens of this underground realm through a well sunk in his cellar floor.

A moment's thought about the subterranean symbolism of this grim fantasy will reveal that the 'life' on which such an artist draws is after all not that normally visible to mortal eyes; and that - despite Pickman's 'photography' - it rarely reveals all of its true nature in its embodied shapes.

Consideration of the stories like 'Pickman's model' and 'The Glamour of the Snow', which involve artists as characters, leads us to a singular revelation: that the authentic clairvoyant 'medium' - the figure whose occult art is best fitted to gain us access to another dimension, deeper, darker and more strangely scented than our own - is the artist himself. His or her imagined universe of words occupies, even more precariously than ours, that unstable self-mutating borderland between being and dissolution - and is open to more transformative realities in consequence. 'Quiddity' in Clive Barker's The Great and Secret Show[15] or the unravelling carpet of his Weaveworld[16] show that contemporary fantasists are rediscovering some of these truths.

In his recent The Dark Half[17] Stephen King has a policeman capable of strange epiphanies:

> how crazy it would be to believe not just in a vengeful ghost, but in the ghost of a man who never was. But writers INVITE ghosts, maybe; along with actors and artists, they are the only totally acceptable mediums of our society. They make worlds that never were, populate them with people who never existed, and then invite us to join them in their fantasies. And we do it, don't we? (King 1990: 381)

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CHAPTER 10: THE 'SOURCES' OF REVELATION: TOWARDS THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL ETHICS.

In my last two chapters, my subject has been the nature of 'evil', at least as this force was understood in certain early twentieth century works of supernatural fantasy. In them, evil is being interpreted, of course, not merely as a sum of 'bad actions' or as the equivalent of moral failure, but as an independently existing spirit, a kind of wilful extrahuman entity capable of exerting its influence upon the human psyche.

That we think of such moral and psychological influences in personified form is natural enough, given the personifying tendency of all religions, and the legacy of their history upon our mental habits. In the case of Western thought the dominant influence of this kind is Judeo-Christianity; and it is probably not wrong to see the spirit of evil in supernatural fantasy as an inverted reflection of its spiritual opposite, the Holy Spirit, the third 'person' of the Christian Trinity.

If, as we found in the preceding chapters, it was possible to interpret the occult plane and its evil forces along psychoanalytic lines, it should surprise no-one if the heavenly realms are capable of similar analysis. Unaccustomed as most people are to having the spiritual dimensions of orthodox religion treated as occluded allegories of our psychoanalytic or psychological makeup, there seems no valid <u>prima facie</u> obstacle to our adopting such an approach.

Though this is not the method of conventional religious hermeneutics, it need not necessarily be thought of as 'diminishing' or reductive. After all, Christianity's own founder seems - on some readings - to have perceived that religious realities have a psychological aspect; as when he reputedly informed his followers that 'the kingdom of God is within you' (Lk. 17: 21).

My purpose here is to show that the mystical experience, interpreted on psychoanalytic lines as the drive beyond the dominant reality of words, is a central element in 'holiness' just as much as it is in 'evil'. To carry out such a project I could have explored ideas of goodness and holiness in some appropriate fictional or poetic text; instead, I have preferred what seemed the most direct method. I have chosen to look at some founding texts of Christianity, with special emphasis on St Matthew's Gospel.

Of course the Bible is a powerful source and wellspring for a great deal in Western literary culture, which alone should justify its investigation from any perspective helpful to literature. From Dante, Chaucer, Milton and Spenser onwards, the fortunes of literature and religion have often gone hand in hand. The influence of English translations of the Bible upon its prose style have been enormous; and the salient examples of T.S. Eliot and Dylan Thomas in our century suggest that the process is not ended.

If, in consequence, the treatment of Biblical texts (or of their English translations) as literature is no longer controversial, then a psycho-literary analysis of the present

sort would seem as allowable as any other critical method. The difficulty is that to talk of religious beings as psychoanalytic phenomena seems inevitably to call in question our understanding of their ontological status.

Literary men who have ventured into Biblical terrain of recent years, like Northrop Frye[1], Robert Alter[2] or Gabriel Josipovici[3], have not only come armed with extensive learning of their own; they have, with some circumspection, reshaped the province of religious scholars to fit their own practice. By primarily treating the literary texts of the Old and New Testaments as formal entities, they largely postpone questions of religious claims.

Of course, in supposing that the Bible <u>is</u> an appropriate object for the sort of aesthetic attentions due, say, Shakespeare, certain assumptions of religious status have already been made; in turning it from numinous icon into literary artifact an unspoken process of secularization has already taken place. However, this process can in practice be allowed to take its course without undue emphasis or overt announcement on these critics' part.

Unfortunately, this same expedient - the postponement of religious questions - is not entirely open to me in what follows. Inevitably, I shall have to touch on certain sensitive areas. Hence, this chapter is an unusual one in a literary thesis. It may seem to stray over a number of boundaries and intrude on scholarly preserves where the literary critic is taken as a trespasser of sorts.

Though I too wish to look upon the New Testament as a literary text, my main emphasis will be on what this text cannot say, on what remains unconscious in its communication. Such a Lacanian exercise in exploring the 'unconscious of the text' is part of my wider aim of inquiring into the mystical character of literary language, and will inevitably lead me further than the words themselves - to certain hypotheses about the nature of the religious entities we are dealing with. In this pursuit I am insisting only that these entities have a psychological character, and that this character may be delineated. My present interest ends with these inward forces and their effects; any further specifically theological functions or status are beyond the scope of my debate.

My excursions beyond the 'purely literary' are confined within the boundaries of the kinds of connection which Matthew Arnold once made. A long time ago Arnold insisted upon a certain equation between the poetic and the holy. In both their instructive and their numinous functions poetry and religion are continuous with each other - this was Arnold's insight, and not all such insights are superseded.

What principally concerns me in my investigation of the textual 'unconscious' of passages of New Testament religious writing is precisely that very individual if largely unsayable informing essence which underlies these gospels, determining not only the character of their religious and mystical language but also their particular religious world-perspective or 'reality' - and the kind of actions they resultingly advise. That this hidden element will be an underlying yet

unexpressed structure of sorts is to be expected from Lacan's definition[4] of 'unconscious':

> The unconscious is that part of the concrete discourse insofar as it is trans-individual, which is not at the disposal of the subject to reestablish the continuity of his conscious discourse.
> (Wilden 1968: 20)

In the case of the religious texts to be studied, whether apocryphal or orthodox New Testament works, one such important submerged 'structure' is equivalent to what in certain contexts is named the Holy Ghost.

My principal aim in all of what follows will be to track down and elucidate the nature of the Holy Spirit, which I shall treat as neither a cosmic entity entirely independent of humanity nor a mere intellectual invention of the first Christian teachers; I shall be looking rather at the Holy Spirit as a pre-existent psychological force and internal presence to which these teachers simply directed appropriate attention.

Whatever else my project in this thesis has been, it is certainly a dissection of the nature of the muse: which is to say, of the psychological factors and forces which inspire and determine the transformations of language in literary art. And the importance to literary creation of understanding the muse and its powers would surely be admitted. If the New Testament writings have a muse, then that muse is proclaimed by the writings themselves to be the Holy Spirit - no less than the third and equal person of God, as at least later theology insisted.

If it seems audacious to treat the Holy Spirit in its textual relations as a muse, there is no very evident reason why this should be so. For whatever its other attributes, this is unmistakably one of them. It has most traditional characteristics of a muse: it inspires writing, and is a daemon-like guide to action and speech from an unseen place (Luke 12:12). But it is not only the inspirational source of verbal production from beyond the words themselves, it is also in a sense the end and goal of the texts it produces and informs. Acquaintance with the Holy Spirit is where these religious writings are supposed to lead us - again, to an (immaterial) extratextual reality.

However, the 'Holy Ghost' is unlike the ghostly realm of occult fiction, or even the Romantic Sublime, in the extratextual functions claimed for it. It is considered to possess a life even more independent of its texts than are either of these other sources of inspiration; and it is supposed - even in its Pauline variant - to have a special relation not only to verbal utterance but to conduct. This connection with conduct will provide one of the threads I must follow in attempting to track down its hidden nature in what follows.

Because the Spirit is meant to continue to lead an autonomous existence with practical effect upon the life of the reader quite apart from the act of reading itself, it is hence appealed to and invoked in a different way in the religious writings. Though the epistles and even the gospels may use both poetic image and rhetorical exhortation for this

invocatory purpose, the most powerful literary method is the exemplary and representative narrative - as in the symbolic parables and the gospel story itself, or in the tales of Paul's sufferings: his 'bearing witness' to the Spirit.

The simplicity and directedness of such narratives, the way their stories cumulatively repeat and reinforce one theme, are part of their effectiveness. The properties and the settings are so providentially right: the simple people, the removed lakeside setting (which must have been a potent but distant precursor and model for the Wordsworthian exercise) are a triumph of authorship. And yet this mode of authorship is of the most extraordinary kind: Jesus's deliberate distance from the texts he produces gives both great meaning and great symbolic poignancy to the Death of this particular Author. This 'remote authorship' is another theme I shall have to take up again here later.

If there are significant differences, attention to the popular symbolism which has represented the Holy Spirit down the ages reveals many similarities to other muses. For example, we have earlier looked at the occult muse, and that of the Romantic sublime; and there is a reason, we have ultimately found, why most muses turn out to be feminine. Though orthodox Christianity has tended to deny the Holy Spirit a sexual nature, that has not always been so. There is evidence that the translation from a Judaic to a Greek environment altered popular understanding of the Holy Spirit's gender: as Elaine Pagels[5] puts it: 'The Greek terminology for the Trinity, which includes the neuter term for spirit

(pneuma) virtually requires that the third "Person" of the Trinity be asexual' (1982: 74). But Hebrew writers would have thought in terms of ruah which is feminine, or, as is equally the case, of shekinah (cf. Mollenkott[6] 1984: Ch. 7).

The same is true for the related Judaic idea, personified divine Wisdom. Its feminine aspect (as hokhmah) would later be hypostatized in Gnostic Christian literature as Sophia; and Jesus in The Gospel according to the Hebrews[7] (James 1955: 2) - a text which is quite early enough to have been a strong candidate for canonical acceptance - certainly speaks of his 'mother the Holy Spirit'. M.R. James's comment on this phrase supports Pagels's assumptions: 'The description of the Holy Spirit as "my mother" is due to the fact that the Hebrew word for spirit is of the feminine gender' (ibid.).

Again in The Gospel of Thomas[8] (Grant and Freedman 1960: Logia 98 and 102) Jesus claims both a spiritual Father and Mother, who are most likely God and the Spirit. Thomas has Jesus saying, indeed, 'my (earthly) mother [gave me death], but [my] true [Mother] gave me life' - a logion which later 'official' Marianism would have found especially shocking (Pagels 1982: 74).

Yet if the preferred symbol in traditional Christian iconography, the dove, is most often taken as being of neutral sex, then the image is maternal at least in its traditional link with love, caring and fertility. It bears postdiluvian connotations of messengerhood and yet is regularly depicted beneath Christ's feet: below, creature-like, pre-human, a force.

The present essay embarks, then, on an investigation of this - for Western Culture - most fundamental and archetypal of muses, with a multitudinous progeny in writing of all kinds, including creative literature. My title speaks of a search for origins, and in its archaeological (or genealogical) quest for origins[9] my present study may actually resemble one of Foucault's many enterprises; but the origin it seeks is psychological, and not some regulating mechanism of power and authority, as it would be for Foucault.

Indeed, one of the very striking characteristics of the Holy Spirit as a point of psychological 'origin' is its intrinsic antipathy to all such systems of worldly power. So unimportant are these systems in the true unseen scheme of things, they are hardly even worth the effort of actively opposing, as Christian guidelines for conduct towards the Roman state seem to imply. Unluckily, such indifference to worldly power became unfashionable during the subsequent history of Christianity: as we know, the later Catholic Church could be every bit the paradigm of a Foucauldian institution.

2

To provide a conspectus of all theories of the Origin of the Religious Impulse would be undesirable here; it is a study in itself, and its history is by and large the history of our culture.

A full survey would have to include such opinions as, for example, that of the Marxists, for whom religion arises as an

ally of the state and a means of social control over the masses by the few. On this view, religion aids the state by lulling away the desire to redress this-worldy grievances; while for Nietzsche in contrast it gives licence to the democratic domination of the few by the many, in the name of a dubious supra-sensible equality. Then there is the view of Structural Anthropology that the sacred is a reflection of, and gives divine sanction to, the social institutions of the group. On the other hand there is Freud's conviction - developed from Feuerbach's idea of religion as personifying human ideals - that the gods are the human family writ large, with God the Father upholding the authority of reason and of conscience. Also deserving a place is Jung's belief that religion is a communal expression of the activities of the Collective Unconscious and its archetypes.

Perhaps the most influential and persistent theory is that voiced by David Hume[10] in his Natural History of Religions (1757):

> We are placed in this world, as in a great theatre, where the true springs and causes of every event are entirely concealed from us; nor have we either sufficient wisdom to foresee, or power to prevent those ills, with which we are continually threatened. We hang in perpetual suspense between life and death, health and sickness, plenty and want; which are distributed amongst the human species by secret and unknown causes, whose operation is oft unexpected, and always unaccountable. These unknown causes, then, become the constant object of our hope and fear, and while the passions are kept in perpetual alarm by an anxious expectation of the events, the imagination is equally employed in forming ideas of those powers, on which we have so entire a dependance.
> (in Wollheim, ed. 1963: 40)

Fear of the unknown future, with a desire to placate fate and to control its mysterious principles, is the motive of the religious life, according to Hume. His emphasis on the negative emotions of fear and propitation of the unknown no doubt suited his own sceptical bent; however it was also to prove adaptable to the temper of nineteenth-century man, subject to his own evolutionary pessimism and fear of the primitive. As early as Comte, cultural evolution from religion to positivism is interpreted as a rise out of superstition and ignorance. And even in that standard twentieth-century work, Kellett's A Short History of Religions[11], the introductory speculations (1962: Ch. 1) on religious origins are still Hume's, in essence. Kellett by and large agrees with Sir James Frazer, whom he quotes (12): religion, in Frazer's view, is 'a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to control the course of nature or of human life'.

To list the varied alternative views is not to deny that many are in some measure compatible with each other: most of them rest upon the centrality of authority and fear, or projection upon the cosmos of certain authority-functions of the super-ego. Upon more detailed scrutiny, Freud's version of the rise of religion actually echoes Hume's quite closely. I have chosen to quote here from his more developed The Future of an Illusion[12] (1927), rather than the better-known mythic account in Totem and Taboo (1912-3). Again, in Freud's view, it is in the context of his helplessness against nature, fate, and social impotence that man first invokes the gods:

> There are the elements, which seem to mock at human control: the earth, which quakes and is torn apart and buries all human life and its works ... there are diseases, which we have only recently recognized as attacks by other organisms; and finally there is the painful riddle of death .... With these forces nature rises up against us, majestic, cruel and inexorable; she brings to our mind once more our weakness and helplessness, which we thought to escape through the work of civilization.
> (Freud 1961[b]: 15-6)

Man's initial strategy in the suborning of these powers is 'the humanization of nature' (16). If behind nature there are beings like ourselves, then the situation, if dire, is at least familiar; we can 'feel at home in the uncanny and can deal by psychical means with our senseless anxiety' (17). Furthermore, against these 'violent supermen outside' we are actually not without some recourse: 'we can try to adjure them, to appease them, to bribe them, and, by so influencing them, we may rob them of a part of their power.'

The inspiration for this move is ready and available within the unconscious psyche, since the tactic repeats an event in the developing experience of every infant - and so unwittingly reinforces its 'magic' potency through an 'uncanny' invocation of the forgotten past:

> It has an infantile prototype, of which it is in fact only the continuation. For once before one has found oneself in a similar state of helplessness: as a small child, in relation to one's parents. One had reason to fear them, and especially one's father; and yet one was sure of his protection against the dangers one knew .... In the same way, a man makes the forces of nature not simply into persons with whom he can associate as he would with his equals - that would not do justice to the overpowering impression which these forces make on him - but he gives them the character of a father. He turns them into gods .... (17)

On this basis, 'a store of ideas is created, born from man's need to make his helplessness tolerable and built up from the material of memories of the helplessness of his own childhood and the childhood of the human race' (18). And yet the subordination to and dependence upon an imago that follows is not really a happy state of affairs; though it relieves some anxieties it only substitutes others for them: 'Religion would thus be the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity; like the obsessional neurosis of children, it arose out of the Oedipus complex, out of the relation to the father' (43).

Freud's insistence upon the father-relation as the key to the question of religious origins may be said to unite neatly in one, through the agency of a single symbol, the apparent variety of the other thinkers. For most of them, despite differences of detail, authority and fear are the keynotes, and in Freud the divine Father is created to wield the first and command the second.

Recently, through the work of Julia Kristeva and others, it has begun to be realised that the historical account above does not exhaust all possible characterisations of religious need. There is, it appears, a maternal and feminine religious mode which can be set against Freud's cosmic father. Some argue that its earliest manifestation was the cult of the earth-mother, whose worship is claimed to be historically prior to the arrival of the authoritarian male-dominated pantheons, all of which attempted to depose her and obliterate her sect. Jung[13] is fond of adducing the cases of Tiamat and

Marduk, and Cybele and Attis (in Storr 1983: 273). There is evidence of this demotion having taken place in the Greek world, at least, where the Pythian priestesses of Delphi's oracle were classical survivals of an earlier Dionysiac-style worship of the fertile Earth. By historical times, however, they had become unlikely votaries of Apollo, deity of reason and of the sun. Ephesian Artemis, in origin no doubt a very ancient deity (Ephesus itself was founded in the 11th century BC, and was associated immemorially with the cult) had to face a double indignity: appropriation by the Attic pantheon, and later contention with and defeat by the male Christ.

In a wider perspective, though, the priority of the Earth-Mother may rest primarily upon an intuitive aptness: for the child, mother comes before father, after all.

Strangely, in view of his support for 'male' priority, the first clear modern psychological expression of this alternative 'feminine' religious force is relayed to us through Freud's own agency. His friend Romain Rolland, after reading The Future of an Illusion, outlined his different perception of the essential religious emotion in a letter to Freud. Freud's meditation upon - and demystification of - Rolland's testimony occupies the initial chapters of his major Civilization and its Discontents[14] (1930). On its first page Freud outlines Rolland's idea of the 'true source of religious sentiments':

> This, he says, consists in a peculiar feeling, which he himself is never without, which he finds confirmed by many others, and which he may suppose is present in millions of people. It is a feeling which he would like to call a sensation of

> 'eternity', a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded - as it were, 'oceanic'. This feeling, he adds, is a purely subjective fact, not an article of faith; it brings with it no assurance of personal immortality, but is the source of the religious energy which is seized upon by the various Churches and religious systems, directed by them into particular channels .... (Freud 1961: 64)

Freud endeavours to explain away this 'feeling of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole' (65) as having its psychological origin in the phenomenon of primary narcissism, in the earliest child's imperfect separation between his own ego and the world at large - represented especially by his mother's being.

Freud, as we have seen, was ultimately unconvinced by Rolland's 'oceanic' consciousness, and his discovery of its source in primary narcissism is an attempt to trivialise the notion. Julia Kristeva would no doubt happily leave Freud's psychological analysis uncontested; but his reference to primary narcissism would not be taken by her as denigratory or dismissive, as Freud intended. Indeed, she would probably find his patronising attitude to this period of complete maternal dominance, together with his continued insistence on the religious primacy of the father, to be symptoms of his unconscious chauvinism: as if in his own person Freud is compulsively re-enacting the archaic and yet perennial 'drama of the gods' we have spoken of.

Indeed, for Kristeva this repeated pattern, the replacement of the Earth-mother by male deities, is only a symptom of an inevitable dynamic of religious history. In her

view, the whole purpose of most sacred rules and rites is the encoding of a variety of talismanic safeguards against the works of the female, in an attempt to anathematise the female influence. Kristeva's intellectual example might thus inspire us to view the combat between the 'female' and 'male' types of religious expression - the progressive engulfment of forms of 'oceanic' spirituality by creeds based on law, precedence, ritual and priestly hierarchy - as a recurring event in the evolution of religious forms.

