SHIRON 試論

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Of the Standard of Taste:
David Hume's
Aesthetic Ideology

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This essay endeavours to clarify David Hume's aesthetic ideology. By analyzing his discussion of two related topics—the judgment of taste and the origin of justice—the essay explores how the problems of commerce and civil laws are registered in his aesthetic theory. After Mandeville inveighed against Shaftesbury's theory of virtue, the British theorists of moral sentiments—many of whom were Scottish—tried to answer the question of how a modern commercial society that approves individual desires and passions as the driving force of commerce can avoid moral corruption. They constructed subtle arguments to demonstrate that principles regulating moral degeneration were incorporated into the mechanism of human sentiment. What I propose to maintain in this paper is that (1) David Hume's account of taste presented in his brief essay entitled 'Of the Standard of Taste' offers a specimen of the main ideas fully developed in his major philosophical works and (2) Hume's account of taste is really articulated by the social and political problems that beset eighteenth-century British moral philosophy.

Modern civil society as recounted by Hume is a society that gives primacy to private desire and gratification. The power to maintain the order of such a society is not entrusted to reason but to imaginative faculties like sensibility, fancy, and sympathy. Like other British moral philosophers, Hume denies reason the authority to govern a highly civilized commercial society, for the attempt to direct citizens by rational reasoning toward public virtue would, he insists, ends by spoiling the energy that drives the progress of commerce and civilization. It is delicacy of sensibility that is expected to check violent passions that are prone to run away with themselves. Hume's civil society is thoroughly aestheticized in the sense that it is supported by the power of imagination. Hume's moral philosophy, it can be said, demarcates the limit at which the legislation of reason ends and the rule of imagination begins. That is why his writings—both philosophical and political—are among the most important texts of aesthetic and social theory, and are texts to which we must return again and again as long as we live in a commercial society.

Poetic Quaternaries:
William Blake's
Unsystematic System

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The purpose of my study is to sketch a critical approach evincing the existence of four levels of significance within Blake's poetry. Evidently, this goal cannot be achieved without starting from the assumption that there exists a unity of significance within what I call Blake's *unsystematic system.* The title syntagm (*poetic quaternaries*) epitomizes my approach to the subject. As all Blake students know, the poet states that there exist four specific types of vision: single, twofold, threefold, and fourfold. I intend to demonstrate that these classes of vision correspond to four distinct yet convergent levels of meaning, i.e. social, metaphysical, aesthetic, and religious, which underline Blake's artistic structure from a conceptual point of view. This hermeneutic scheme, which should be viewed as text-oriented and flexible, can be extended, so that it may comprise the whole Blakean production. It must be remembered that the components of this *Literaturwissenschaft* pattern are interrelated, even symbiotic, and, even if they represent something in themselves, their general function is to be discovered only within the integrity of the system.

From a methodological perspective, I must point out that my approach to Blake's work draws concurrently on theory of literature, hermeneutics, metaphysics, the history of ideas, and visionarism. Thus, my analysis starts from a series of critical assumptions, and proceeds thence by a process of *explication de texte* to the demonstration of the hermeneutic thesis. In the end, my interpretation evinces Blake's complex profile as a poet and thinker, and, simultaneously, attempts to offer a fresh starting point for a systematic academic approach to his work in general.

Mary Shelley,
an Autobiographer

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In the Introduction appended to the third edition of *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus,* Mary Shelley makes an analogy between the creation of the monster by the protagonist, Victor Frankenstein, and her act of writing as an authoress. Mary Poovey regards the monster as Victor's double, 'a symbolic agent of egotism,' which brings about the collapse of the domestic peace of his family. Victor, a man living in a patriarchal society, irreverently deludes himself that he is given a woman's biological prerogative to give birth. Mary makes her acts of literary creation overlap, in the Gothic style, with the creative act of Victor, who, driven by his self-conscious desire, transgresses and violates the bounds of humanity. In Barbara Johnson's words, *Frankenstein* is 'the story of the experience of writing *Frankenstein*'. By means of the image of the monster, Mary, a woman writer in a still largely patriarchal age, is telling the story of her own life. Her anxieties, spiritual torments, and clashes with social norms are successfully transformed into the Gothic tale of an ambitious scientist and his monster.

The aim of this paper is to consider how Mary has created her autobiographical novel, paying special attention to its historical background. She was a member of an early nineteenth-century bourgeois family and, at the same time, a writer belonging to English Romanticism. Her ambivalent feelings about the writing of *Franken-stein* derive from her peculiar situation. Though she was a woman firmly placed within the bourgeois family structure of her age, her own particular family of literary celebrities was quite out of the ordinary. I will consider the Frankensteins in the novel under the perspective of 'mentalitè,' in the changes by which Lawrence Stone sees the emergence of the modern family. Philippe Ariès uses the word 'feeling' for the same experience by means of which the members of the modern family form a unified habit or way of life. It should be noted that 'mentalité' or 'feeling' indicates just the field in which English Romantic Poets have tried to complete a vital, dialectical movement of 'soul-making,' struggling with the desire to overcome self-consciousness, by means of the imagination.