In her Powers of Horror[15] she frames her initial perception of these differences as follows:

> Could the sacred be, whatever its variants, a two-sided formulation? One aspect founded by murder and ... atonement, with all the ... obsessive rituals that accompany it; and another aspect, like a lining, more secret still and invisible, non-representable, oriented towards those uncertain spaces of unstable identity, toward the fragility - both threatening and fusional - of the archaic dyad, towards the non-separation of subject/object, on which language has no hold but one woven of fright and repulsion? ... What will concern me here is ... the confrontation with the feminine ....
> (1982: 57)

While Freud found his psychological 'origin' in a primal Oedipal need to placate the father, so Kristeva's different version looks further back over the Oedipal divide, to a time when the mother's presence was dominant, indeed all-exclusive. This pre-linguistic realm which predates the establishment of rules and boundaries or the formation of identity continues to influence those later structures which are reared upon it: it becomes, as it were, their 'lining' - but this lining is of a nature opposed to what it is made to sustain.

The primal war between these two conditions of earliest life becomes translated into latter-day religious terms, and is expressed in many of its common rites: 'The function of these religious rituals is to ward off the subject's fear of his very own identity sinking irretrievably into the mother' (64). Such formal rites - very different from the Dionysiac celebrations of more ancient times, which actually revelled in the inchoate 'feminine' influence - are usually performed or prescribed by a male priesthood, exclusive in character.

Unusual as this analysis may seem, the independent conclusions of a more orthodox theologian, William L. Countryman, can be made to support aspects of Kristeva's thesis. In his recent Dirt, Greed and Sex[16], an extensive analysis of the meaning of purity and purification in the New Testament, he perceives that the Levitical rules are based on a fear of what does not accord with expected 'kinds'. Pigs and their meat are excluded principally because, to rather narrow ancient Semitic notions of taxonomy, they are hybrid entities - regrettably unconforming to type. Jesus's contribution, in Countryman's view, is to substitute a new internal criterion of intention for traditional rules of external purity (1989: passim).

Kristeva anticipates at least his former findings, when she reveals that 'The pure will be that which conforms to an established taxonomy; the impure, that which unsettles it, establishes intermixture and disorder' (98). She adduces much telling scriptural evidence that older Jewish law is heavily based on an inflexible loyalty to the authority of the word,

and to the word's conceptual boundaries and determinations. For example, Leviticus 11: 3-4 insists that though beasts with cloven hooves which chew the cud may be eaten, those - like the camel - which show only one of these attributes, may not - suggesting that the cow is the model on which the idea of a domestic animal was formed. Leviticus 19: 19 announces 'Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee.' Leviticus 21: 18-21 declares unclean any man who is blind or lame or who carries a blemish, a flat nose, 'or any thing superfluous': in other words, whoever fails to conform to the stereotype of a human male. Worst of all, the woman falls under the same definition: because of 'her parturition and the blood that goes with it, she will be "impure": "according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean"' (Leviticus 12:2; Kristeva 1982: 99). It is uncertain, Kristeva feels, whether blood itself is anathema because it represents life (even if life which has lost its 'form') or because of its menstrual connection with woman.

What Kristeva finds inescapable here is that these rules of purification encode the desire to legislate and preserve the purity of the word: of that transcendent talisman of the Oedipal victory over the unspeakable, and the prime instrument of the Father's control. Confirmation of her opinion comes from Jewish attitudes to the deity's name: Yahweh's name remains unutterable not because he represents the ineffable, but because the primal word with which he names himself is

itself holy; as the first and most powerful of all words, the holiness of speech itself derives from it, at an appropriate remove. In interpeted form, Yahweh's name announces that he is in being and in possession of identity, that he has escaped the formlessness of the maternal chaos by a self-willed act of speech.

'I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people' declares Leviticus 20: 24-5. A system for the preservation of the authority of the word is upheld by exclusions and founded upon differences; as Leviticus implies, its distinctions between clean and unclean are a reflection of the necessary distinctions between nations that give them force. That the Jewish ritual food-laws set this race apart is one of their original purposes.

Thus the holy of holies in the temple - containing nothing, as Pompey found to his disgust - is simply the fountainhead of a system founded upon interposed conceptual 'nothings', a system by which elements of existence are formally decreed to be separate. What we discover in Jewish religious life is, according to Kristeva, a 'series of separations ... in the last analysis relating to fusion with the mother' (94) - or, rather, to separation from the mother. It is possible to interpret circumcision, in this light, as a second umbilical separation applied ritually to the phallus: a last symbolic reinforcement of the mature male's freedom from the enclosing feminine, by which act he takes his rightful place in a male order which commands through phallic rules and precise divisions. The disputes and lucubrations of

generations of Pharisees were aimed at ever finer grades of this kind of legal precision; what they achieved in the event was only a kind of absurd argumentative infinite regress.

Kristeva seems to support such interpretations when she asks of the purity laws if they are 'an attempt to keep a being who speaks to his God separated from the fecund mother? In that case, it would be a matter of separating oneself from the phantasmatic power of the mother, the archaic Mother Goddess who actually haunted the imagination of a nation at war with the surrounding polytheism' (99):

> The pure/impure mechanism testifies to the harsh combat Judaism, in order to constitute itself, must wage against paganism and its maternal cults. It carries into the private lives of everyone the brunt of the struggle each subject must wage during the entire length of his personal history in order to become separate, that is to say, to become a speaking subject and/or subject to Law. (94)

We do not know how ancient were the rites of the Earth-Mother, or how old the myth of Eden. (Certainly the snake-priestesses of Delphi have ancestresses depicted among the figurines of Minoan Crete.) Nonetheless, it is hard not to see the same Python worshipped at Delphi - as the inverted phallus, product of, not simply intruder into, the depths and chasms of the maternal soil - behind the form the adversary takes in the Eden myth.

In Eden, as with the Pythia, the woman is the serpent's natural ally. Paradoxically it is his reptilian presence which acts as catalyst in the acquisition of knowledge of good and evil; he makes necessary what was not formerly required:

reason, conscience and the word. The Eden story is thus the supreme example of phallic bad faith, as so many Gnostics were later to insist (cf. Pagels 1982: Ch. 3, 'God the Father/God the Mother'). The author of the fable succeeds in implying that the woman's frailty is instrumental in the casting out from Paradise. This author blames her for provoking the fall, when in fact the flower-bejewelled Feminine Paradise is the 'evil' Adam must denounce and deny in order to come into being. The fabulist projects the frustrated anger of his own ambivalence upon Woman herself, in the person of Eve - who is, of course, not only metonymically but literally all womanhood. Secretly Adam knows it is his wish to leave: only then can his expiatory religion of authority and penance come to exist, can his nostalgia be transmuted into the manipulations of power of which he dreams.

Where does Christianity stand in all this? The question is complicated by the further one: Which Christianity do we mean? That Jesus represents a break with all the above in some sense is evident, even if the later Church, with power interests of its own, reinstated by degrees as many rituals and regulations as had been overthrown. I think the consensus would be that Jesus effected some sort of reconciliation of the two warring religious modes (although the exact nature and pattern of this synthesis remains in dispute).

At least to this extent, then, Kristeva is right when she avers that Pauline Christianity's rejection of the purification laws was a highly symbolic act: 'Christian defilement is ... a revenge of paganism, a reconciliation with

the maternal principle. Freud moreover stressed the point in Moses and Monotheism, revealing that Christian religion is a compromise between paganism and Judaic monotheism' (116). To be fair, of course this last suspicion had dawned on a good many before Freud's 1939 essay.

We have looked here at suggestions about two competing principles, discoverable behind the history of religions, both supposedly inherited and absorbed by Christianity itself. In terms of these opposing principles, Kristeva's Mother-goddess confront's Freud's phallic Heavenly Father. In Jesus's new spiritual order, both are somehow subsumed together.

I have a third suggestion to offer, to be substantiated in what follows. In the case of any human family, the child's being assumes the pre-existence and different natures of its mother and father, but cannot properly be seen as a 'reconciliation' of them. In the same way, the new and central spiritual principle that Jesus counterposed against others valorised neither the father nor the mother, but the child.

3

To validate such a claim, or even properly to expose its meaning, means laying out a great deal of evidence, both historical and textual. The remainder of this chapter and the start of the next will be concerned with the implications of both text and tradition; the sifting of both is necessary before I am able to return to a more Kristevan and psychoanalytic perspective in my final pages.

Among the various matters raised, the question 'Which Jesus?' is both preliminary and paramount. If this chapter purports to investigate the unconscious of one or other of the gospels as religious texts, then heady textual questions of the sort which have beset biblical scholarship since the late eighteenth century can hardly be altogether sidestepped.

At the very least, some position on textual matters must be adopted, some stand announced. For of course, we are not dealing here with a single, but a composite authorship: both anonymous oral traditions and a plethora of unknown documents lie behind the gospels we know, rendering any claim to a unitary consciousness or even 'unconscious' problematic.

By itself, this difficulty might not be insuperable; it is hardly worse than that which confronts the critic of Homer, for example, or the Arthurian cycles. Again, in the case of occult fantasy, we have found that very diverse authors who write under a single inspiration will be found to reveal the same or very similar 'deep structures' and psychic patterns.

One obvious way out in our case might be to emphasise a central coherent core of influences emanating from the historical figure of Jesus himself, or from what the early church made of him. But a further impediment stands in the way, which has been recognised ever since the 'quest for the historical Jesus' foundered in the last century. None of the accounts of Jesus's life, even the earliest, are historical documents in the modern sense: all of them are heavily and divergently theological - or, in a more modern phrase, 'ideological'. Early Christianity itself was beset by

substantial differences of interpretation of the acts and words of its founder, which its documents reflect.

The later acrimonious attempts to reduce this variety to order by the Catholic church from the late second century onwards eventually imposed a standard hermeneutics which, by its political success and wide dissemination, itself makes it difficult for us to 'read' the gospels, whether canonical or apocryphal, except by its light. The very idea of 'heresy' is in fact, part of a rhetoric of persuasion: an additional and extra-critical means to compel acceptance of a 'thesis' about a set of texts.

Whether or not we should perceive this ideological element as an 'obstacle' as such, it raises the possibility that we have no single 'centre' to speak of, or perhaps even centres. Luckily, however, the situation is not so despairing as it once seemed, or as it appeared after Rudolf Bultmann's sophisticated 'form criticism' had done its work earlier this century (cf. Bultmann 1963)[17]. Since then, increasing scholarly knowledge and a changed perspective have persuaded many that the synoptic evangelists accept a certain integrity of method; as believing early Christians as well as men of their time, they worked subject to conventions which imposed limits upon what they could freely add or invent, and they were obliged also to take religious pressure to preserve the past into account; though, of course, their latitude for adaptation and invention was still considerable. As Edward Schillebeeckx[18] puts it: 'we are led to conclude that the New Testament, not in spite of its diverse kerygmatic [i.e. active ideological

and theological] projects but because of them, gives us substantial information about Jesus of Nazareth, at least as reliably as any other serious secular book whatever of that period. But it is intellectually irresponsible simply to assume this in advance' (Schillebeeckx 1989: 437).

To consider the textual evidence in the body of these chapters might seem like too great a digression from my main argument, or to do violence to the needs of a literary thesis. However, since I believe some account of the texts themselves is essential I have deferred their extended discussion to Appendix I at the end of this volume, where the reader who is so inclined may consult the relevant findings. Naturally, I have depended there very widely on the scholarship of others; though where conflicting opinions exist I have felt free to come to conclusions of my own.

The central textual and historical matters are, however, hardly in dispute. The evidence shows that three dominant forms of the Christian religion were influential in the first and second centuries AD. These were associated, respectively, with Jerusalem and the apostle James; with Paul and the mission to the Gentiles; and with the diverse Gnostic sects which flourished in the second century, especially.

Each of these led to textual production of some kind. Not all the influential texts are extant, however, and some that are known only in fragments or in isolation are still disputed. What I presume to offer in subsequent sections of these final chapters is, indeed, an alternative means to textual scholarship alone of reaching the single central

structure of emotions and ideas which seem to underly all the divergent forms of early Christianity, and which, in consequence, there seems little reason not to attach directly to its founder. These methods are at once both literary and psychoanalytic: they are aimed at finding and interpreting the common ground which does exist between the early movements.

Ideally, all the routes of early religious development - Judaistic, Pauline, Gnostic - should lead back to this one point, and share it essentially in common. (Of course, my findings too will be an 'interpretation', to be provisionally relied upon only where scholarship confirms them.)

For the present purposes of linking these movements according to their common ground, I shall select only a restricted handful of their texts to represent each. In the case of Jerusalem Christianity, I shall take the so-called 'Epistle of James' as sufficiently representative of an aspect of the Jerusalem point of view. St Matthew's gospel, as well as the Q document which partially underlies it, also strongly reflect this tradition, although the version of Matthew we have incorporates much of Mark, and is sporadically influenced by its very different theology, reflective of Pauline attitudes. Paul himself will thus be represented both by Marcan passages and by certain of his own epistles, as well as by the partially pro-Pauline Epistle of Barnabas. The Gnostic strain is mediated through several of the newly-discovered texts from Nag Hammadi, but principally through the extraordinary Gospel of Thomas, which undoubtedly contains some very early material.

My project is a little eased by the fact that our specific interest is in Jesus as teacher, not as Messiah-king, prophet or divinity. Thankfully, we have no need of going into the various kerygmatic models inherited from Judaism, as Schillebeeckx does skilfully in the third part of his Jesus (1971).

Of these three early Christian schools, the Pauline division grew out of certain Hellenistic-Jewish strains present in Christianity from the first, but it burgeoned under pressure of the demands of the Gentile mission - advocating especially, in Paul's hands, the primacy of 'faith' in the risen, ascended and returning Lord, and a consequent freedom from the demands of the torah.

The Jewish-Christian group centred around James and the apostles in Jerusalem, on the other hand, saw Christianity first of all as a reform movement within Judaism itself. Its belief, in contrast to Paul's, was that morality was quite as important as faith in the religious life. Its adherent groups no doubt grew and hardened defensively in their separate stance(s) after 70 AD when the original ideal of Jewish unity was no longer attainable.

The various Gnostic sects, in contrast, rejected this essentially practical bias: instead they sought an earthly union with a transcendent realm beyond this vale of tears, through the practice of meditation. Their particular strain only becomes fully recognisable with the teaching of Basileides around 117-138 AD, but its varied theological roots are no doubt much earlier.

The tendency has been to align the historical Jesus with one alone of these camps; the liberal critical school from Tübingen onwards has almost universally sought, for obvious reasons, to place him in Judeao-Christian company alongside his apostles. Jewish scholars like Hyam Maccoby[19] and Geza Vermes[20] (1976) have taken this process particularly far, their findings tending on the whole to diminish the supposed differences between Jesus and Judaism. To Maccoby (1986) the real Jesus was a Pharisee of Pharisees(!) and Paul a scoundrel opportunist who distorted his master's teachings to found a new religion; Hugh J. Schonfield (1965)[21] agrees with both that Jesus's real aim was that of political uprising. All these must, however, be taken as views of an extreme kind.

What such speculations most reveal, perhaps, are the limitations of the purely historical method, which is inherently more apt to reveal the 'like' than the 'different': Jesus has inevitably to be 'like' other historical figures of the time with whom it is feasible to compare him.

Nonetheless, whatever evidence may be gleaned from the history of early Christianity must be brought to bear in what follows, along with the textual evidence, in order the better to guide my initial approaches to the deeper psychological layers of the source material. It is the points where these different elements coincide to reveal a similar story that are, I think, especially authoritative. Such points have governed my sense of probability and directed my choices among viewpoints in reconstructing the Christian religious past.

The following section attempts to trace in more detail what may be learned of the outlook of the Jerusalem school. Paulinism and Gnosticism will be examined and compared with Jerusalem Christianity and with each other in my next chapter.

No matter what special attitude each historian takes to Paul, his testimony in his epistles is treated as a major historical source of information about James and his followers in Jerusalem. What especially seems to have gone unquestioned in all the discussion of the first Jerusalem Church is the portrait painted of it in Acts and the Pauline Epistles; as if Paul would have no vested interest in caricaturing his opponents!

A key document for this question is perhaps the most remarkable epistle in the New Testament - remarkable in that it was ever included at all by the Catholic editors, let alone given pride of place after the Pauline letters. This work is unostentatiously entitled 'A Letter of James' in The New English Bible. Its tone is gentle, firm, authoritative, and its theme is simple: 'what use is it for a man to say he has faith when he does nothing to show it?' (James 2:14).

In other words, its target is the Pauline doctrine of 'faith' before 'works' painstakingly laid out in the preceding epistles. 'You have faith enough to believe that there is one God. Excellent! The devils have faith like that, and it makes them tremble. But can you not see, you quibbler, that faith divorced from deeds is barren?' (2:19-20), counters James.

> Away then with all that is sordid, and the malice that hurries to excess, and quietly accept the message planted in your hearts, which can bring you to salvation. Only be sure that you act on the message and do not merely listen; for that would be to mislead yourselves. A man who listens to a message but never acts upon it is like one who looks in a mirror at the face nature gave him. He glances at himself and goes away, and at once forgets what he looked like. But the man who looks closely into the perfect law, the law that makes us free, and who lives in its company, does not forget what he hears, but acts upon it; and that is the man who by acting will find happiness. (James 1:23-5)

If we wish to see these as the words of Jesus's brother, the first Christian leader after Jesus himself, then it has to be admitted at once that this letter is one of the most disputed texts in the New Testament. On the one hand it has its defenders to this day. Bishop John A.T. Robinson, of Honest to God[22] fame, believed it to be genuine; scholars in Britain and on the continent are to be found to argue the same case (cf. Schillebeeckx: 714, Note 47). But since there seem actual textual dependencies on the Pauline letters both in verbal structure and imagery, the majority verdict is that it cannot be of very early date.

However, this verdict is hard to reconcile with the fact that the first Epistle of Bishop Clement[23], the earliest of the extant Church Fathers - writing from Rome about 95 AD - clearly presupposes this epistle, along with many of Paul's (cf. 1 Clement ch. V, VI, and XI:11. Indeed, V apparently tries to reconcile the 'Abraham' dispute; see below).

The majority verdict also assumes that James, who died only four years before Paul - he was assassinated in 62 AD -

could not have read some of Paul's letters; or that literary influence could not have proceeded also in the other direction. None of this is, however, finally established. The opening invocation - 'Greetings to the Twelve Tribes dispersed throughout the world' - suggests that James's words were widely disseminated in the Jewish-Christian diaspora, to which Paul also preached and where he could have scrutinised them. Indeed, Acts itself tacitly admits that James had what is now called a media-network at his disposal (see below). That his 'Abraham' illustration (2:21-4) appears with the opposite inference in Romans 4:13-25 would, to my logic, suggest the immediacy of argumentative cut-and-thrust rather than 'dependence' as such.

Of all the arguments against 'James's' authenticity, the strangest is that which points out that its views do not fit Paul's picture of James or of the 'circumcision church'! It would be naive indeed to expect perfect objectivity in worldly matters from so combative and spirit-driven a man as Paul.

Whatever the real truth about the authorship of this epistle, its content and manner were sufficiently like the James the early church remembered to be graced with his name; and that, I think, is evidence in itself. Whether the writer is or is not James the Just, the epistle is no cobbled-together forgery, intended to deceive. Textual evidence aside, its monumental sincerity and its quiet but insistent authority are still stylistically compelling. If this at all resembles how the original James sounded, then - one begins to feel -

there is no question of his qualifications for leadership of the first church, which some have wondered at.

As expected, the 'law' is mentioned; but this law does not concern rites of external purification or the observance of imposed rules of conduct. James appeals not to conventions but to the 'perfect law' implanted naturally within us from the beginning, like a mirror of the self; a man may refer to this or ignore it, but to live by it is to be most human: it is then 'the law that makes us free'.

The difference between Pauline 'faith' and Jamesian 'law' is simply that the latter always must and will find its natural outlet in action: it is entirely one with its external results, and it makes no sense to discuss them separately. Though undoubtedly Paul argues in almost the same terms about the power of faith, his doctrine is essentially more passive, a contemplative waiting for grace rather than a binding will to do. It is not that James rejects outright the entire basis of Paul's theology; it is that he sees potential dangers in its emphases that he wishes to forestall.

If 'James' is anything at all like the historical figure whose name it bears or borrows, then Paul's insistence (e.g. Gal. 2: 11-15) that it was his own converts' non-observance of the <u>torah</u> which set the apostles against him is partly a 'blind'; the first doctrinal question to divide Christendom was really that which re-emerged at the Reformation with a different alignment of forces: 'Is justification by "faith" or by "works"?' Within this, the <u>torah</u> was a subordinate issue.

The idea that men who had travelled with Jesus and felt the force not only of his teachings but his actions could overnight become the most rigid of formalists does not really bear thinking on. Jesus described himself as 'a glutton and a drunkard' (Lk. 7:37); he associated with such men as tax-collecters and publicans; he not only spoke with women but prostitutes were numbered among his following - 'behaviour which could only be seen by God-fearing Jews as leading to a loss of ritual cleanliness' (Wilson[24] 1984: 94).

His words, too, portray him as insisting that no human should be called 'Rabbi' or 'Father'; that the greatest among the disciples should be their servant (Mt. 23:8-11); as a man who belittled those who 'pay tithes of mint and dill and cummin' but overlook the weightier demands of the law: justice, mercy, and good faith (23-4); and whose favourite quotation (from Hosea) was 'I require mercy, not sacrifice' (e.g: 12:7; 9:13). Indeed, his known opposition to the temple and its sacrificial cult may have been an indirect cause of his death. His willingness to contravene the Sabbath for the sake of good, as in the healing of the man with the withered hand, is no Marcan invention (Mk 3:1-6) either; according to a gloss of Jerome's it appeared also in 'the Gospel which the Nazarenes and the Ebionites use ... and which most people call the authentic [Gospel] of Matthew' (in Throckmorton[25] 1979: 51; here The Gospel according to the Hebrews actually seems to be meant, and this was one of the principal 'Jerusalem' texts).

Disciples who failed to understand the tendency of these teachings would have to be duller than even the pro-Pauline

Mark paints them. Had they excluded converts simply to preserve the Jewish ritual law the living Jesus might justifiably have accused them of 'straining off a midge, yet gulping down a camel' (Mt. 23:24; NEB).

It would be quite wrong, however, to portray Jesus as an out-and-out antinomian, as some of Paul's followers evidently believed. What James was afraid of, on a theological plane, was the appearance of converts who believed that obligations of action were secondary, or that belief in Jesus's Messiahship was by itself a valid ticket to heaven, quite enough to merit a place among the elect. And it is important to note that James's argument outlined above is entirely in accord with the spirit of Jesus's own sayings, outside Mark and John. It was Jesus who insisted that the condition of men's souls must be known by their 'fruit' (Mt. 7:18-20); 'Not everyone who calls me "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father' (21); the man who hears his words and 'does not act upon them' builds a house upon sand (26). Lines to similar effect appear in The Gospel of the Nazaraeans (again most likely Hebrews is meant; cf. M.R. James 1953: 7) and are alluded to in II Clement[26] 2:15: 'If you be in my bosom and do not the will of my Father who is in heaven, I will cast you away from my bosom' (cf. Throckmorton: 28).

The basis of most of the canonical sayings above is to be found in Q, representing the oldest identifiable stratum in our gospels (cf. Havener[27] 1987: 127, 135); and many of the Matthean parables are on exactly the same theme: those of the

'talents' or 'the ungrateful debtor' (18:23-35) are of this stamp. Even more in accord with James is the following: when 'a teacher of the law has become a learner in the kingdom of heaven, he is like a householder who can produce from his store both the new and the old' (Mt. 13:52). Matthew has Jesus say : 'Do not suppose that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to complete' (5:17).

Countryman (1989: see above) has advanced the idea that the essence of Jesus's ethics lies in their accent on the importance of intention; but this is to make him a little too like an Oxford philosopher, perhaps. Certainly Jesus has in mind like James the inseparableness of the inner and the outer: the kingdom which is within and the world of action outside. A primary merit of Humphrey Carpenter's Jesus[28] is that his analysis of the ethical sayings leads him to the following formula: Jesus's distinctness lies not in the abolition of law but in the view that 'keeping the Law is not enough' (Carpenter 1980: 42). It is not that Jesus is an antinomian, but he does see that 'fixed rules do not work' (47); and 'it is the spirit in which someone acts that matters rather than mere conformity of his actions to a set of rules' (55). If rules are just and the spirit is sound, then the rules will automatically be complied with. Yet this position is hardly less rigorous than following rules: to maintain continuity of the right spirit in all one does is really far more exacting than mechanical obedience. After all, it applies to everything in life, both outward and inward.

Despite the importance of action, impulses do not have to be put into action to merit praise or blame. Nursing anger or improper lust may threaten the desired condition of spirit just as much as if they were acted out (Mt. 5:22-8), or if rules were broken by them. Admittedly, this means that the 'inner' half of the combination is still the final court: and such an inward-determined world is a 'kingdom' in Jesus's symbolic vocabulary - a kingdom we build and share with others, in spirit and through our actions - and its integrity must be preserved. One may blaspheme, if one must, against even the person of God's messenger; but whoever in his heart blasphemes against the all-completing spirit of holiness is entirely lost (cf. Mt. 12:32).

Though this spirit circumscribes <u>all</u> our thoughts and deeds, as rules do not, its effect is to simplify wonderfully the basis of moral action. In James's view we need only be most 'natural' to the 'son of man' within to accord with 'the perfect law, the law that makes us free'. It is in this context Jesus can say, somewhat whimsically, 'my yoke is good to bear, my load is light' (Mt. 11:30).

We see that there is actually some everlap between James's and Paul's position: both make final appeal to a special inward state of being that informs and regulates all our responses. And, once Pauline prejudgments are set aside, it is actually possible to view the historic James's concrete dealings with Paul with some sympathy. Paul painted James (when out of his company) as the arch-conservative of the 'circumcision party' (Gal. 2:12); but in fact James seems to

have treated Paul with considerable tolerance. For his part, Peter's own rather wary encouragement of Paul (Gal. 1:18) was probably in the spirit of what I for one believe were Jesus's true words: 'He who is not against me is with me' (preferring Mark 9:40, Luke 9:50 and Oxyrynchus papyrus 1224, fol 2 recto, col. 1 - 'For he who is not against you is for you. He who today is far away will tomorrow be near you' [in Throckmorton: 96] - to Luke 11:23, Matthew 12:30 and - dare it be said - Q [Havener 133: Logion 31]). Later, Paul seems to have alienated Peter (all the canonical Petrine letters which suggest otherwise, including the first, are cobbled-together late pro-Pauline forgeries).

For his part, James was in an extremely delicate position in Jerusalem. While in favour of the advance of Christianity into the Gentile world as such, he was afraid that any rumour about a disregard of the basic requirements of the torah might undermine his own primary purpose - nothing less than the conversion of all Judaism to the recognition of Jesus as Messiah (Kellett 1962: 181). In this he was simply being true to the specific injunction of Jesus himself: 'Do not take the road to Gentile lands, and do not enter any Samaritan town: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Mt. 10:5-6). It is doubtful that James saw this as entirely restrictive, or he would have offered Paul no houseroom whatever; but the main work was the conversion of the Hebrew nation, who would be a light thereafter to the rest of the world. With this in mind, he wanted to convince the religious leaders that his followers could be as good or better Jews

than they were themselves. Though close examination might reveal differences of doctrine, James wanted to assure his potential converts that these differences were no threat to Judaism as such, but were rather its completion. Hence retaining circumcision - 'external' sign though it was - might be a tactical necessity in the circumstances. There was no hope of winning over Jerusalem otherwise.

There had been other regrettable setbacks to this plan before Paul. First Stephen and then Philip among the particulary wayward Hellenistic-Jewish group of Christians had found the regime of ritual observance irksome, and out of key with exactly what they remembered of the Master (Acts 6ff.). In the first instance a compromise was effected and a different organisation accepted for the Hellenes. But James must have felt the wisdom of his stance confirmed after the tragic martyrdom of Stephen at the hands of an inflamed Jerusalem mob; the very existence of the fledgling Christian movement had been placed in jeopardy. In spite of Maccoby's views (1986: Ch. 8), there seems little doubt that Stephen's Hellenistic group was a primary source of inspiration for Paul, then and later.

Nonetheless diplomacy continued to be James's way of dealing with dissent, nomatter how this endangered his ultimate goal. At the later Antioch conference with Paul and Barnabas, it was James himself who found the compromise solution, according to Luke:

> My judgment therefore is that we should impose no irksome restrictions on those of the Gentiles who are turning to God, but instruct them by letter to

> abstain from things polluted by contact with idols, from fornication, from anything that has been strangled, and from blood. (Acts 15:19-21)

This outcome was mostly reasonable rather than formalistic (note also James's ability to instruct nascent Christendom 'by letter'). Indeed, perhaps there should be a colon after 'idols': James may have been preserving only those elements of ritual that spurned idolatory, and therefore had a more than merely conventional significance. 'Fornication' implied cohabiting with pagan temple prostitutes; meat not killed in a kosher way recalled pagan sacrifice and should be disdained.

Such an accommodation - a separate rule for Gentile converts - must have cost James a good deal, since it is clear that most of his Jewish-Christian followers were quite incapable of appreciating the case's subtleties or of tolerating Paul for a minute. To them it seemed that the 'law' was a final sticking-point; and they were to cling to this position all the more obstinately after James's death, as Paulinism gained ascendancy. Paul, for his part, seems to have received the concessions as a carte blanche (Gal. 2:10) and thereafter gone his own way, ignoring even their mild provisions.

We have to consider now whether Jesus himself would have stood with James or Paul, given the changed aspect of things twenty years after his death. The verdict is not as self-evidently in James's favour as it might seem; perhaps James had made too many compromises with the original spirit of Christianity in pursuing his final objective. A lot rests on the potential for success of his efforts; later - considerably

after 70 AD - the Ebionites were to claim that Judaism was just on the point of conversion when James's heritage came to nil through the fall of Jerusalem. They blamed even this on Paul, testifying in effect that it was the successive agitations caused by his over-enthusiastic converts in Rome which finally turned the Roman authorities against the Jews (cf. Maccoby: 181). But at best it is more probable that Gamaliel's 'time will tell' attitude (Acts 5:33-42) had actually spread somewhat among the liberal Pharisees, largely owing to the respect James personally commanded. When James was fatally flung from the crest of the temple steps at the prompting of a Sadducean High Priest, the indignation of leading Pharisees was such that they caused the culprit to be deposed from office (cf. Luedemann[29] 1989: 169ff.).

But if the inferred testimony of Q is to be trusted, the real state of affairs was blacker than this - especially for the travelling prophets beyond Jerusalem. They themselves had met with rejection and were turning to a more receptive audience: potential Gentile converts to Judaism (Havener 1987: 100-103). Perhaps well before 70 AD the future progress of Christianity rested entirely with the Gentiles.

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CHAPTER 11: JESUS AND OEDIPUS: 'JERUSALEM', PAULINE AND GNOSTIC INTERSECTIONS IN 'THE MIRACULOUS CHILD'.

It was above all Paul, then, who for good or ill set the Christian faith on its route to Nicaea and eventual status as a world religion. It must be said that in comparison with the legalistic groups who inherited the tattered mantle of James in Palestine, Paul's vision was closer to that of his founder - a man whom he had never met.

Paul's own self-promotion has tended to obscure what, in my opinion, is the true but unrecognised nature of his gifts and calling. The high profile of his evangelistic role has overshadowed another, prior vocation for which he displayed no less talent. That it has been overlooked is understandable, since this occupation barely existed in any distinct and discernible form in his time. Nonetheless, it is also Paul's own doing that he is not nowadays appreciated as what he really was: a literary critic. Failure to recognise the 'literary-critical' factor in his life has opened the way to scholars like Maccoby, who claim that Paul simply invented Christianity.

Paul was certainly brilliant, intellectually precocious and a gifted writer. And yet, an excessive insistence upon his own originality is a weakness in a critic, and this was Paul's principal fault. To maintain the authority of his message, he claimed to derive it almost entirely from his Damascus road experience.

This desire to emphasise his own interpretational priority is visible in his actions. When he returned to

Jerusalem three years after his 'revelation' he seems to have taken pains to avoid the primary 'authorities', the apostles - except for minor contact with Peter and James - as if he desired to maintain the purity of his private inspiration intact. He even boasts of the fact in his epistles (Gal. 1:18-20), as if reserving to himself all claims to his own 'thesis' about Jesus.

Certainly, his attitude to the original apostles seems to be characterised by a sense of competition (not least when he tries to deny it, as in 1 Cor. 1:10-17):

> Are they Hebrews? So am I. Israelites? So am I? Abraham's descendants? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am mad to speak like this, but I can outdo them. (2 Cor. 11:22-3)

It would be quite absurd to see Paul as a solitary for all the intervening time between his revelation and the appearance in Jerusalem, mulling over his private vision in grand seclusion in the Syrian Desert. As we have seen (Appendix I), there were already Christian texts available, and, however sparse his references to them, Paul knew and had meditated on this 'scripture' and the older writings that led up to it. And, of course, he listened to the Damascus Nazarenes, allowing his mind to form.

But - in a sense he was right: in a sense it all did come from that moment on the Damascus road. Above all, he meditated on that revelation <u>itself</u> - not so much its content but its quality. It was essentially from that quality and those meditations that Paul's understanding of Jesus's meaning generated itself.

Speaking of this event or, probably, of another like it, he uses the following words:

> I know of a Christian man who fourteen years ago (whether in the body or out of it, I do not know - God knows) was caught up as far as the third heaven. And I know that this same man (whether in the body or out of it, I do not know - God knows) was caught up into paradise, and heard words so secret that human lips may not repeat them.
> (2 Corinthians 12:2-5)

Paul was, then, infrequently subject to spontaneous mystical experiences, and his understanding of the meaning of the spirit of faith and of the risen Christ was conditioned by them. As usual, their essence lies in the 'unspeakable', that which entirely diffuses the importance of the 'word'. If Paul's account of the heavenly rewards in Corinthians

> As it is written, what eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and what has not entered into the heart of man, such things God has prepared for those who love him. (1 Cor. 2:9)

(whose terms the Gnostic Thomas appropriates [Logion 17] and Bottom in A Midsummer Night's Dream [IV,i, ll. 209-12] parodies [see Appendix I]) renders them equally indescribable, then the further disruptions of the sense of the saying by Bottom and Thomas only further carry its message into its dismembered form. After all, Bottom too has had an experience in the fairy wood which defies and undoes verbal description. He too is 'born again' in the spirit, it seems.

Paul did not need a modern psychologist to tell him that the source of his experience lay within himself: he describes his Damascus road encounter as occurring 'when it pleased him

who had separated me from my mother's womb to reveal his son in me' (Gal. 1:15; Authorised Version, as in Kellett: 184). The New English Bible rendering - 'had set me apart from birth' - overlooks an important psychological connection here. What Paul discovered is that the 'Son of Man' lay unsuspected within him all the time - since birth and before. Presumably then, he reasoned, it waits thus in everyman.

Commentators have hurried to point out that the terminology Paul uses in his mystical passage above is Gnostic - multiple heavens and the like (though it reminds me rather of the ancient Jewish world's Paradise Lost: the intertestamentary Secrets of Enoch[1], a central sourcebook on Messianism [50-150 AD]; or else of the almost equally old Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs [in Platt II, 81-105; 220-269]). Certainly in his 'metaphysical' emphasis on the difference between the lower material world and the bright world of spirit Paul's theology offers a transition to Gnosticism, it is true (though probably in the first-century AD context, where Christian beliefs varied so widely, such labels are not actually very meaningful). Again, Paul's position involves not just a Gnostic repudiation of the material plane, but also its limited transformation into spirit:

> Scripture says, 'The first man, Adam, became an animate being' whereas the last Adam has become a life-giving spirit. Observe, the spiritual does not come first; the animal body comes first and then the spiritual. The first man was made 'of the dust of the earth': the second man is from heaven. The man made of dust is the pattern of all men of dust, and the heavenly man is the pattern of all the heavenly.

> As we have worn the likeness of the man made of dust, so we shall wear the likeness of the heavenly man. (1 Cor. 15:45-9)

If the Gnostic Anthropos or archetypal man was derived partly from the 'unconscious' of the Pauline texts and partly from the Hermetica, then Paul himself before that was drawing upon the 'unconscious' of the Christian texts, too. There is a continuity of development here which should not be ignored. Paul's theological interpretations were grounded in his understanding of what he had read, and were not born simply of his own desires.

Nonetheless, there is certainly a proto-Gnostic trend in Paul; especially in his tendency to underrate the events of this world at the expense of the next, a largely non-Jewish trend which seems to be Paul's own importation (derived, perhaps, from the Hermetic writings, if these existed so early). For him spirit tends to be seen not so much as a psychological entity or an unconscious drive but as a metaphysical substance at war with matter.

Perhaps it is in this Pauline metaphysical conception that the whole root of his difference with James lies; for it seems the law became identified in Paul's mind with mere control of man's lower material nature. Matter, according to Paul, was an aspect of the universe that Christ had 'vanquished' and spiritualised in a way which made law redundant: 'he annulled the law with its rules and regulations' (Eph. 2:14-5). This conception becomes the basis of many characteristic statements: 'in Christ Jesus the life-giving law of the Spirit has set you free from the law of sin

and death' (Rom. 8:2); 'Those who live on the level of our lower nature have their outlook formed by it, and that spells death; but those who live on the level of the spirit have the spiritual outlook, and that is life and peace' (Rom. 8:5-6). In (Deutero-Pauline) Colossians we read: 'he has forgiven us all our sins; he has cancelled the bond which pledged us to the decrees of the law. It stood against us, but he has set it aside, nailing it to the cross' (2:14).

Large as they were to loom in the later turbulent history of Christianity, in their historical setting the differences between James and Paul reduce to differences of emphasis, not to entire doctrinal opposition. Setting these emphases aside, what we need to note is the common ground: what for Jesus was 'the kingdom' was for James 'the law' and for Paul 'faith'. Both Jesus and Paul could speak of 'the Spirit' in this connection with equal ease, and almost interchangeably with the other terms. For all of them, these entities lay first and foremost 'within'.

But while Paul's vision was directed forwards to the second coming, to the <u>parousia</u> and its redemptive power, James and Jesus hoped for its expression in this world too, through the work of men's deeds.

Lest it seem I have been dismissive of Paul's 'reading' of the Christian message, it is worth noting that right in the heart of Q itself is a cryptic saying which could easily be Pauline: 'The law and the prophets were until John; since then the kingdom of God has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force' (<u>Logion</u> 62, Havener: 143). Matthew (11:12-13)

slurs over it in evident puzzlement; but Luke's interpretation of the second clause makes credible sense: 'since then, there is the good news of the kingdom of God, and everyone forces his way in' (16:16). Evidently, Jesus believed that some transformation had been effected in the law by his coming; and now enthusiasm and power of feeling took precedence above mere rules. But as the next Logion (cf. Luke 16:17; Mt. 5:18) re-emphasizes, this meant putting the law into its proper place, not its abrogation.

If the ancient Jewish historian Josephus's evidence is to be believed, this strain of 'partial antinomianism' actually preceded Jesus (which is further evidence that it really did exist in his teaching): it was, indeed, part of John the Baptist's legacy to Christianity, as this desription of John suggests:

> He was a good man, and exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, practise justice towards one another and piety towards God, and so to join in baptism. In his view this was a necessary preliminary if baptism was to be acceptable to God. They must not use it to gain pardon for whatever sins they committed, but as a consecration of the body, implying that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by right behaviour.
>
> (Josephus in Wilson: 84)

Baptism is the one ritual to which, upon unequivocal evidence, Jesus gave some credit. And yet, if what John 4:2 records is accurate, as it may be, then only his disciples baptised and not Jesus himself - which suggests reservations on his part. It is unlikely at any rate that baptism meant the

same for Jesus as the later church: a sacred and magical act, essential for salvation, by which sins were washed away.