Victor's violation of the bounds of humanity seems to present a critique of Romantic imagination. But what

Mary is more acutely concerned with in the novel is not Romantic imagination itself, but its inevitable corollaries or consequences. Like her protagonist Victor, she has aspired to transcend social conventions inhibiting her creativity, but she criticizes and finally refutes his monstrous self-assertion, perceiving that it will bring about the collapse of domestic happiness. In the final outcome, Mary as a woman writer shows herself to be a conservative, not the radical critic of society that she had been expected to be.

'A blank to me':
Thomas Hardy and
the Loss of Meaning

PETER ROBINSON
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As is well known, the young Thomas Hardy suffered a loss of faith in the established religion of his native land. However, the loss I want to look at here is the kind that can happen to a person of any or no creed, and can happen, what's more, at moments not necessarily of epoch-making cultural change, but when least expected. In order to live and have social relations we need to invest other people with meaning — with a meaning for us. Hardy, as both poet and novelist, appears to have been peculiarly sensitive to occasions when these investments would suddenly lose value. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* he assembled the circumstances in which such a loss could occur with tragic consequences, through errors of belief; while later, in *The Well-Beloved*, he concocted a theory-driven plot about its happening serially in relations between an artist at different phases in his life and three different generations of women — one which, in its preposterousness, points all the more sharply towards the bewildering anguish and disorientation that such losses produce. By looking at passages from these two novels and considering in detail his poem 'At Waking', I show that Hardy's honesty was to focus on occasions of such meaning loss and give highly plausible literary shapes to these experiences, while, simultaneously, pointing readers in the direction of a love for the particular.

Timelessness in
Angela Carter's
*The Infernal Desire
Machines of
Doctor Hoffman*

SATOSHI MASAMUNE
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Angela Carter (1940-1992) has taken up various problem of time in her novels. In her early career she explores into the problem of time passing away, resulting in a hero's sense of loss. In the 1970s, this theme is developed into examining a dynamic aspect of time; a tension that occurs between what is described as an event and its erosion by the passage of time is investigated. In *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, which this paper focuses on, Carter's interest in the temporal problem seems to be enlarged into dealing with a postmodern exploration of on the act of the narration. Generally, when one narrates an event, there are two temporal points involved: the point in time at which each event in the narrative actually happened, and the point in time at which the act of narration is fixed. However, when an event is being narrated, the latter aspect tends to become invisible, as a result of which, we are confronted with a seamless whole, exempt from the signs of the actual pauses that the narrator may well have made during the act of narrating; the narrative looks as if it existed timelessly, i.e., unaffected by the passage of time.

Instead of indicating the defective partiality this status of the narrative involves for describing the totality of our reality, Carter apparently attempts to make a claim that our perception of reality is made timelessly, and that, therefore, it is natural that the narrative which relates it should be existing in the same manner. For this purpose, she incorporates into *IDM*, pseudo science fictional situations in which all of one's perceived reality is deliberately a reflection of one's desire. Thus by creating the sequences annulling the processes of the formation and the fulfillment of desire on the perceiver's side, Carter concretely depicts a timeless world which she seems to think would reflect a truer form of our perceived reality in terms of time.

A counterargument might be proposed, however, against her creating such an unusual setting: a claim that our narrative consists not only of realities that are simply desired, but also of objective realities, and that because Carter overlooks the latter type of realities she fails to grasp the entirety of the narrative. In fact, this point relates to the second thesis of this paper, which

rejects such a counterclaim: Carter seems to argue in *IDM* that our desire, once it is stipulated, is forced to lose some original nature of it, ending up with being no different from an objective fact. Consequently, to set up the distinction between desired perceptions and objective ones from the onset might be meaningless. Instead, Carter draws the line between these two types of realities as she differentiates the stage at which desire is not yet stipulated and that at which such a stipulation is finished. Carter seems to think that the timeless feature of the narrative is concerned with the latter stage.

This paper thus concludes that this novel implies the possibility that the narrative exists timelessly, not because the narrational aspects of it are omitted, but because the narrative as it reflects our perception of the reality should be timeless by nature. In the light of this conclusion, the existing interpretations of the hero's motive for killing the enemy leader and his daughter might be modified, and a new suggestion as to what the last sentence of the novel means might also be offered.