Perhaps Paul's most potent theological revision lies in his concept of sin, as Kristeva suggests (1982: 128) - especially in his remarks that 'sin is not imputed when there is no law' (Rom. 5:13); and 'the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound' (5:20).

The considerable sophistication of Pauline doctrine is shown through his assumption that law creates sin. What men take to be law, however arbitrary and absurd, is law; hence man is judged perennially by the standards he sets up for himself. He is dragged down by toils of his own making, hampered by his own leaden vision. In Paul's eyes, Christ frees man from his own intransigence; faith and grace together act in the place of law.

And yet Pauline theology rests on its quite clear anticipations of the doctrine of original sin (usually attributed, in its evolved form, to St Augustine), of which the need for law is but one sign: Christ is the personification of grace, and his sacrifice in the crucifixion is the testament and apotheosis of God's grace. For man had no hope of salvation until this act was effected. His simple responsibility is reception of the divine gift, without which he might never be free. Thereafter, no earthly act of his has power to save or damn him: 'A man is happy if God considers him happy, irrespective of good deeds' (Rom. 4:6).

Now this is a powerful vision, as history has attested. Yet its flaw lies where Kristeva diagnoses it: 'One could say, in fact, that sin is subjectified abjection' (128). What Kristeva means is that Paul has simply internalised and spiritualised the Jewish purification laws, not abolished them; worse, Paul must abase man's nature in order to make room for grace.

As far as one can tell, this emphasis on what would later become 'original sin' is not marked in the Gospels. One might derive some support for it from, for example, Jesus's cryptic response to a compliment: 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone' (Mk 10:18). Yet if original sin is intimated here, it implicates even the future bearer of grace himself, at least in his earthly guise; which is hardly altogether good news for Pauline Christology.

The other side of the coin - Paul's most positive contribution to Christianity - is his formulation of Christian love, as Kristeva makes clear when she returns to biblical topics in her Tales of Love[2]: 'Far from needing to deserve it or to fear its withdrawal by God, the Christian is assured of being loved, independently of his merits' (1987: 139). Here we have a different presentation of the Law, where 'Love ... is the answer to every one of the commandments' (Rom. 13:10). Paul's contribution is to put the accent on the first word of Jesus's injunction, when he repeats: 'The whole of Law is summarised in a single command: "Love your neighbour as yourself"'(Gal. 5:14).

For Kristeva the Christian love-feast perfectly expresses this doctrine of love, where the communicant devours the loved object, a symbol of the sacrifice of self: 'Turning love into an identification with the ideal father and having that identification based on an absorption, an oral assimilation of his body, introduces into Christianity a relief of oral sadism directed at the archaic maternal body. The mother will not eat you ... look for the sign of the father within her' (1987:149).

Kristeva here engages the communicant at the altar rail in a ritual re-enactment of the child's situation at the mother's breast: this time, however, the nourishment received is 'spiritual', not physical, and the mother has been replaced by a composite entity, a spiritual Father who usurps the mother's role. It is clear that in Kristeva's view the powerful 'spiritual' effects of such symbolism really depend on its profound, if concealed, psychological references.

These are hints which will be developed in what follows. Although I shall be following my own line of symbolic inquiry, not always identical with Kristeva's, her suggestions offer a useful model to work from. An essential pointer is her interpretation of these spiritual matters as imaginative and symbolic projections of the Oedipal crisis of childhood.

As she infers, what Christianity seems to offer at this level is the possibility of a new and different revisiting of the Oedipal transition. In this process, the passion of the cross is 'raised to the level of a universal narrative', whereby the subject must re-enact its own death:

> introducing into the preconscious the idealizing necessity of one's own death, at once favors my leap into the Name of the Father. A subtle machinery for idealization rather than repression in the precise meaning of the term, agape-passion turns into the erotic unleashing of the death drive only when a narrator - an I - takes it upon himself to recompose the Writing of the Universal Subject and join his own name to the Name of the Father .... The son, and the believer who identifies with him, will be welcomed by the Father, made homologous to him ... beyond the sacrifice of the body and as very condition for that sacrifice .... The obliteration of the body and the Body's image are nevertheless hypostatized in Christ, and this leads to the abolition of the Self (of the body-Self) and at the same time to its renewal within the Subject who is the Adopted Son through the Name of the Father: 'I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in this body I live in faith: faith in the Son of God who loved me and who sacrificed himself for my sake' (Gal. 2:20). (144-146)

What Kristeva dramatises here is the process whereby the Christian subject identifies itself with the Other in the role of law and authority, and so links itself with the Lacanian 'Name of the Father', rather than opposing that rule. In order to overcome the subject's natural independence and Oedipal antipathy, Christianity offers a cannibalistic oral ritual in which the eating body is symbolically killed and absorbed by the body eaten. In so acting, 'I' as subject imitate the example of the primal Son who died 'into the Father' before me, and accede in my own death. Christian agape, in this view, identifies closely with the thanatos, the death of self, which eros on the other hand opposes.

Such an interpretation depends closely on Kristeva's understanding of the way Christianity operates on the axis

between the Oedipal Father and Mother 'gods' of ancient religion. The 'reconciliation' between them that Christianity provides is apparently only an act of cosmic transvestitism: if the Father's law comes newly dressed in maternal guise it is still the law for all that; only its techniques of persuasion have softened.

As I suggested in section 2 of my last chapter, this vision of the psychic forces underlying Christianity is not the only one possible. There is another route we may take to uncover the inner sources of Christianity's appeal, one which leads not primarily through the Mother or Father, but bears instead upon the symbolic power of the Child. Indeed, this figure will provide the main topic of my final three sections.

2

Jesus was aware of the unconscious and its power; his own implicit literary theory makes this clear. Jesus's literary form was the parable. Not unknown in Jewish writing, it was a form in which he excelled, and yet it is notable that he committed none of his sayings or his parables to papyrus. But we should not infer from this that he intended them to be forgotten or that there was not implicit in this a kind of art: the reckless prodigality of his oral method is itself a communication, not unlike the symbolic statement of the cross. He trusts to the minds of others to carry on, to ponder and adapt. The extraordinary faith in his listeners his method demonstrates, illustrates how from the start his art was not

the art of the self: he anticipates a community, and by making his words a community possession gives them an organic life independent of his own ego.

As in the parable of the sower, he 'seeds' the unconscious of his audience with 'the word that tells of the Kingdom' (Mt. 13:18): the various kinds of soil represent the ways its meaning will be differently received, as Jesus himself explains (19-23). It is now independent of its original teller; he has no more claim on it. But this does not mean others may do with it as they wish - outside certain limits. What regulates and ensures its transmission is the grain of truth it implicitly contains: this is the source of the artist's impossible confidence; and, in a sense, this truth was never his possession from the start. If the words convey it, they will endure; and if not them, then the essential core of unspoken meaning that underlies them, which is other than they are. What does not feed off this inner truth cannot survive: 'A vine was planted outside of the Father, and it has not become strong; it will be uprooted and it will perish' (Thomas, Logion 41, Grant and Freedman: 146). Just such an unsayable reality is the Kingdom itself: it is invisible and yet 'as lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west' (Mt. 24:27; Lk. 17:24) it stretches out upon the earth. (Though, as in Q [69] the parousia is the actual subject meant, in Thomas's version we have 'the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, and men do not see it' [cf. Logion 111, Grant and Freedman: 185]; and here I prefer Thomas to Matthew, Luke, and hence Q.)

What Jesus as artist trusts so implicitly to is the power of the unconscious. For, in the end, 'Nothing is covered that will not be revealed, hidden that will not be known. What you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered into the ear shall be proclaimed upon the housetops' (Q Logion 37, Havener: 136; Mt. 10:26-7;Lk. 12:2-3).

The Kingdom itself has this same quality: it lies within and only with time reveals itself: 'The kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. As a seed, mustard is smaller than any other; but when it has grown it is bigger than any garden-plant; it becomes a tree, big enough for the birds to come and roost among its branches' (Mt. 13:31-2). Again, it is like 'yeast, which a woman took and mixed with half a hundredweight of flower till it was all leavened' (Mt. 13:33; cf. also Q in Havener: 140-1; Lk. 13:18-21).

The parabolic method makes several assumptions. Firstly, the ineffable may be conveyed through the simple and concrete; if spiritual truths are mysteries which reveal themselves differently upon interpretation, plain and concrete things participate in their realities nonetheless and are continuous with them. Secondly, humans may be directed towards the unsayable understanding which lies dormant within them all through the agency of words, even though the words can never encapsulate that meaning; as with access to the Son of Man within, communication is evocation, not transmission of facts. As Thomas puts it: 'When you beget in yourselves him whom you

have, he will save you' (Logion 71, Grant and Freedman: 164). Hence it is that Jesus eschews abstract statement or rational demonstration. He chooses instead the indirect methods of art which appeal so readily to the unconscious.

It is confidence, not negligence or indifference which leads him to his 'wasteful' method so like that of the therapist or the artist. If it requires self-denying patience to involve the listener in the act of creation and discovery, this does not imply carelessness about the results: 'I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!' (Q Logion 48 in Havener 139; Lk. 12:49-50).

The follower of Valentinus who wrote the Gnostic Gospel of Philip talks of religious language as necessarily one of 'types and images' since it is 'a language of internal transformation; whoever perceives divine reality "becomes what he sees" .... Whoever achieves gnosis becomes "no longer a Christian, but a Christ"' (Pagels 1982: 141).

Though the realities religious language seeks are in their essence unsayable, this does not mean they are not susceptible to analysis. It is in pursuit of this unsayable pre-existent 'inner understanding' we have spoken so much of, supposedly capable of transforming the world, that we are led to the third and independent archetype, that of the Child: one which assumes the symbolic meanings of both Mother and Father, and yet is not to be identified with them.

It is important to note how central a symbol the child is in Christian iconography; the apt prompting which caused both Matthew and Luke to begin with mythical infancy narratives has left a legacy of imagery to the world of which Christmas is the perennial celebration: the hope and possibility of rebirth, of 'beginning again', is the universal meaning of the child-king in the humble manger, which entirely overrides such considerations as lack of historicity in the accounts.

> They brought children for him to lay his hands on them with prayer. The disciples scolded them for it, but Jesus said to them, 'Let the children come to me; do not try to stop them; for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these.' (Mt. 19:13-15)

And again:

> He called a child, set him in front of them, and said, 'I tell you this: unless you turn round and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me .... I tell you, they have their guardian angels in heaven, who look continually on the face of my heavenly Father.' (Mt. 18:2-6;10)

The meaning of Matthew's 'turn around' (i.e 'go back') is made explicit in John 3:3: 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God'; or else in the first part of the so-called 'Johannine logion' of the synoptics: 'I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes' (Q Logion 24, Havener 131; Mt. 11:25 AV; Lk. 10:21). In Matthew 29:16 Jesus asks, 'have you never read that text, "Thou hast made children and babes at the breast sound aloud thy praise"?'

A remarkable feature of Jesus's way of addressing God is the name 'Abba', which the early church copied. While this had limited precedent among some hasidim (cf. Wilson: 89), it is accepted as being distinctly characteristic of Jesus (Schillebeeckx: 259, 267); Abba is something like the modern 'Papa' in register, both infantile and yet reverent. In other words, Jesus's mode of addressing God was curiously personal.

But this does not mean that Jesus saw his relation as exclusive; 'sonship' was a condition others could attain: 'He who has God for his father listens to the words of God' (John 8:47); and 'Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven' (Mt. 23:9).

> For all who are moved by the Spirit of God are sons of God. The Spirit you have received is not a spirit of slavery leading you back into a life of fear, but a Spirit that makes us sons, enabling us to cry 'Abba! Father!' In that cry the spirit of God joins with our spirit in testifying that we are God's children; and if children, then heirs. We are God's heirs and Christ's fellow-heirs, if we share his sufferings now in order to share his splendour hereafter. (Rom. 8:14-17)

This extract captures perfectly the strange dark ominous colouring and the deferment of all hope to the parousia we associate with Paul's metaphysical pessimism; and yet, surprisingly, it retains the basic doctrine intact: there is nothing unique about being a son of God. As we see in all the above, Jesus is actually persuading people to replace the condition of earthly sonship with the heavenly. This understanding will be especially important in what follows.

There is an unusually mysterious passage in John 3:6-12:

> it is spirit that gives birth to spirit. You ought not to be astonished, then, when I tell you that you must be born over again. The wind [pneuma] blows where it wills; you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from, or where it is going. So with everyone who is born from spirit .... If you disbelieve me when I talk about things of earth, how are you to believe if I should talk about the things of heaven?

It is the indefinable and magical character of this being 'born over' that John tries but fails to convey here; not through lack of skill, but because it is inherently intangible and unsayable.

Jesus's habit of calling his followers 'children' tends to get lost in some translations. It is, however, common in The Gospel of Thomas, where the general emphasis on the child is even stronger than in the canonical texts. If there is no authentic historical root to the Thomas sayings, they nonetheless tell us how Gnosticism grasped at this foundation element and meditated on it. The strangest of such logia (3) has: 'An old man in his days will not hesitate to ask an infant of seven days about the place of life, and he will live ...' (Grant and Freedman: 117). Another (47) refers to the revolution in values (as in Q 62 above) since John's death: up to that time no human stood higher in stature than the Baptist; yet now 'he among you who will become as a little child will know the kingdom and will be greater than John' (Throckmorton[3]: 48; Grant and Freedman: 149; see also Mt. 11:11-2; Lk. 7:28).

A saying from Thomas with similar import sounds almost like T.S.Eliot:

Jesus said:
You have indeed uncovered the beginning
so that you may seek the end;
for in the place where the beginning is,
there the end will be.
Blessed is he who will stand in
the beginning,
and will know the end and will not taste death.
(Logion 18; Grant and Freedman: 131)

We have so far seen firm evidence of the importance of the child - and hence of rebirth - as a spiritual symbol in the strands of early Christianity variously represented by Matthew, John, and the Gnostic Thomas. Rebirth has its Pauline representation too, but to illustrate this I have chosen - somewhat perversely - to quote from yet another extracanonical work, The Epistle of Barnabas[4]. Whether or not it was written by Mark's cousin and the one-time companion of Paul, this is a thoroughly Pauline composition, and actually has some claim to canonical authority. To judge only by internal evidence, it was set down some time not very long after the fall of Jerusalem, and is an entirely orthodox Pauline work, except only that it still sees good works as important aids on the path to redemption; it was cited by Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius - and also Origen and Jerome, both of whom believed it genuine. Part of its interest is that it is directed to potential Jewish converts or else a backsliding Jewish-Christian community. It quotes the Old Testament extensively, but the only gospel Barnabas knows is a version of Matthew (or even, in VII:5, the Ebionite gospel?).

Quite possibly it owes its absence from the canon not to spurious doctrine but to its gauche style and embarrassing quaintness (much of it is devoted to tortuous attempts to turn

the Old Testament and the law into Philonian allegories about Christ). If so, it has the distinction of being the first such work properly rejected on artistic, not doctrinal, grounds.

What concerns us here is Barnabas's belief in the heart as the true temple, rebuilt by God so that 'we are become renewed, being again created as it were from the beginning. Wherefore God truly dwells in our house, that is, in us' (XIII:21).

> Seeing therefore he has renewed us by the remission of our sins he has put us into another frame, that we should have souls like those of children, forming us again himself by the Spirit. (V:11)

As we see, both Gnostics, evangelists, and patriarchs of the Church delighted in the notion of re-birth which baptism came to symbolise. The othodox Justin (c. 155 AD, in Stevenson[5]: 66) points out how we have no choice about our first birth; but so that 'we may not remain the children of necessity and ignorance' (67) we have been given the opportunity 'to be born again'. Clement of Alexandria (c. 180) elaborates the complementary image of Christians as children: 'the Word alone supplies us children with the milk of love, and only those who suck at this breast are truly happy ... to those infants who seek the Word, the Father's loving breasts supply milk' (in Pagels: 87). Here orthodoxy and Gnosticism meet in the contemplation of an androgynous parent God.

The third-century apocryphal Acts of Peter transfers this androgynous significance from God to Christ himself:

> Thou art unto me father, thou my mother, thou my brother, thou my friend, thou my bondsman, thou my steward; thou art the All and the All is in thee; and thou art, and there is naught else that is, save thee only. (in Mollenkott: 9)

The Gnostic Valentinus claimed after learning the secret of Paul's teaching from one of Paul's disciples, to have had a vision in which he 'saw a newborn infant, and when he asked who he might be, the child replied "I am the Logos"' (Hippolytus; in Pagels: 49). Like Valentinus, the Gnostic seer Zostrianos in his manual of discipline at last attains a vision of spiritual things in the form of 'the perfect child' (142).

Since the child-Logos springs from Heaven, this accords with a symbolic discourse attributed to the infamous pre-Gnostic Simon Magus: 'Grant Paradise to be the womb' Simon begins (in Pagels: 75), 'and Eden the placenta'. To the Sethian Gnostics the womb of every pregnant woman represents 'an image of the heavens and the earth' (Ibid.).

The 'sign of Jonah' by which Jesus sought to symbolise his ministry (Mt. 16:4; Mk 8:12; Lk. 11:29) has always been difficult to interpret. Matthew is particularly tortuous in this regard (12:38-42). For the Mediaeval church it symbolised rebirth from the uterine belly of the whale (Wilson: 98) and 'rebirth' may indeed be the correct symbolic import, in the Christian context. The choice of the ICHTHOS symbol by the early Church seems a fortunate one for similar reasons: the fish is an independent product of the sea and yet is inseparably linked with its oceanic origins, like an embryo with its amniotic fluid. Similarly, the 'reborn' Christian

supposedly bears the permanent mark of his or her baptismal immersion, reflecting that person's link with all-encompassing psychological and spiritual depths.

It is easy enough to see that this mass of imagery associating religious truths with the facts of birth and early childhood must point to a recurrent underlying meaning. The sheer universality of its appeal is a clue that this is where the central point of common origin we seek is to be found; that it is to the child-image and its significance that the various trails - Gnostic, Johannine, Pauline - conjointly lead us.

Yet the different schools vary in the way they deal with this central spiritual and psychological datum. What is especially visible is that the Gnostic route overshoots the firm stopping-point of Jesus in the child, and finds its termination in the inchoate 'feminine' pre-ego; perhaps Paul, too, tends to miss the mark in their way, though to a lesser degree: it is significant that he finds glossolalia - which signifies return to the pre-verbal condition (it is, in fact, a 'speaking in no-tongues') - more an embarrassment than an aid (1 Cor. 14). In contrast, the beautiful Gnostic poem 'Thunder, Perfect Mind', spoken by a feminine divinity (cf. Pagels: 16; a fuller version in Filoramo[6] 1991), movingly invokes the paradoxical and unsayable qualities of this deep pre-verbal region - but in all essentials this is no longer a Christian poem.

To their credit, most Gnostics continued to show little sign of practical sexual discrimination in their communities - as little, in fact, as the very earliest Jewish Christians; and this is probably a result of their belief in the power of the divine feminine and in an androgynous God. (The orthodox Church rapidly returned to a discriminatory stance, once hierarchy was again important to it [cf. Pagels 1982: 83-4; cf. also Pagels 1988[7]].) And yet the penalty of the Gnostic obsession with this other-worldly prelinguistic zone was lack of concern with the things of this world, including gender. Jesus's heaven, in which there is no marriage or giving in marriage, becomes for some Gnostics - the Carpocratians, for example - an excuse for the abuse of all earthly existence, including sexual abuse of the flesh. Something like their remarkable doctrine had made its appearance even in Paul's day (cf. e.g.: 1 Cor. 6:12ff.).

James stands however on the other side of this imbalance, tending, if anything, to obscure the divine child and its attributes in his desire for practical, even political, action in the world. If only through re-naming the inward and outward realm of the heavenly child as 'law', specifically, he leaves room for the 'fearsome' Father-god's re-entry, and for a re-emphasis upon external rules.

3

For the fact is, Jesus's archaic starting-point is neither the formless pre-ego nor the Name of the Father. The structure of

his moral and spiritual vision is erected rather on the beginning self in its own right. What the imagery and exhortation of his sayings promise is not at all a one-sided rejection of this world; rather he offers us the chance to re-negotiate the Oedipal crisis, the far-reaching effect of which will be to transform our world in turn.

Under stress of his final cross-examination, Jesus might have denied that his kingdom was 'of this world' (John 18:36). But the world he meant is the social sphere we daily encounter: this mundane product of human hands, as it appears to perceptions founded upon the established Oedipus; not as it might be if we learnt to see - and hence act - differently. For the time being the kingdom is an embattled enclave in a larger, inherently antipathetic realm governed by wealth, power and subordination. But this dark vale is man's (and Oedipus's) creation, not God's or the Gnostic demiurge's. The true parousia, the eternal millennium, the ultimate victory, would surely be whenever the Kingdom 'within' and the physical world are at last sucessfully united.

There is an important contrast here between the boundless 'feminine' and God as Jesus evidently conceives him. As infinite chaos, the feminine formless is potentially infinite in a way that God is not. Since God is 'All', his infinite nature is rather to be conceived as the product of his totality; within it, presumably the feminine is encompassed and resolved. Hence, God's self must be a unity, a boundless form, and not a chaos. He is god of the existent, not of non-existence; of the living, not the dead.

What is central here is that there is a continuity, in Jesus's eyes, between the unity of God's self and the human subject as it prepares for the onset of the Oedipus. As all his statements on the child make plain, Jesus sees a radical potential in the nascent infant identity at this point, a point when it has all but crossed the borderline into personal existence, but is still, so to speak, an empty category in worldly terms, for its content is still undefined, still essentially the Real. Ideally seen, its state of being at this moment is closest to that of the Creator's own. It is this curious affinity between God's situation and that of the beginning self, still by and large untrammelled by the world, that the various traditions which grow out of Jesus explore.

Before the arrival of law and its corresponding guilt, or of the arbitrary divisions of the world which hang upon its values, there are hints and glimpses of a better way. And yet Jesus is not supposing that the wordless state itself is all that we might read into it; nor is he desiring for us simply a physical and actual regression, but only its revalued equivalent in adult terms. What is required is the sacrifice of the Oedipal Self in favour not of no-self on the one hand, nor of submission to the Name of the Father on the other, but of a better self - justified entirely in its own terms - which we can assume if we so will.

This self is the equivalent of God's true universal Self, or - if that is an impossible ideal - of the mode of being of the Son of Man, who imitates His harmony and unity in human form. What Christianity invites us to do is to undertake the

Oedipal transition again, but to take on at its conclusion not 'our' self but that of the universal Son of Man. Thus it is that Jesus can aver, without essential hubris (and without the Trinitarian implications which John and the later Church were to find in the saying): 'no one knows the Son except the Father, no one the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him' (Q Logion 24, Havener: 131; Mt. 11:27; Lk. 10:22). Not God's Name but his Self must be the ambition of the true disciple: to be discovered first of all in emotional terms in the precarious place where Subject and Other are indeed indistinguishable: in our innate memories of the transition between the Real and the Imaginary, when the formless in us comes to form.

But this desired state is not a condition of rest, for the universe itself is not at rest. For the adult it is above all in the deed, in action, that the physical and the spiritual are shown to be inseparable. If action and bodily movement are aspects of our adult life which stand closest to the Real, which are most attuned to non-verbal reality, then it is in a sense the 'purification of the deed' that most concerns Christian morality.

An indication here is to be found in the healing miracles themselves; they, in their way, are a bodily 'beginning again'. But this is not simply a bodily matter. For Pauline dualism the miracles have always been hard to take: Paul does not indeed mention them at all. But as an affirmation of psychosomatic wholeness - a regeneration of body and spirit together 'from scratch' - they seem especially meaningful, and

a sign of where Jesus's sympathies lay on the dualist issue. It is in this context that we may best understand Jesus's tendency to begin a healing by saying 'your sins are forgiven you'.

Hence Jesus's central logion: 'If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind; he must take up his cross and come with me' (Mt. 16:24). The rest of the saying is to be found in Q as well as twice in Luke (there is on this rare occasion even a variant version in John 12:25): 'Whoever finds one's life will lose it, but whoever loses one's life will find it' (Q Logion 72, Havener: 145); but only Matthew's version conveys, I think, the full sense: 'if a man will let himself be lost for my sake, he will find his true self. What will a man gain by winning the whole world, at the cost of his true self? Or what can he give to buy that self back?' (16:25-6). (The version in Thomas [Logion 109, Grant and Freedman: 184] adds a Gnostic colouring: 'He who will find himself, of him the world is not worthy'.) Jesus's sacrifice and loss of his earthly Self upon the cross was in this context a parable by example.

Christian ethics are, then, not an arbitrary set of rules, but simply a consistent expression in action of what it means to inhabit this single archetypal Self beyond the self, the materials of which are present in all from the beginning. The Sermon on the Mount is not a comprehensive list of isolated prescriptions like the Ten Commandments, but examples and indications towards a single end which its balanced maxims do not, cannot, specify or say outright.

Instead they function to illustrate what is needed to preserve the unity, peace, harmony, and wholeness of an active state of being in which the Oedipal self is no longer the main issue; the consequences - being sons of God and inheriting the earth - are signs of the growing Kingdom in this world. 'Eternal life', too, whatever its future advantages, could be seen as beginning here and now; for, of course, a Self which is universal and archetypal, which anyone may appropriate and which is unique to no-one, does not die. Those who inhabit it participate in its eternal qualities, but do so in the present.

In fact the true personal rewards intended are not directly mentioned in these maxims: they include an end to the loneliness of the personal self, an openness to creation unblinkered by the Oedipus (with its inevitable emphases on domination, differentiation, possession and power), and the joys of living in accord with a primal condition which provides the ground and meaning for terms like 'innocence', 'purity' and 'beauty'; those elements which combined together constitute the spirit of holiness, the Holy Spirit, the active personality of the Archetypal Human.

'The heavens will curl up and the earth before your eyes, and he who lives from the [Living] One will not see death' says Jesus, according to Thomas (Logion 108; Grant and Freedman: 184). On another occasion in Thomas, the disciples ask Jesus to name the day of the parousia and the start of 'the new world'; he replies that what they are waiting for has already come, 'but you do not recognise it' (Logion 52, 152-

3). This is probably the most explicit profession of a 'realised eschatology' in antiquity; and, interestingly, it places the Gnostic Thomas in the company of Q (cf. Schillebeeckx: 410 ff.), rather than with Paul and Mark as one might anticipate.

A generous view would be to conclude that the later developments of Christianity divided Jesus's corpus among themselves, without any of them retaining complete authority. The flaw in Gnosticism as a whole - which Thomas, as we see, does not always follow - was its displacement of the kingdom entirely out of this plane of being; the tiny leftover spark of gnosis was not, literally, 'knowledge' (as many commentators still suppose) but the mystical inward umbilical mark of an utterly transcendent otherworld. Gnosticism's spiritual vision thus turned inward, in contemplation of this navel-like vestige of a higher and more fitting origin beyond this plane.

Gnosticism has not entirely departed, as a movement. Psychoanalysis has its own Gnostic branch in the work of Jung, and Jung's identification of Christ with the perfected ego, with the 'integrated self', is well known. Having established[8] that 'I have chosen the term "self" to designate the totality of man, the sum total of his conscious and unconscious contents' (in Storr, ed. 1983: 242), Jung goes on to say that 'Christ is our nearest analogy of the self and its meaning' (299).

But Jung is critical of Jesus's full adequacy for the role. Since the archetypal self subsumes all opposites, Jesus should have incorporated into himself evil; he should have assimilated his shadow AntiChrist. After an extensive and interesting analysis of the Church Fathers up to Aquinas (1983: 300-309), who unanimously declare evil to be 'nonbeing' and hence ontologically negligible, Jung remains unconvinced by their dismissals. For him, evil is an undeniable psychic and hence ontic reality: thus Christ in completeness should represent it as a part of his being, his archetypal selfhood.

Jung raises a thorny issue, certainly. But curiously, it is the very character of infantile experience that allows us to escape the crux he presents. Lacan, analysing the elements of pre-Oedipal being, distinguishes firmly between the Lust-Ich and the Unlust (Lacan 1986: 239ff.): 'a distinction is made between that which brings Lust and that which brings Unlust, pleasure or displeasure' (240). The infant's pre-Oedipal world is not after all unified, for it contains pain; but since its single criterion of reality is pleasure, a barrier and split is introduced between the realm of its own being and the location of pain. Unlust is thus 'what remains unassimilable, irreducible to the pleasure principle. It is out of this, Freud tells us, that the non-ego will be constituted' (241).

In the field of the Real, the seminal Lust-Ich

> privileges only that which is reflected in its field by an effect of Lust, as a return to homeostasis. But that which does not favour homeostasis and is maintained at all costs as Unlust bites still more into its field. Thus, what is of the order of Unlust

> is inscribed in the ego as non-ego, negation, splitting-off of the ego. The non-ego is not to be confused with what surrounds it, the vastness of the real. Non-ego is distinguished as a foreign body, fremde Objekt. (Lacan 1986: 245)

What this means is that pain is effectively banished from the reality the nascent ego will accept; interestingly, the infant consciousness actually begins to form itself as a preliminary 'self' by this act, before the mirror stage and the Oedipus event. It does so by allowing a primal split in its reality, one which relegates pain to the 'non-ego' beyond itself. We are probably right in finding the psychological origin of evil not so much where Kristeva does, in an external view of the primal feminine, but in this 'pain': in the child's rage and desolation at its mother's absence.

Lacan uses this fact to criticise too simple-minded an acceptance that the meanings of 'good' and 'evil' are dependent on each other. He takes 'the expresssion, No good without evil, no good without pain, which preserves in this good and in this evil a character of alternation, of a possible calibration' (241), to represent a 'binary' point of view, something like Jung's. On his side all he will assent to is 'no evil without there resulting some good from it, and when the good is there, there is no good that holds with evil' (242).

So for the child these states of mind of joy and rage are not continuous but entirely discrete, in a way which can never occur again, and which means 'good' and 'evil' do not function precisely like the binary oppositions of acquired language.

The angry and bereft infant is not the same person as the happy and contented infant; and of the two the euphoric state has priority, for it preserves its continuity with the foetus and the womb. Hence, in affirming the euphoric state of being as a psychic unity, it may be Jesus is not betraying psychic realities but enforcing them. There is a sense, a psychological sense, in which the Church Fathers were right, and 'evil' is ontologically separable from 'the good'.

Unhappily, the problem raised does not end here, but may simply be continued on another level. Nietzsche[9] sees his work as revealing an irresolvable fundamental antagonism between two attitudes to the world, represented initially by the symbolic natures of Dionysus and Apollo. Eventually he comes to recognise that the symbolic enactment of this conflict takes place not between Dionysus and Apollo, as he had supposed, but between Dionysus and 'the crucified' (cf. Deleuze 1983: 14).

In presenting things thus, his basic assumptions are quite correct, as far as they go. For Nietzsche, the amoral joy of Dionysus incorporates and affirms every part of the colourful reality of process, change and appearance. It includes indiscriminately in its euphoria even the elements of tragedy and grief; finally, as in Yeats's poem 'Lapis Lazuli', even the tragic is elevated and subsumed into Dionysus's cosmic gaiety. Christ on the other hand disgusts Nietzsche as he who finds life sordid, who expiates sorrow on the cross, who looks to a better life to come, denying this one.

The opposition of Dionysus and Christ is irreconcilable:

> On the one hand, the life that justifies suffering, that affirms suffering; on the other hand the suffering that accuses life, that testifies against it, that makes life something that must be justified. For Christianity the fact of suffering in life means primarily that life is not just, that it is even essentially unjust, that it pays for an essential injustice by suffering, it is blameworthy because it suffers. The result of this is that life must be justified, that is to say, redeemed of its injustice or saved .... Christian joy is the joy of 'resolving' pain in this way, pain is internalised, offered to God, carried to God, 'that ghastly paradox of a "God on the cross", that mystery of an unimaginable and ultimate cruelty', this is a truly Christian mania, a mania which is already wholly dialectical. (Deleuze 1983: 15; Nietzsche quotation from On the Genealogy of Morals)

Nietzsche thus sees Christianity as the apotheosis of a negative Platonism, that which seeks the meaning of this world outside this world's boundaries. It is 'dialectical' in the sense that it seeks resolution of an irresolvable human problem that just 'is', as Nietzsche's Dionysus accepts.

Yet as the foregoing analysis should have shown, Jesus - as opposed to Paul and the Gnostics, who perhaps have more in common with Nietzsche's picture - is offering not a deferred but a 'total' picture of reality, which still includes more than the merely material, just because these 'beyond' things are there - in the Real. He opposes to Nietzsche's realism a deeper Realism; one that does not disregard the present world, but demands commitment to it through action.

What he does insist on is that the Oedipus event gives rise to an illusory and one-sided point of view upon the world. In retrospect, this is perhaps Jesus's major achievement: the recognition that the Oedipus structure is not

immutable and fixed, but may happen differently - and change all our perceptions along with it.

In contrast, Nietzsche's (later) Dionysus repudiates the pre-individuated Will of Schopenhauer; he joys in the phenomenal and denies the noumenal. He delights, in effect, in the violent emotions of the Oedipal struggle, and accepts its products - a world of 'things' - even if he ultimately sees these as undermined by process itself. Here, then, is Dionysus's deceit: his euphoric affirmation of a world which includes force and domination - 'the will to power' - is opposed to that of Jesus; but it is no less regressive. It too sends us back to an only slightly later phase of the Oedipal transition, and calls the violent emotions of that phase 'reality' - which is to promote those conflictual feelings as inevitable and an intrinsic part of the human situation. It is entirely appropriate that Nietzsche's philosophy has its logical beginning in a primary act of parricide, the announcement of God's death.

By hoping, in contrast, to free mankind from the pessimism of the Oedipal event, with its origin in murder, Jesus is hopefully not being less 'realistic'; rather he wants to open a new door onto reality by demoting part of that which divides us from it. As Edward Schillebeeckx puts it: 'Jesus sees in the kingdom only an end to all overweening relations based on power, to every repressive domination of one human being over another' (Schillebeeckx 1974: 145). Such a position is possible only as a rejection of the consequences of the Oedipal event.

How one reacts to Jesus's alternative is, I suppose, determined by one's opinion as to the inevitability of the Oedipus in its present form. For Nietzsche there was no question, and his Dionysus glories in the existence of pain. It cannot be disguised that this same pragmatic fact of pain was an overwhelming problem for Jesus, too. Whether the strength of his vision could overcome and incorporate the existence of pain and death, could find a place for these things in its spiritual economy, occupied his mind up to the end. The necessity for the Son of Man to assimilate and situate pain in his ideal person led Jesus to the cross. For many, his success may still remain an open question; but as an expression of unity between theory and action, between the spirit and deed, it is certain that few braver things have been attempted.

Strangely, it is in Thomas (Logion 23) that we find the completest statement of Jesus's intentions for the Oedipus; though this saying is certainly not authentic as it stands it may have some basis in genuine tradition; it is certainly very ancient. Even if - at worst - it contains only some other person's meditation on Jesus's ministry, it is nonetheless instructive. Unfortunately, one cannot feel equally kind about the work of the Coptic Gnostic redactor himself; he has evidently doctored the last part of the saying in the interests of making it sound even more mysterious and delphic, by adding his own feeble imitations to its list of items. The same saying is garbled with similar ferocity in another apocryphal work The Martyrdom of Peter (see Grant and

Freedman: 75). It is alluded to also in the Apocryphal Acts, which demonstrates its wide currency in ancient times [cf. M.R. James 1953: 335, 429, 450].

Luckily, what must be the correct termination is preserved in the Gospel of the Egyptians (cf. James 1953: 11) and in 2 Clement 12:2 (or V:1 [Platt]. 2 Clement's different elucidations of the passage may usefully be compared with mine below [see Platt: 144; 2 Clement ch. V]).

I offer a composite version here:

> Jesus saw little ones receiving milk. He said to his disciples:
> 'These little ones receiving milk are like those who enter into the kingdom'.
> They said to him: 'If we are "little ones", will we also enter the kingdom?'
> Jesus replied: 'When you make the two one, and make the outside like the inside (and the inside like the outside, and the upper like the below), and the male with the female neither male nor female, then you will go into the kingdom'.
> (cf. Grant and Freedman: 136)

Here we are presented with a not-entirely-Gnostic Jesus who insists that the external world must be reshaped on the pattern of the inner 'kingdom', but that this pattern is itself the mirror of the absolute totality beyond; in accomplishing this unification, we find that the unconscious is made continuous with our everyday experience and that the unified 'feminine pre-verbal' becomes a lining for the differentiated world we meet.

The Coptic version has at least the merit of suggesting the completeness of renewal that new vision should bring. Its elaborate list includes among its signs: 'when you make eyes

in the place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image ...'.

Nietzsche's slur upon Jesus suggests above all that Jesus denies the world of process in favour of illusory perfection. But I think this is to misunderstand the Jesus of the gospels, as even his 'literary' practice makes clear. To trust all to the ways of oral transmission is certainly not to deny the processes of the world, or their ultimate ambivalences - especially ambivalence about what verbal symbols as symbols can convey.

An example of the way the parables maintain over and again the tension between the sayable and the unsayable is provided by the tale of the Prodigal Son, in the special Lucan material (15:11-32). Both brothers are their Father's sons; but the first by squandering his inheritance denies the father-relation for a time. Neither the 'justice' on the elder brother's side nor the latitude the younger requires are denied; the parable is indeed about the incompleteness of concrete judgments, their need for endless supplementation like the parable itself. The elements are not 'reconciled' in the tale's conclusion - for in a sense sayable and unsayable would lose their power to generate meaning if the tension between them lapsed. The hidden truth is that perhaps the prodigal's homecoming does not entirely take place in the parable: the reality may be that we cannot entirely come home. But, according to whoever framed this story, the obstructive and unhelpful nature of the reality we have created around ourselves fails to relieve us of the constant need to try.

4

There are aspects of the Christian message which every new age finds shocking or especially difficult. Perhaps the hardest of Jesus's sayings for our own post-Freudian age is, paradoxically, that found in Matthew immediately after the prohibition on divorce (Mt. 19:3-9): the recommendation of celibacy.

The disciples, themselves taken aback at the severity of his ruling on divorce, comment incredulously 'If that is the position with husband and wife, it is better to refrain from marriage'. To their further surprise, Jesus takes their proposal seriously, as the opportunity for a new injunction upon sexual matters:

> To this he replied, 'That is something which not everyone can accept, but only those for whom God has appointed it. For while some are incapable of marriage because they were born so, or were made so by men, there are others who have themselves renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven. Let those accept it who can.' (Mt. 19: 11-2)

The speech and its qualifications are particularly revealing, in many ways. For a start, the passage demonstrates how Jesus sees spiritual realities as there to be translated into the realities of the world, as the medium of actuality permits; but with no less determination, for all that. Actual and 'beyond' realities must meet and adapt.

However, for the spiritually gifted or dedicated, one way of giving expression to religion's underlying truths would

be to become 'a eunuch for the kingdom of Heaven's sake'. How sexual celibacy could - for those who freely choose it - reflect a deeper spiritual truth might at first seem something of a mystery. Certainly, a wrong assumption would be the Puritan one: that there is a strengthening virtue in privation itself.

The psychoanalytic interpretation of the Christian message offered on the preceding pages perhaps enables us to understand why this sacrifice might be required. If we are to 'turn back' and undo the Oedipal process, taking the beginning self as our model - then this is in some way to bypass sex understood as gender, which is after all the product of the Oedipus event.

Much that seems (and sometimes <u>is</u>) bizarre in the Gnostic interpretation of sexuality becomes at least intelligible on this understanding. Gnosticism chose perhaps the most extreme and 'inward' ways of embodying and enacting Christianity's original insight. However, the differently realised sexual situation these words leave us with seems an appropriate one for those who intend to proceed under the sign of the androgynous Mother/Father.

So if the 'miraculous child' is taken as our spiritual centre, then we have to keep in mind that this being is - in all the more obvious ways, at least - pre-sexual. But of course, without procreation there can be no real children; this is where Christianity must vary in its accommodations to bodily experience, and find alternative ways of expressing the ideal through the concrete.

Hence in the Christian view the One may also be served through the 'becoming one flesh' of marriage: through becoming one member of an androgynous partnership, rather than through the spiritual androgyny of the individual. We see why it is that the sequence of sayings in Matthew which includes the passage above begins with the prohibition on divorce and proceeds naturally through the topic of celibacy to the call for children to 'come to me' (19:14).

Jacques Lacan's former pupil, Serge Leclaire[10], has written on the topic of the 'marvellous child', which he terms an 'unconscious representative' or a 'primordial signifier'. (If he is deliberately avoiding the word 'archetype', that is nonetheless effectively what he means.) The 'primordial signifier' of the 'marvellous child' figures as an unconscious presence in our thinking, yet in itself it is strictly unnamable: 'it doesn't speak nor will it ever speak' (1975: 22; tr. in Gunn[11] 1988: 43).

> The marvellous child is a primordial unconscious representation where, more than anywhere else, everyone's wishes, nostalgia and hope are bound together. What the transparent reality of the child almost entirely unveils, and renders visible, is the reality of all our desires. It fascinates us, and we are no more able to turn away from it than we are to grasp it. (1975: 12; tr. Gunn 1988: 43)

Leclaire goes so far as to say 'Whoever does not mourn and mourn repeatedly the marvellous child that he would have been, remains in limbo' (12). The biblical parallel to our normal human relation to this child is, for Leclaire, the episode of the murder of the innocents: 'For everyone there is always a

child to kill, a representation of plenitude and immutable joy to mourn and mourn repeatedly'.

As Daniel Gunn explains:

> The 'marvellous child' inhabits the familiar terrain of a many-sided ambivalence. It is both necessary, to be welcomed as a source of energy and excitement, and debilitating, to be killed a necessary first step on the road through language to desire. '"I" begins at that moment in time' Leclaire writes.
> (1988: 45)

The 'primordial signifier' Leclaire has identified, then, resembles in many essentials the proto-Oedipal being whose imitation, as the primordial Son of Man, Jesus enjoins upon us. Moral action consists in the living-out of this figure's various qualities and attributes, a living-out which preserves his being intact and whose purpose is to build a varied spiritual kingdom on earth for this 'child-king', who is also ourselves.

As Paul correctly divined, such a morality is less to do with rules, with the Names of the Father, than with process and activity: actions undertaken 'in the spirit' and personality of an imagined and yet living being whose real self underlies our own. Its reward is a more 'real' existence in which some at least of the Oedipal veils obscuring the world have been removed.

Though the openness of the child-vision to the world reflects affinities between its own form and that of the Real, it evidently cannot be achieved without some excision, some sacrifice. Of necessity, a part of human nature has had to be jettisoned like Christian the Pilgrim's burden. In the

unfolding of this theology of the ichthos, this Lacanian ichtheology, we must accept that the marvellous child is marvellous precisely because he is linked to, and is in a way a reincarnation of, the Lust-Ich which has shed its connections with the Unlust.

Hence in responding to the 'marvellous child' we privilege one tradition only of our being's history. That is what the Sermon on the Mount means when it blesses the pure in heart (Mt. 5:8). The reward of those 'whose hearts are pure' is that 'they shall see God'; we may, if we wish, suppose that this is no deferred reward: inward purity and 'seeing God' can be effectively the same thing.

A 'gentle spirit' (5:5) and the making of peace (5:9) are equivalently blessed: the harmony and integrity of the inner being are not only cultivated for themselves, but extended into the world at large. All along, the continuity of the self with its surroundings, its neighbours and its environment, is recognised. However, the inward takes priority over the material; we should not mistake our real good for food, clothes, or another's possessions: our real object transcends all these. To concentrate our desires on things is to reverse the proper order, to lose ourselves in the divisive and, finally, illusory world of names and objects. In worshipping things, we become the Other's, not our own. Condemning others, we align with the Other, not the One: again, that is to lose our link with the primal being within.

These examples reflect the fact that the primal self is in one way the most individual thing we know, in another it

belongs to no individual alone, but is effectually everyone's. To this view, humans differ morally only in the different degrees they allow this being expression in their practical lives. The hardest thing is to accept that the universality of this relation is true even of those who are at odds with us: that they too possess the primal subject potentially within themselves. Even so, Christianity insists upon such an outlook towards others: preservation of its essential Spirit in a consistent and unbroken fashion requires that we do not especially privilege the differences among humans that are, in the end, the products of the Oedipus.

> Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors;
> only so can you be children of your heavenly Father,
> who makes his sun rise on good and bad alike, and
> sends the rain on the honest and the dishonest ....
> You must therefore be all goodness, just as your
> heavenly Father is all good. (Mt. 5:43-8)

The strength of the Christian position depends very largely on the way its gospels offer a concrete and practical expression to what are still, at bottom, mystical insights. This plain, vivid, everyday character is most striking in the synoptic gospels, which openly offer directives for living; for bringing reality and its events into line, as far as we may, with the psychic Unity which underlies them.

Hence while Paul is right in marginalising the importance of the moral law, even when 'introjected' and assimilated by the moral individual, the emphases of Jesus and James upon action are also necessary. Justification by inner experience alone may well lead to self-indulgence and utter relativity, as James feared. The Real for Jesus is process, not stasis:

its human equivalent is a kingdom constantly in the middle of construction.

Non-verbal action, while inherently more 'Real' than speech, is nonetheless an outward expression of an inner principle, even when most apparently spontaneous. As James implies, it may be made to reflect the form of a universal human truth within.

Hence the model for Christian moral action is the caring offered to the infant by its parents, an insight even Freud seems to have been working towards: 'the original helplessness of human beings is thus the primal source of all moral motives' (quoted Eagleton[12] 1990: 285). 'Good' is what an infant experiences, when it feels itself sustained by adult love; as Eagleton comments: 'Morality has its origin not in the superego, but in the small infant's affectionate gratitude for the care of its elders' (1990: 285). But for adults, it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35; a saying, surprisingly, included in no gospel). It is not simply that in these new terms to receive incurs a debt, while to give strengthens an investment; it is that action, being closer in nature to the inward, is both an expression of the inner, and has the power to modify and sustain it. The infant's feelings are recaptured in behaving with the emotions of parental care towards the universe and its inhabitants at large.

The reason we must be, while sharing empathically in the child's nature, not infantile but parental (which is not the same as 'paternal' or 'patronising') is that, after all, Christianity is not regression but a mode of being in the

actual world. It properly belongs, not to the chaotic pre-Oedipal 'feminine', but to a stage when individuation is already in progress. Instead, however, of simply affirming self-preservation and the integrity of the newly marked-off internal territory, it partially re-introduces and reincorporates the 'something left over' by the process. It is here, in the permanently ambivalent territory between self and other, that Christianity finds its moral ground.

In this connection, there is an important contrast to be drawn between the fervent personal lyricism which takes possession of Paul's inspired style and the largely anonymous and communal language of the synoptic evangelists (outside the flourish of Luke's initial chapters). For them, religious truth is always much more than a merely personal possession, though it is that too.

It is in the Gospels especially that the elusive parable and the striking but gnomic maxim serve not as complete embodiments of articulated thought, but as guides and stimuli to deeper meditation on the themes they invoke. Behind this lies a view of religious truth which holds that no definition, no single injunction, can be adequate and final; for what is really at issue is a body of knowledge entirely different from any of its verbal expressions.

The sayings and illustrations of Christianity are hence necessarily oblique: for often all they can do is stimulate our faculty of inner vision by patching in a partial outline or suggesting the location of a space. Ultimately they are meant to lead to an encounter in the Real, beyond and outside

the words in which they are framed. Christianity's especial contribution to the history of world religions is its moral mysticism, its sacramental vision, where the Incarnation's real meaning is to be found: this vision awaits the moments when mysticism and the physical, the inner Real and external reality, co-operate and conjoin.

For this reason Lacan's suggestion that there is a similarity between the Stoic and 'the Christian register' (1986: 254) is somewhat wide of the mark. Both are bound, in his view, by 'the absolute authority of the desire of the Other, that Thy will be done!' However, Stoicism's submission of self to outward necessities is not echoed in the Christian vision, for there inward being and external ideal become identified, their desires conjoint.

If one is to judge by the closing words of The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, then Lacan's own final position - that the most authentic spiritual values are not those that are measured by rules, but are found in their 'beyond' - is perhaps closer to Christianity's than he realises. Indeed, Lacan appears to give voice to his own brand of Paulinism:

> Love, which, it seems to some, I have down-graded, can be posited only in that beyond, where, at first, it renounces its object .... There only may the signification of a limitless love emerge, because it is outside the limits of the law, where alone it may live. (1986: 276)

However, a reader with an ear for ironies might well claim Lacan to be saying that such perfect transcendental love is actually impossible anywhere this side of the 'beyond'.

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CONCLUSION

Broad-ranging in its examples as this thesis has been, it is still necessarily incomplete. If, as I believe, a relation to the mystical experience is a very widely occurring impulse in literature and in art, then this study has been able to show that this is true in practice only over a limited compass.

I have tried partially to compensate for this inevitable incompleteness through the structure of my thesis, by building it upon contrasts: contrasts which both divide and, more importantly, link my divergent examples, so setting them within what could only be - if my connections are justified - a much broader supportive context; although the largeness of this context can sometimes only be implied, or else represented in a token way.

Since concentration was also necessary in order for fruitful interactions to emerge among my examples, I have restricted my scope to specific areas, and to texts within these areas which do, I think, interact and inform each other.

Nonetheless, I have ranged between kinds - fiction, poetry, numinous religious texts - and between 'highbrow' and popular forms, moving on from Eliot and Woolf to supernatural horror stories, written at much the same time as the work of these more august contemporaries. Such contrasts of kind and intended audience were employed to show that reference to the mystical experience overrrode such differences, and united otherwise very diverse literary enterprises.

The central contrast built into the main body of this study is that between two periods of literary history, the Romantic and the Modernist. Though the second of these periods is generally felt to be at least in some ways a reaction against the first, the mystical impulse continues to be found in examples drawn from both. The creative outputs of Eliot, Woolf and Pessoa are, in their distinctive ways, as closely founded on the mystical experience as are those of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Such continuity hints at the ubiquity of the mystical impulse in its capacity to inspire writing.

The dominating theme connecting my chapters is not simply the importance of childhood and of 'cosmic consciousness', or the meaning of the archetypal feminine, or the drive towards the Lacanian borderland of language. It is also the clear perception, on the part of many writers, of the dual character of the mystical experience: that it is just as capable of providing glimpses into annihilation and hell as into a pre-verbal paradise.

Though hinted at by Aldous Huxley in my introductory section, and again in Lacan's reference to dark gods, this division first strongly affects this thesis in section two, 'The Romantic Sublime', through Coleridge and Wordsworth's different perceptions of the mystical, a mystical derived, ultimately, as they saw, from childhood awareness. For Wordsworth, 'those first affections' not only continue to be 'a master light of all our seeing' but also uphold and cherish the human soul. Unreservedly he celebrates

those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence ....

These lines, from the ninth stanza of the 'Immortality Ode' (IX: ll. 20-27) are preceded, admittedly, by a perhaps more exploratory, less euphoric perception of the true effects of undermining the Symbolic Order in search of the Real, which involves

obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised
(ll. 13-17)

the forbidding shocks of which upon the human frame, which can make us 'tremble like a guilty thing surprised' (l. 19), are redeemed only by their tutelary character, it appears.

Nonetheless, it is left to Coleridge alone to perceive that the mystical sublime conceals the possibility of an equivalent 'beyond' that is less benevolent, less concerned with human ambitions: it is, indeed, an annihilating reality which contains the essence of the horrific.

Significantly, Coleridge dashed off his own 'twin' poem to the 'Immortality Ode', his 'Dejection: An Ode', when he had heard only the few initial stanzas of Wordsworth's effort. The Dejection Ode's terrifying images of disintegrating and fragmented reality, passages inspired by the sound of the wild wind 'raving' upon a wind-harp - 'a scream/ Of agony by

torture lengthened out' - seem a kind of riposte to the sombre and elevated dignity of Wordsworth's work; a protest that there are other, darker realities existent. This wind is like a poet out of nature, playing upon the human device, the lute, just as human poetic consciousness would work upon the natural world; but what it has to say, this voice from the source of Wordsworth's mystical sublime, is not encouraging to Coleridge:

> Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!
> What tell'st thou now about?
> 'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,
> With groans of trampled men, with smarting wounds -
> At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
> But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
> And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
> With groans, and tremulous shudderings - all is over -
> It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
> A tale of less affright,
> And tempered with delight,
> As Otway's self had framed the tender lay, -
> 'Tis of a little child
> Upon a lonesome wild,
> Not far from home, but she hath lost her way:
> And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
> And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.
> (ll. 109-125)

The child of the last lines, who seems a kind of dismal and dishevelled answer to the child who trails 'clouds of glory' in Wordsworth's vision of things, of course represents Coleridge himself - interestingly presented here in a feminine guise. With reference to the Elysian infant state Wordsworth envisages, Coleridge confesses that his own relation to and understanding of childhood is now different; but he wishes heartily he could find his way back to the sunny reality of the Wordsworthian ideal.

This interpretation is partially confirmed by the excised lines which follow after line 133, where Coleridge calls upon 'Edmund' (i.e. Wordsworth) to

> sing his lofty song and teach me to rejoice!
> O Edmund, friend of my devoutest choice,
> O rais'd from anxious dread and busy care,
> By the immenseness of the good and fair
> Which thou see'st everywhere ....
> (PW: 368)

The pattern established here, the contrast between the holy and the hellish visions of the 'beyond' of language, is made the main motive of my own final section, 'Heaven and Hell'. In this section, a discussion of supernatural 'evil' as represented in Edwardian occult horror fiction is juxtaposed with a 'psychoanalytic' reading of Christian texts as texts, concentrating in particular upon St Matthew's Gospel. My reading, which builds upon Jesus's own logion upon the matter, strives to show that heaven, like the hell of Edwardian fiction, is within - as also are representative figures from the Christian pantheon, including the 'Holy Ghost'. Surprisingly, this entity seems initially to share some of its characteristics with the daemonic feminine deity who presides over the supernatural world of the occult authors.

The same division of light and dark also operates, in a rather more complex way, between the first two chapters of my intermediate section, 'Mysticism and Modernism'. Eliot's emphasis on the intersection of time and the timeless is there juxtaposed with Virginia Woolf's accommodation of mysticism and the Death Wish in Mrs Dalloway. A related insistence upon 'death of the self' informs Pessoa's multiple personalities.

Since the structure of my thesis points to a common concern with mysticism in both Modernism and Romanticism, it is appropriate to ask what, after all, distinguishes the Romantic sublime from Modernist mysticism. If a concern with mystical experience appears in both movements, is there anything in their respective treatments of this common area which reflects their different characters as divergent and in some ways opposing literary currents?

One can, I think, point to a different functioning of the mystical element in the works involved. The Romantics, on the whole, tend to see the totality of the poem working like a kind of consciousness-altering drug, drawing the reader into its different experiencing world. Like the effect of La belle Dame sans merci upon Keats's knight-at-arms, a poem works an enduring change upon the consciousness of the reader. Yet this is not the sort of character-building change that Leavisites piously hope for: instead, it represents a mystical 'death-spell' in which the reader's final relation to his own individuality is fundamentally altered, and his practical stance to the ordinary world undermined and changed, if anything, for the worst. 'The world well lost' is the best face that is often put on this situation; though some poets, like Shelley, Byron (and the younger Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey), did translate their sense of the possibility of 'other worlds' into a political need to make this world a more poetically appropriate place. Others might seek out an enclave, like the Lakes or fabled Italy or 'the East', in hope that there the poetic and the actual happen to coincide.

The world, at least if it is to be taken on its own terms, is an even more decisively lost cause for Modernist poets, writers and artists. But what these figures exchange it for is different. A Modernist work typically begins by offering not an experience so much as a 'performance': the reader retains more of his critical judgment and his distance, at least as regards the work's content. He is encouraged to 'work at' the text or surface, rather than be seduced by it. On its side, the work 'enacts' the mystical, rather than creating its conditions. It may even choose to operate largely through the thoroughly unmystical idiom of abstraction.

To some extent these surface features are strategic, only. What really happens is that the main attention is deflected from the content to the form: to the <u>way</u> things are said and to their relation with their medium. The alien strangeness of the work's formal elements is intended to provide a meeting-point between the human and the ahuman. It is here, for many Modernists, that the mystical is located: at the precipitous 'edge' where what is said merges into the concreteness of its own medium. The mystical arises, supposedly, in the work's unsayable formal aspect, which is the point where statement is transmuted into 'thing', where the artifact combines with the Real.

> Words, after speech, reach
> Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
> Can words or music reach
> The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
> Moves perpetually in its stillness.
> (T.S. Eliot, <u>Burnt Norton</u>, ll. 139-143)

Clive Bell was an important theorist of English formalist Modernism, and a figure in Eliot's social and cultural milieu; it was Bell who invented the term 'significant form', which allowed Eliot to talk with special meaning about 'significant emotion' (Eliot[1] 1988: 196). In his book Art[2] Bell announces (in spite of his own scepticism about religious institutions and doctrines) that '[a]rt and religion belong to the same world' (Bell 1961 [1914]: 82). This is true because 'both seem to express emotions different from and transcending the emotions of life' (ibid.), and both are concerned with Man's 'sense of ultimate reality' (91): 'the task of the artist is either to create significant form or to express a sense of reality - whichever way you prefer to put it' (67-8).

> Now the emotion that artists express comes to some of them, so they tell us, from the apprehension of the formal significance of material things; and the formal significance of any material thing is the significance of that thing considered as an end in itself ... we can only suppose that when we consider anything as an end in itself we become aware of that in it which is of greater moment than any qualities it may have acquired from keeping company with human beings. Instead of recognising its accidental and conditioned importance, we become aware of its essential reality, of the God in everything, of the universal in the particular, of the all-pervading rhythm. Call it by what name you will, the thing that I am talking about is that which lies behind the appearance of all things - that which gives to all things their individual significance, the thing in itself, the ultimate reality. And if a more or less unconscious apprehension of this latent reality of material things be, indeed, the cause of that strange emotion, a passion to express which is the inspiration of many artists, it seems reasonable to suppose that those who, unaided by material objects, experience the same emotion have come by another road to the same country .... Be they artists or lovers of art, mystics or mathematicians, those who achieve ecstasy are those who have freed themselves from the arrogance of humanity.
>
> (Bell 1961: 72-3)

2

The different character of the two mysticisms, Romantic and Modernist, will, I hope, make themselves felt in each of my final examples. In these closing sections I wish, by way of recapitulation, to turn briefly to two poets: the first a Modernist, the second a Romantic. For both men, in their different ways, the mystical is allied to the creative.

In the first case I wish to consider a single work by the German poet Rilke. I shall not be looking at the poem independently, but considering it in the context of an explication by the philosopher Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's account appears in his essay 'What Are Poets For?'[3] in his Poetry, Language, Thought (1975 [1971]); the interaction between poet and philosopher is valuable in this context from a variety of points of view. Most importantly, it examines matters which have been central in this thesis from a philosophical, rather than a psychological or a religious, perspective.

On the whole, I have tended indefinitely to defer discussion of the specifically metaphysical claims that are often made for the Reality of the mystics, as being beyond the scope of this thesis, which prefers a psychoanalytic model. However, there are really only two contrasting attitudes that can be decisively adopted: either the Real is, despite its name, a solipsist illusion of primary narcissism, an entirely subjective artifact of consciousness; or it is an occasion of

temporary access, before the arrival of words, to a universal Reality beyond the self, which includes awareness within itself. A third position might be that human words and concepts are incapable of conveying, even to this degree, the relation of the child's pre-linguistic experience to the ontological reality beyond it. Between these varying standpoints this thesis does not presume to judge.

In Martin Heidegger's case, 'Being' is definitely treated as a self-existent metaphysical entity, about which it is humanly possible to speak; though, according to the later Heidegger, one has to be a poet to do so effectively. Heidegger's attitudes to Being are on several counts different from the main assumptions about Reality followed in this thesis. In the first place, he believes in the 'being' of particular things, which it is their nature to express, and which the mind may phenomenologically apprehend in the mode in which it is offered to mind; secondly, in his view language is capable of fully embodying this indivisible interaction between mind and beings. As Terry Eagleton[4] puts the relation between Being-as-disclosure and Dasein: 'The primary form of that disclosure, in the later Heidegger, is language. Language is the privileged mode in which Being articulates itself in humanity, and poetry is its essence: "Poetry is the saying of the unconcealedness of beings"' (Eagleton 1990: 301). Despite these very evident differences from the perspective of this thesis, there are also points of similarity, as will appear below.

Rilke's poem, 'improvised verses', is given here in the version the translator, Albert Hofstader, provides (Heidegger 1975: 99):

> As Nature gives the other creatures over
> to the venture of their dim delight
> and in soil and branchwork grants none special cover,
> so too our being's pristine ground settles our plight;
> we are no dearer to it; it ventures us.
> Except that we, more eager than plant or beast,
> go <u>with</u> this venture, will it, adventurous
> more sometimes than Life itself is, more daring
> by a breath (and not in the least
> from selfishness) .... There, outside all caring,
> this creates for us a safety - just there,
> where the pure forces' gravity rules; in the end,
> it is our unshieldedness on which we depend,
> and that, when we saw it threaten, we turned it
> so into the Open that, in widest orbit somewhere,
> where the Law touches us, we may affirm it.

Martin Heidegger is a metaphysician who, in his late work, presides over the dismantling of metaphysics as a separate discipline. He continues to its logical conclusion the Nietzschean project of identifying the philosophical with the poetic: poetry, for the later Heidegger, <u>becomes</u> the only philosophical way of saying.

Because of his Nietzschean influences, one would not expect Heidegger's idea of poetry to coincide with that presented in this thesis. Indeed, as we have seen, one side of Heidegger's picture has poetry unashamedly celebrating the Dionysian appearances of existence, and somehow directly expressing through words the 'Being of beings'.

And yet there are hints, even in this picture which implicitly accepts the power of words to reveal 'phenomenological' truth, of another potentiality in the poem,

involving a direct relation to Being itself. In his discussion of this second level of reality, Heidegger may be drawing Nietzsche back to his own Schopenhaurean beginnings, and to the earlier form of Dionysus who figures in The Birth of Tragedy: the Dionysus who undermines individuation and represents the primal, undifferentiated form of Will.

In his discussion of Rilke's 'improvised verses' (Heidegger 1975: 118), Heidegger notes that 'Man is sometimes more venturesome than the venture' upon which life sends him; he is capable of running ahead of the limits Being sets for his own nature. 'He who is more venturesome than that ground ventures where all ground breaks off - into the abyss,' Heidegger announces (118-9).

Heidegger's concept of the Open resembles in some respects Lacan's idea of the Real. Technological man wills heroically, expresses his inherent 'being' through his productions, and yet by 'building the world up technologically as an object, man deliberately and completely blocks his path, already obstructed, into the Open .... The man of the age of technology ... opposes himself to the Open' (116).

According to Heidegger, creation is of an entirely different nature from 'production': 'Production is possible only in objectification. Objectification, however, blocks us off against the Open' (120). In contrast, poetic creativity, by eschewing the idea of a 'product', is an even more daring kind of willing, a special kind of utter vulnerability to Being: 'To create means to fetch from the source' (120).

This kind of daring known to poets gains its only security from its utter carelessness. The poet alone is willing to venture all on the possibility of being in the Open. This region of the Open is what Rilke seems to be referring to in a letter which Heidegger quotes:

> ... like the moon, so life surely has a side that is constantly turned away from us, and that is not its opposite but its completion to perfection, to plenitude, to the real, whole, and full sphere and globe of being. (January 6, 1923; 1975: 124)

Interestingly, Rilke speaks of this 'other side' as a kind of Death, a perception which aligns him with writers dealt with earlier, like Virginia Woolf: 'Death is the side of life that is averted from us, unillumined by us' (November 13, 1925; ibid.). In the former letter quoted he says that the point is 'to read the word "death" without negation' (125). Such by now familiar expressions reveal that, as with many principal figures in this thesis, there is a mystical dimension to creativity in Rilke's eyes; an impression which letters like the following (August 11, 1924) confirm. Noteworthy is Rilke's clear perception that this other 'dimension' is within:

> However vast the 'outer space' may be, yet with all its sidereal distances it hardly bears comparison with dimensions, with the depth dimensions of our inner being, which does not even need the spaciousnesss of the universe to be within itself almost unfathomable. Thus, if the dead, if those who are to come, need an abode, what refuge could be more agreeable and appointed for them than this imaginary space? To me it seems more and more as though our customary consciousness lives on the tip of a pyramid whose base within us (and in a certain way beneath us) widens out so fully that the farther we find ourselves able to descend into it, the more

> generally we appear to be merged into those things that, independent of time and space, are given in our earthly, in the widest sense worldly, existence. (Rilke's own emphases; in Heidegger 1975: 128-9)

These last perceptions echo almost exactly those of Virginia Woolf's Mrs Ramsay in To the Lighthouse ('The Window'; section 11), who perceives herself as a 'wedge-shaped core of darkness'. In the very depths of her or his creative being, Rilke implies, the poet touches a new reality where the worldly identities of things dissolve and merge with her/his own. The barriers to the Open, in other words, become permeable at last.

It is words themselves which normally provide the most obvious barriers to Being, as agents of 'objectification'; but in Heidegger's view words - which are themselves formed from Being (he calls language 'the precinct' of Being [132]) - may actually act as passages to this 'other realm', when they are treated not as 'products' but in the poet's special 'creative' or 'opening' way:

> The nature of language does not exhaust itself in signifying, nor is it merely something that has the character of sign or cipher. It is because language is the house of Being, that we reach what is by constantly going through this house. When we go to the well, when we go through the woods, we are always already going through the word 'well', through the word 'woods', even if we do not speak the words and do not think of anything relating to language. (132)

Heidegger is thus unlike Lacan in feeling that contemplation of the wordiness of words themselves may actually take us towards the experience of Being, may give us

intimations of what those exceptional souls dare 'who are sometimes more daring than the Being of beings. They dare the precinct of Being. They dare language' (Ibid.). Heidegger actually asserts that it is only in some relation to language that the poets' (and the mystics') special sense of pure Being manifests: 'the return from the realm of objects and their representation into the innermost region of the heart's space can be accomplished, if anywhere, only in this precinct' (Ibid.; Heidegger's emphasis).

To speak as the poet does solely for the sake of speaking is, in Heidegger's view, not only to turn 'our unprotected being into the Open' (140), but to make of the wholeness of the poem an equivalent to 'the sound wholeness of the Open, in that it makes room within itself for man' (138). The poet's special brand of daring is, then, a recognition of a something 'more' (132) - more than we ordinarily acknowledge - belonging both to being and the word. But this something 'more', being conveyed by language, is no 'more' than a breath:

> Those who are more daring by a breath dare the venture with language. They are the sayers who more sayingly say. For this one breath by which they are more daring is not just a saying of any sort; rather, this one breath is another breath, a saying other than the rest of human saying. The other breath is no longer solicitous for this or that objective thing; it is a breath for nothing.
> (Heidegger 1975: 140)

Though Lacan is the principal moving spirit of this thesis, which has followed a psychological rather than a philosophical bearing, it has agreed with Heidegger upon the possibility of employing language itself to pass beyond

linguistic determinations. The aim is thus to use words against themselves in the service of contacting, however briefly or tangentially, the vast 'depth dimensions' of Being of which Rilke speaks. The wide and varied application of this principle is something which this thesis has hoped to adumbrate metonymically through its examples. As I have said, it is at least my own belief that in doing so it uncovers one of the fundamental drives of creative literature.

3

The first literary figure to be examined at length in this thesis (in Chapter 2) was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and in a way Coleridge is a paradigmatic figure for the work as a whole. This shows itself in his recognition from the first of the importance of the 'two sides' of the 'beyond' experience: its heavenly and its hellish aspects, the mystical and the 'abject'.

He himself acknowledges in Biographia Literaria his own 'obligations to the Mystics' (BL: 79); to exlude them from his personal history, he says, would be 'the denial of a debt, the concealment of a boon' (83):

> For the writings of these mystics acted in no slight degree to prevent my mind from being imprisoned within the outline of any single dogmatic system. They contributed to keep alive the heart in the head; gave me an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentiment, that all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of death, and were as the rattling twigs and sprays in winter into which a sap was yet to be propelled from some root to which I had not yet penetrated, if they were to afford my soul either food or shelter. (BL: 83)

Other factors - the writings of Kant and Schelling - helped to refine these early intuitions, and make them graspable and manipulable. But, Coleridge implies, the influence upon him of the mystics remained fundamental, something which was not replaced by, but continued to inform, his later studies.

In Chapter 2 I attempted to recover, both from Coleridge's theory and his poetic practice, the meaning of the 'supernatural element' which he saw as central to poetry (at least as he thought poetry should be). My argument then was concerned with the link between the 'supernatural' and the 'mystical'; but what Coleridge's poetry, especially, reveals is that the mystical sublime also has the power to appear in a very different guise, as the transcendentally horrific. In both cases there is no essential difference in the content of the experience; what differs is only the way it is received.

Coleridge's second long supernatural poem, 'Christabel', seems, just as much as the 'Ancient Mariner' (and some shorter lyrics like 'Kubla Khan'), to be, in a concealed way, about the writing of poetry and the nature of the poetic work. As I suggested in Part II, the 'reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities' (BL: 174) achieved by poetic imagination resembles the collapse of the binary opposites of reason and the effective unification of subject and object in the mystical experience. 'Christabel' certainly explores the problem of opposites, and finds their ultimate authority to be questionable and contingent.

As many have seen, both on the level of style and subject-matter, the poem is predicated upon uncertainty. It offers us a situation where undecidability reigns and where opposites - including good and evil - interpenetrate each other. What seems to follow here is that this merging together of apparent 'fixities and definites' (BL: 167) is something which poetry is specially constituted to reveal.

The first encounter of Geraldine and Christabel takes place at night, in poor visibility, where the cloud-layer 'covers but not hides the sky' (l. 16), and where the moon is full and 'yet she looks both small and dull' (l. 18). The supernatural atmosphere and the awareness of anomalies in our ordinary expectations of things - like the cock which crows at midnight - are closely linked.

The apparently pure Christabel and the apparently evil Geraldine are curious counterparts, as the poem progressively discloses. This hidden - unconscious - truth of their connection is something which, significantly, Bard Bracy's dream symbolises (just as his own songs might embody a similar 'reconciliation of opposites' on another level). In his dream he sees a white dove, bearing Christabel's name, lying in fearful distress, a bright green snake 'coiled around its wings and neck' (l. 550) and moving with the dove, 'swelling its neck as he swelled hers!' (l. 554).

Geraldine herself seems to incorporate similar oppositions in her own person: when she undresses to share Christabel's bed, she accidentally reveals an unpleasant secret - that she is half deformed. Christabel is immediately

obliged 'by magic' or hypnotism to suppress her own knowledge of the sight, in a way that perhaps echoes the mechanisms of primary repression. Once in bed and in Geraldine's arms Christabel thinks of her own good but departed mother: a fact which may suggest that Geraldine has some covert connection with these maternal memories. Geraldine may indeed be linked with the unrevealed 'bad side' of such deep recollections.

For Coleridge, the difference between the paradisal and the hellish 'sublime' seems to be represented by Christabel and her counterpart Geraldine, respectively. The transition between parts one and two of the poem emphasizes this difference: part one ends with Christabel asleep, envisioning her mother near and remembering the prophecy 'That saints will aid if men will call:/ For the blue sky bends over all!' (ll. 330-331). The picture here is really of a universe <u>in principle</u> benevolent since its 'supernatural' element is benevolent. However, during the night Geraldine casts her spell over Christabel, and the positive note is not sustained. Part two opens in much gloomier fashion with the words: 'Each matin bell, the Baron saith,/Knells us back to a world of death' (ll. 322-3).

The power of Geraldine's evil is shown in, for example, Christabel's inability the next day properly to answer her father's question: Geraldine's influence attacks her powers of speech. As Charles Tomlinson[5] puts it: 'Christabel bewitched suffers simultaneously with the disintegration of personality the disintegration of the will' (Tomlinson 1973: 237). This effect, the overwhelming of identity itself by a larger force,

parallels the conditions of mystical experience: but it figures here as something to be resisted, something terrifying and uncontrollable.

The culminating moment in the fragment we have is the effective seduction by Geraldine of Sir Leoline, Christabel's father. Symbolically this seems to mimic the overwhelming of the Name of the Father and the subversion of the Father's speech by the pre-verbal negative sublime, the daemonic feminine. Sir Leoline, like a logocentric critic, only half-listens to Christabel's story and rushes to his own, rationalising interpretation of it. The strainful rhetoric of his utterances demonstrates how Geraldine's influence has succeeded in undermining the authority of the word - especially 'the word' too emphatically relied upon. What is perhaps most astonishing is that she subverts the poet, too, bringing to an untimely end the creative work which is the vehicle in which she herself exists - apart from a strange twenty-two line conclusion to Part II, which begins with the child's image: 'A little child, a limber elf,/Singing, dancing to itself' (ll. 656-7).

The paradox that Coleridge, who is the supreme theorist of poetic unity, should also be the poet most associated with fragments and unfinished pieces, is too striking to ignore. There is some suspicion that 'Kubla Khan' and 'Christabel' both merely masquerade as unfinished, however; that they are really complete works in disguise. If so, then in both cases their completeness lies at some deeper level than their merely narrative aspect.

As if such a statement were not paradoxical enough, it may be that 'Christabel' actually offers itself as the archetype of the failed and incomplete work, and that is exactly where its hidden unity lies. In this case, it presents itself as an example of imbalance, of a failure to reconcile opposites successfully, to blend the 'sunny pleasure-dome' with 'caves of ice'.

What results is an irruption of the non-verbal which terminates the ability of the poem to go on speaking, just as Christabel's linguistic ability is hampered by Geraldine's spell. The poem's harmony, balance and form - all that would control the 'beyond words' experience and render it positive and sublime - are irrevocably disrupted by the poet's fearful intuition that the mystical and ineffable have the power to be the horrific too: '(O sorrow and shame should this be true!)' (l. 674).

Thus in both its form and its 'incomplete' content 'Christabel' brings poetry to the edge of an impassable divide: the divide between words - even poetic words - and the unsayable which, whether as the ineffable or the unspeakable, lies beyond them.

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APPENDIX I: THE EARLY TEXTS OF CHRISTIANITY

The modern consensus on the question of texts and their dependence is associated, for English readers, with the name of Canon Streeter[1]. Streeter's broad plan, which is taken as a working hypothesis by most theologians, is that Mark is the earliest of the gospels and that Luke and Matthew both use it, combining it with the source-document Q and with independent written or oral tradition exclusive to each of them alone (cf. Streeter 1927). If Mark was written in Rome after the fall of Jerusalem (70 AD) as seems likely, then Luke and Matthew are a decade or so later. John, which shows little dependence on the others, is assumed to be the latest work, different in kind, written a little before the turn of the first century. None of the evangelists were, on this view, eye-witnesses of the events they describe; even the names tradition ascribes to them are much in doubt.

Not all textual questions are laid to rest by this scheme, but alternatives can seem impenetrably complex (even if equally likely or unlikely). Schillebeeckx[2] records one recent proposal for us, that of P. Benoit and M.-E. Boismard of the synoptic Institute at Nijmegen: 'instead of the "Two Sources" theory they postulate "four foundation documents": a Jewish-Christian gospel-text from Palestine (A), a Gentile-Christian revision of A (called B), an undefinable third document (C), and finally the Q source, so called. What is more, the evangelists are said to have made use of these sources not directly, but via yet other intermediary gospels that relate and refer to one another in various ways. A very complex account of things....' (1989: 102).

Another complicating element is posed by the lost Gospel according to the Hebrews which is generally recognised to be of a different character from the fanciful apocryphal gospels of a later age. It was in Hebrew, not Greek, and used by Jewish Christian communities associated with descendants of the original Jerusalem church in Palestine and Syria: 'a work which is especially acceptable to such Hebrews as received the Christ' says

Eusebius[3] with subtle deprecation (Stevenson[4] 1960: 339). It closely parallels our Matthew Gospel, and was supposed at an early time to be its original. Jerome himself who knew it thought so, though he later changed his mind (James[5] 1953: 4). Certainly its wording was substantially similar in places, as we know from many marginal 'glosses' in early manuscripts of Matthew (4-8). According to an extant library list, the Stichometry of Nicephorus (3), it was 2,200 lines long, 300 less than Matthew. Most likely it lacked Matthew's infancy narrative or the virgin birth, since its theology was 'adoptionist' (i.e. Jesus became Christ only through the agency of the Holy Spirit at his baptism). This alone was reason for its rejection by the later orthodox Church, who took very little time to deify Jesus. But since, as now appears, Q itself[6] was adoptionist (Havener 1987: 124), this may be a point of contact between the two traditions, and testimony to the earliness of Hebrews theological standpoint on this issue. Indeed, it accords with the Jewish idea of the Messiah: that he would be divinely appointed and inspired, but certainly not divine in his own right.

Many German scholars, such as Schwegler (cf. Luedemann[7] 1989: 8), have argued at different times for Hebrews as a source for one or other of the gospels. However, from the extracts that remain to us, it is unlikely that this gospel as it stands is at all primitive; it elaborates a developed and sophisticated theology of its own, presumably in reaction to other Christologies already in existence. Interestingly, it assigns the first Jerusalem resurrection appearance to James, Jesus's brother and the primary pillar of Jerusalem Christianity after his death. Though there is some support for this in Luke, where James is almost certainly the (deliberately) unnamed companion of his uncle Cleopas on the road to Emmaus (cf. Wilson[8] 1984: 138), the clear 'political' jockeying associated with resurrection appearances makes the real priority difficult to establish. Thomas[9], incidentally, has Jesus warn his disciples before his crucifixion to 'go to James the Just, for whose sake the heaven and the earth came into existence' (Grant and Freedman 1960: 124, Logion 11); despite the authentic Hebraic flavour of the compliment (and the testimony of history that this is exactly what the disciples did), Thomas may be merely echoing some saying in Hebrews, rather than offering material based on a true primitive

source. Our earliest clear account is Paul (I Cor. 15, 5-8); Paul indeed acknowledges an appearance to James, but places it far down his list, with Peter at the head - but then, he saw James as his principal opponent, and the Gentile church he influenced has followed his lead in exalting Peter and abasing or obscuring James. On the whole, we can conclude very little even from the resurrection account about the relative authenticity of Hebrews as a source.

Other unexpected testimony in its favour, however, comes from Eusebius the first church historian, in the course of an anecdote about the patriarch Pantaenus, who flourished c. 180:

> Pantaenus ... is mentioned as having gone to India; and the story goes that there he found, in the hands of some persons who had come to know Christ in that land, the Gospel according to Matthew, which had anticipated his arrival; for that Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached to them and left behind the writing of Matthew in the actual Hebrew characters, and that it was preserved up to the said time.
> (in Stevenson 1960: 192)

Eusebius, misled by the idea that there was a separate Hebrew 'original' of which our Matthew was no more than the Greek translation, fails to realise he is accrediting a work which fits the description of Hebrews, by placing it in the possession of an authentic apostle. ('India' in this context seems to mean simply the Southern or Eastern borders of the Middle East, as in the case of the Thomas traditions; here it refers to Southern Arabia [Stevenson ibid.]). The work in question may not, after all, be Hebrews; as we shall see below, it may be an even earlier work, a possible ancestor of both this gospel and of of our Matthew, but already linked with the apostle Matthew's name.

All in all, it would be safest to assume that The Gospel according to the Hebrews may be at best (if it is not mainly founded on a translation of Matthew from Greek into Hebrew, as some earlier scholars conjectured) the contemporary of the Gospels we know, owing its similarity to its independent derivation from the same sources, though one would expect it to by-pass Mark, if so. Though its theology may be closer to the Q sayings source than any of the canonical gospels, it is not identical with either the earlier or later phase of Q, but may represent some development upon it, evolved after the collapse of Jerusalem. Its hints of Jewish-Christian

theology were, however, sufficiently distasteful to the early orthodox (predominantly Johannine and Pauline) church for it to be excluded from the canon and eventually suppressed.

Significantly, Eusebius, in his critical account of the canon (in Stevenson 1960: 339), places Hebrews neither among the acknowledge nor the rejected writings, but in the middle 'disputed' category - along with the Apocalypse of John, the epistle of James, II Peter and John III, all of which made it into the New Testament. Evidently Hebrews missed acceptance by no more than a hairsbreadth.

While accepting Streeter's broad schema as a basis, there are other views possible of the development of the canonical gospels, as we have seen. My own preference among these has at least the advantage of explaining why they originally received the names they did, which is otherwise problematic. This view holds that John and Matthew, at least, include in their lineage original documents actually composed by the apostles whose names they bear. Support for this idea is offered by the early Bishop Papias (60-130 AD), who collected together as much hearsay and oral tradition as came his way. Unfortunately much of what we have of this is probably unreliable, but it may contain hints of the truth.

He remarks, for example, that 'Matthew compiled the Sayings in the Aramaic language, and everyone translated them as well as he could' (in Wilson 1984: 44). Whether or not Matthew was the first compiler of Q, it seems conceivable that an early and no doubt rather disordered and unplanned 'miracle' gospel (as argued for by Canon Harvey of Westminster; cf. Wilson: 100) existed that may or may not have borne his name and was a possible source for Mark. Such a theory has indeed been advanced before, under the name of the 'Ur-Markos' hypothesis (cf. Powell Davies[10] 1956: 109). Perhaps this was even combined with a version of Q at an early stage to create a Mark-like gospel, but with a Jewish-Christian base. Eusebius's Pantaenus story above may be one sign of the existence of such a combined gospel under Matthew's name; I will offer what other evidence there is shortly. With some probability, perhaps a number of the 'many' gospels Luke speaks of (Luke 1-3) as extant in his time were erected upon this stem. It is notable that the only recognisable name among the disciples attached to

'Yeshu' by early Rabbinical literature is that of 'Mattai' (Wilson: 62); is this a legacy of the apostle Matthew's early literary prominence?

Whatever else may be true about it, our own 'Matthew' is a strange compound work. Apart from its evident desire to find as many Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) prophecies for gospel events as possible, its theology is an accommodating mixture of colours (cf. Maccoby[11] 1986: 173), some of them more favourable to the Jewish-Christian emphasis on 'law' and the need for works than any other canonical evangelist.

The case for The Gospel of St John is equally complex. The received opinion of scholarship - that John was late and largely a 'theological romance' of sorts - received a jolt with the discovery of the Rylands fragments in Egypt (Grant and Freedman 1960: 55), verses from John's crucifixion narrative which are datable to early in the second century. Despite its uniquely developed Christology, ultra-Pauline if it is Pauline at all, John is more trustworthy than Mark on (particularly Judean) geographical details and perhaps even chronology. It is not hard to postulate an underlying authentic narrative stratum of earlier date in which the crucifixion bulks large, upon which a late theological excursus has been imposed.

If we will, strange corroboration for a multiple authorship is provided by Papias once again; for on Papias's authority we learn that there were indeed two Johns, an earlier and a later, both based in Ephesus and buried there separately. Both shrines were venerated as the final resting-place of the apostle and evangelist. Papias was known as a 'hearer of John', but, as Eusebius points out, it is the second John, John the Elder, who was his mentor (in Stevenson 1960: 50). The historian suggests that the Revelation should be attributed to this latter figure (51) rather than the apostle. The bizarre possibility that there was a later John whose commentaries and meditations upon his namesake's gospel were later combined with them is an unnerving speculation (or perhaps 'the beloved disciple' was not named John at all); it may, however, go some way to explain the extreme age tradition attributes to the author of Revelations, for this second John would of course have been extant long after his predecessor. And the location of Ephesus, where Paulinism had a stronghold, may confirm

Paul's influence among the varied mix of influences which C.H. Dodd[12] (1960: cf. esp. 4-5) infers in its composition.

Epiphanius (310-403) speaks of Hebrew versions of John and Acts (probably the Ebionite, not our Lucan, Acts) kept in the treasuries at Tiberias (James 1953: 9); perhaps the former was the early narrative version of John. The presence of an Aramaic substratum to the John gospel has been argued for notably by C.F. Burney[13] (1922), and of a separate narrative element by A.T. Olmstead[14] (1942). Dodd eventually accepted a variant of Olmstead's thesis, it should be added.

The attribution of Acts and the third gospel to Luke, the physician companion of Paul, is probably the weakest ascription of the four. Ernst Haenchen's commanding work on Acts[15] establishes decisively that the author was no eye-witness of the Pauline history he describes (cf. Haenchen 1971).

Papias is also the probable source of later tradition which identifies Mark as Peter's amanuensis (in Stevenson: 52); but the story has a concocted and post hoc flavour to it. Perhaps the truth is that Mark was employed by Paul in this capacity. Certainly a Mark, the cousin of Barnabus, is often mentioned in the epistles (Phil. 24, 2 Tim. 11, Col. 3:10) and figures in Acts as a somewhat unreliable companion; in Acts 15: 36-41, he is the occasion of a decisive quarrel between Paul and Barnabas. If he is by chance the author of Mark's gospel, this tendency to go his own way is evident there, too. Unlike Paul, who was comparatively uninterested in the earthly ministry of Jesus (since the 'risen Christ' was all that mattered to him) Mark wishes to ground his Christology in history and is even negligent over the events of the Resurrection.

On the other hand, despite its early date, this is the most virulently 'theological' of the gospels, and that theology is Pauline in essence. It is pro-Roman and pro-Gentile, portraying 'the entire Jewish establishment' as being 'out to kill Jesus'; even his Jewish disciples are presented as 'a dull, quarrelsome lot, always jockeying for position, failing to understand Jesus, denying him when they are in trouble ... and finally deserting him at the time of his arrest' (Wilson: 46). Only Peter, the single apostle to show Paul even conditional sympathy, comes out of this story to any advantage. The original apostles, together with James,

the first leader of the Jerusalem church, were for Paul the 'circumcision party', opponents of his theology of faith and grace and cosmic sacrifice; in consequence of the Pauline triumph after 70 AD, James is almost missing from the history most Christians know; and a denigration both of the apostles and of Jesus's family may be inferred in Mark.

There is direct 'theological' evidence also for alignment of Paul and Mark. Edward Schillebeeckx points out that Romans 1:3-4 is a miniature prevision of the Marcan gospel structure (1989: 510). He insists that in spite of the absence of information about the resurrection '[t]he Pauline Easter kerygma forms from a Marcan standpoint an essential component or constituent part of the gospel, which no less essentially comprises Jesus' activity throughout his life on earth' (110); Mark's theology, though presupposing Paul's, is hence more balanced than its model: it does not ignore Jesus's earthly life, but chooses instead to see it as expressing his symbolic status. A particularly revealing clue is that the term 'gospel' appears in no other synoptic writing, except where its author relies on Mark; whereas Mark even employs it in his title. Paul for his part uses it constantly -'forty-eight times in the authentically Pauline writings' (108). The term 'gospel' itself originates in the Jewish Wisdom literature (cf. 510) - which suggests one source of influence upon Paul's theology. Others that have been advanced are the Orphic and other mystery religions of the dying and resurrected god (Kellett[16] 1962: 193; cf. also Maccoby), and even Iranian religion or the Hermetica. The Pauline influence on our Matthew comes partly through Mark.

Since most 'trees of descent' begin with Mark, it is possible that he has been credited with more compositional originality than he ought. Only a little amateur 'form criticism' with a coloured pencil shows that Mark falls apart almost instantly into twin strands of sayings and narrative, suggesting the combination and selective rearrangement of two or more prior sources. If so, the sayings at least have been re-ordered by Mark to make a theological point. Those up to 3:7 are liberal verdicts on fasting, the Sabbath, the need for ritual purity - all Pauline themes, fitting his campaign for freedom from the torah. In Ch. 7, the abolition of ritual washing and the distinction between clean and unclean foods is further

broached ('Thus he declared all foods clean' [7:19]), combined with an ostensibly Gentile healing. All grist to the mill of the successors of the self-styled 'apostle to the Gentiles'.

It is important to emphasise that there are prior sources involved, or else we may fall into the Maccoby-like trap of supposing that Paul effectively invented Jesus (cf. Maccoby 1986). It is the arrangement and the commentary that result in the exaggerated Pauline emphasis. Indeed, one surprise Mark has for those of us taught to believe that Q is what Mark did not share with the other synoptics, is that Mark seems to know a version of Q - or else his sayings source is contaminated by Q. The point is, he deals with Q material very selectively and seldom in the 'original' words. Mark 3:22-30; 6:10-12; 8:12-3; 8:36-8; 11:25; and 13:21-2 are non-parable Q vestiges that have crept into his text. 'The Lord's Prayer', for example, is reduced to the following: 'if you have a grievance against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you the wrongs you have done' (11:25). (New Testament Evangelists as a breed are somewhat chary of their sayings-sources and choosy about what they take up, according to Havener [1987: 30-31].) Incidentally, Mark seems to know some Q parables in non-Q versions: the 'mustardseed' (4:30-32) is one such (cf. Havener 26-7); Thomas has an independent version too, which shares some details with Mark's.

It is the other 'half' of the mix, Mark's narrative source, which is especially elusive. I have expressed concurrence with Harvey's view that a primitive 'miracle' narrative probably lies behind Mark (see above). The two versions of the feeding of the multitude (6:30-52 and 8:1-21) certainly suggest the collation of two divergent copies of a written source, and illustrate Mark's fidelity to the substance of what he read; but he does not scruple to place his own Anti-Pharisaic interpretations into the mouths of Jesus and the disciples (8:14-21).

In this connection it is perhaps worth mentioning another - perhaps marginal - work that nevertheless belongs in some way within the same tradition we are discussing: the ancient lost Gospel of the Ebionites. Simply on the (perhaps mistaken) ground that its Jewish-Christian sect

would be unwilling to cannibalize a Pauline work like Mark, it might have light to shed on an extra-Marcan (or even pre-Marcan) narrative tradition.

Irenaeus (d. 200) gives us the following information about the Ebionite sect:

> They use the Gospel according to Matthew only, and repudiate the apostle Paul, maintaining that he was an apostate from the law. As to the [Jewish] prophetical writings, they endeavour to expound them in a somewhat singular manner: they practise circumcision, persevere in the observance of those customs which are enjoined by the law, and in their Judaic style of life, that they even adore Jerusalem as if it were the house of God. (in Stevenson: 97)

Since the time of Baur in the early nineteenth century there are scholars increasingly willing to admit that Irenaeus is recording the dying stages of a tradition that stems (with certain twists and breaks) from the original Jerusalem Christianity of the first apostles. Their name 'Ebionites' means 'poor ones', which suggests they took to heart Jesus's injunctions about wealth and possessions. Not that the Ebionites were free from a special brand of their own quirkiness: they were, for example, vegetarians (at least by the time of Epiphanius [310-403 AD]) - which seems to have been true also of James but not Jesus - and they rewrote their scriptures to mirror this custom (cf. Epiphanius in James 1953: 9-10). They possessed their own non-Pauline Acts and an Ascents of James (Wilson: 155), and Ebionite influence is detectable in parts of the Pseudo-Clementine writings (cf. Maccoby 180-3). Gerd Luedemann (Luedemann 1989) has provided a careful recent analysis of early anti-Pauline writing - including Ebionitism and its history among the scholars.

As we see, like Hebrews and our own first gospel, their scripture (in Hebrew) was identified with Matthew's name. It is often hard to know which of the various gospels attributed to Matthew any given ancient author is actually referring to, or to judge just how distinct they really were; but as far as we can ascertain, the Ebionite gospel was discernible from its brothers derived from the same (Matthean?) root. Epiphanius (c. 310-403) says it was 'called according to Matthew, but not wholly complete, but falsified and mutilated (they call it the Hebrew Gospel)' (James: 9); he knows it also as 'according to the Hebrews, as the truth is, that Matthew

alone of New Testament writers made his exposition and preaching of the Gospel in Hebrew and in Hebrew letters' (8). The bits of it that are extant show it to be a comparatively crude work, reminding of those early evangelists whom Origen censures; those who 'came to the task rashly, without the needful gifts of grace' possessed by canonical writers (James: 10). Undoubtedly by the fourth century, too, it was adulterated by contact with the canonical gospels - if it is not wholly derived from them. And yet if this is not entirely the case, we have another link with the tradition that underlies the 'Matthean' gospel narratives.

It begins, like Mark and the ministry sections of the canonical gospels, with John the Baptist; but proceeds directly to the calling of the disciples:

> There was a certain man named Jesus, and he was about thirty years old, who chose us. And coming unto Capernaum he entered into the house of Simon who was surnamed Peter, and opened his mouth and said: As I passed by the lake of Tiberias, I chose John and James the sons of Zebedee, and Simon and Andrew and [Philip and Bartholomew, James the son of Alpheus and Thomas] Thaddeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the Iscariot: and thee, Matthew, as thou satest at the receipt of custom I called, and thou followedst me. You therefore I will to be twelve apostles for a testimony unto Israel.
> (James 1953: 9)

This is quite clearly related to the list of the disciples in Mark 3: 16-19. But Mark has earlier followed the mention of the lake (1:16) with the rather unlikely story of the miraculous 'instant' calling of the two groups of fishermen, who at once drop everything to follow Jesus. If he was confronted by anything like this passage in his source, then perhaps the 'calling' idea was suggested to him by the abruptness and rapidity of its style. Note that Jesus is supposedly addressing Peter, who nonetheless still appears in the list; and yet his listener turns into Matthew before the end. Mark, too, separates the calling of Levi (Matthew) from the other names (2: 13-14), with no obvious narrative motive for doing so. Such a motive would, however, have been provided if Levi was the author of Mark's source. Again, though the lists seem very similar, in Mark, as one might expect, Simon appears not third but at its head. And yet it would be unwise to rest anything very substantial upon points of comparison like these; our knowledge of the circumstances are really too slight. (Like Hebrews and Q,

incidentally, the Ebionite Christology was 'adoptionist': Jesus was a normal man upon whom a divine essence rested at baptism.)

Last in this list of texts is one of a very different kind, the Gospel of Thomas unearthed in 1945 at Nag Hammadi in Egypt, amid a mass of lost Gnostic Christian writing. Unlike other Christian apocrypha, the original of this text was known to be comparatively early (c. 140 AD), and it is widely quoted by the Church fathers (2 Clement, Justin [c. 160], Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and the Didascalia Apostolorum all draw upon it) - sometimes perhaps unconscious that they recalled a purportedly heretical work. Unfortunately, the Coptic version we have is not, as many believe, complete. According to the Stichometry of Nicephorus (James: 15), the original was 1,300 lines long (about half the size of Matthew), whereas our version is palpably shorter than this. It is also heavily Gnosticised and in all probability much adulterated by a Gnostic redactor - since it may not originally have been a Gnostic text: a few fragments unearthed earlier at Oxyrynchus in Egypt are clearly from this same gospel, though in Greek, not Coptic. The Greek text is certainly both more intelligible and more orthodox - and arguably more like the original. Oxyrynchus was an ancient conventional Christian settlement, not a Gnostic community, which lends weight to this judgment.

By virtue of their comparative contempt for the things of this world, Gnostic writers were not under the same - still fairly flexible - constraints of conservation and preservation as their more orthodox fellows, and readapted texts freely. Luedemann (1989: 170-177) compares the Gnostic Second Apocalypse of James also from Nag Hammadi with the Martyrdoms of James in Hegesippus and in the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions, and demonstrates that a single source underlies them all; it is clear that the Gnostics with their belief in a continuing revelation felt no compunction whatever in rewriting authentic texts for their own purposes. Irenaeus has some interesting things to say about the complex literary methods they used (Adv. haer., 1,8,1; Grant and Feedman 1960: 87).

Our hope that Thomas, which is a sayings collection like Q and containing material from it (in a sometimes hardly recognisable form: occasionally, the link is no more than a phrase), might turn out to be

based on on an authentic early Christian compilation of the same kind, can hardly be satisfied by what we have; though recently Professor Helmut Koester of Harvard has argued that Thomas 'may contain some traditions even older than the gospels of the New Testament, "possibly as early as the second half of the first century" (50-100)' (Pagels 1982: 16). Unfortunately, it is hard to know of which of the sayings or parts of sayings this might be true. Grant and Freedman's careful and wary analyses of 1960 still contain arguments which must be overcome; though even they admitted that '[t]he fact that as a whole Thomas reflects a Gnostic environment does not permit us to say that everything it contains is to be rejected' (87).

Whatever else is clear about Thomas, it is not simply a free literary composition, though it may now contain such elements. Though it may have started life as a collection of oral sayings and traditions - just possibly known even to Mark - it looks now rather like an anthology from other known gospels, some of them lost. Sayings appear which have known equivalents in, for example, The Gospel according to the Hebrews, and in the The Gospel of the Egyptians, the latter perhaps a rather dubious work.

A fascinating example of the problems it raises is given by Logion 17 (Grant and Freedman: 130):

> Jesus said:
> I will give you
> what eye has not seen
> and ear has not heard
> and hand has not touched
> and which has not come into the heart of man.

Though it faintly recalls Isaiah 64:4, this saying occurs in none of the canonical scriptures; and yet Paul, writing earlier than any of them, says in 1 Corinthians 2:9: 'As it is written, What eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and what has not entered into the heart of man, such things God has prepared for those who love him'. (In this form, it was parodied in Bottom's dream-inebriated speech of Act IV scene i, 209-12 of A Midsummer Night's Dream; so presumably Shakespeare thought it sufficiently delphic even in Paul's version.) If Paul's form is the authentic one, then we may

see what a Gnostic redactor has made of it, reworking it so that it appears to refer to the mysterious insight of gnosis.

But is Thomas's original source Corinthians or the unknown sayings-collection upon which Paul draws? On the negative side, the redactor of our third-century MS would have a wide range of alternative sources to draw from. The words appear in I Clement 34:8, 2 Clement 11:7 and 14:5, in the late second century Martyrdom of Peter (ch.10) and the Acts of Peter with Simon (ch. 39); also in Mart. Pol. 2:3, The Book of Baruch of the Gnostic Justin (in Hippolytus 5:19,22). Stephanus Gorbanus quotes a version from Hegesippus. And even the fifteenth century Ethiopic Apocalypse of Ezra contains a close parallel to Paul's (see Luedemann 1989: 292-3).

On the positive side, Thomas includes many sayings which are not Gnostic in bearing at all, and its relation to our canonical gospels is very close - from a time before they had even been assembled together. Throckmorton's Gospel Parallels[17] has glosses with variant readings from Thomas, but his representation is hardly complete: in reality, there is barely a page of parallel text which nothing in Thomas bears upon; of twenty-three identifiable parables in Matthew, for example, Thomas has versions of ten of them. It contains however only one parable from the specifically Lucan material (12:16-21).

All-in-all, I have thought Thomas of sufficient intrinsic interest and early date to justify quotation from it in my main text. I take Gnosticism to represent a very early fusion between the Hermetic literature and Christianity proper; other groups than the orthodox Jews were awaiting the arrival of a redeemer, an archetypal 'Son of Man'. If our purpose in what follows is to follow the various trails that lead back to the original inspiration of Jesus, then Thomas is, if nothing else, a sufficient representative for us of the Gnostic route.

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