Of the Standard of Taste:
David Hume's Aesthetic Ideology

Sho Okochi

The relationship between moral philosophy and aesthetics still remains one of the most important problems to be clarified in eighteenth-century British intellectual history. Both of these theoretical discourses have one important question in common—the question of how sentiment, which seems individual and idiosyncratic, can be the standard of judgment. As many commentators have already suggested, in the background of the emergence of moral philosophy and aesthetics during the period was the rapid commercialization of British society.[1] After Mandeville inveighed against Shaftesbury's theory of virtue, the theorists of moral senti-ments—many of whom were Scottish—tried to answer the question of how a modern commercial society that approves individual desires and passions as the driving force of commerce can avoid moral corruption.[2] They constructed subtle arguments to demonstrate that principles regu-lating moral degeneration were incorporated into the mechanism of human sentiment. Theorists of ethics and aesthetics in the age from Shaftesbury to Richard Payne Knight never ceased to discuss the prob-lem of taste. The term 'taste,' derived from bodily palate, served British moral philosophers as the best metaphor through which to signify the inner faculty that intuitively grasps general rules of art and of life and manners. What I propose to maintain in this paper is that (1) David Hume's account of taste presented in his brief essay entitled 'Of the Standard of Taste' offers a specimen of the main ideas fully developed in his major philosophical works and (2) Hume's account of taste is really articulated by the social and political problems that beset eigh-teenth-century British moral philosophy. Unlike his friend and mentor, Francis Hutcheson, Hume did not write much about aesthetics per se, but as the following argument shows, his whole theoretical project is radically aestheticized.

When we read Hume's whole oeuvre, we notice that there are two conspicuously different aspects in him as a man of letters—the passion for philosophy and a profound interest in 'common life.' On the one hand, he is, notoriously, a radical sceptic who puts everything into question including the certainty of the external world's enduring existence and the coherence of personal identity; but on the other, he is an optimistic apologist for modern commercial society, who affirms the development of commerce and the refinement of arts and sciences. In his moral and political essays, Hume, countering conservative criticism of the effeminising force of fashion and commerce, firmly insists that the refinement of manners achieved through commercial affluence promotes moral virtue. He is no less confident about the beneficial effects of the commercialization of British society than Addison and Defoe. In order to understand the characteristics of Hume's discursive practice we need to clarify the relationship between these apparently incompatible attitudes in him as a man of letters. It is clear that Hume is conscious of conflicting propensities within himself. In the concluding part of Book I of his *Treatise of Human Nature*, the crisis of self-division is vividly depicted as the oscillation between solitary and depressing philosophical thinking and lazy, easy-going diversions with his friends.[3] Hume's rigorous sceptical inquiry demonstrates that we can never hope to grasp the reality of things and that all our beliefs are nothing but the product of imagination. Finding that his radical scepticism has destroyed even the basis of his own science of human nature, he recoils from his own discovery, asking himself: 'Can I be sure, that in leaving all establish'd opinions I am following truth; and by what criterion shall I distinguish her, even if fortune shou'd at last guide me on her foot-steps?' (265). Unable to overcome the 'spleen' caused by his philosophical impasse, Hume tries to find a relief in indulging in the common affairs of life: 'I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends.' The amusement and company, however, cannot give him a permanent cure for his melancholy because he believes that the 'indolent belief in the general maxims of the world' (269) stagnates the progress of man and society. The way he finally chooses to get out of his philosophical and psychological predicament is to practice a new sort of writing in which 'a share of this gross earthly mixture'(272) is added to his systematic thinking; that is, he tries to be less dogmatic and directs his attention to the ordinary affairs of life. He thus creates a discourse which reconciles rational philosophy and healthy common sense. The two sides of Hume—a radical sceptic and an optimistic man of common sense—are fused in his style, which characterizes not only his moral and political essays but much of his philosophical writings. As I shall argue in what follows, the characteristics of his style are best understood in terms of the ideological formation of modern civil society.

Hume's essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' is one of his few treatises that consistently discusses an aesthetic problem.[4] It has attracted critical attention as a text containing insightful arguments about value judgment in general. Like his other writings, it is not only the theoretical richness but the rhetorical performance that makes it worth close reading. He begins this essay with reference to 'a species of philosophy' which 'found[s] morality on sentiment' (*Essays* 227)[5] and denies the possibility of finding standards of taste. The act of judgment presupposes certain criteria by which disputes are resolved, but according to the philosophy in question, because the sentiment underlyng taste is by definition not only idiosyncratic but self-contained, taste can never be subordinate to general rules:

> All sentiment is right; because sentiment has a reference to nothing beyond itself, and is always real, wherever a man is conscious of it. But all determinations of the understanding are not right; because they have a reference to something beyond themselves, to wit, real matter of fact; and are not always conformable to that standard. Among a thousand different opinions which different men may entertain of the same subject, there is one, and but one, that is just and true; and the only difficulty is to fix and ascertain it. On the contrary, a thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right: Because no sentiment represents what is really in the object. It only marks a certain conformity or relation between the object and the organs or faculties of the mind; and if that conformity did not really exist, the sentiment could never possibly have being. Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. (230)

If the position that '[a]ll sentiment is right' is granted, any possibility of making judgments of taste is excluded. Following this view, the derivation of the word 'taste' from a physical sense of palate suggests that taste is wholly idiosyncratic and can never be accounted for by general criteria. The attempt to identify 'true' beauty or ugliness in order to establish the standard of taste is no less nonsensical and fruitless than the attempt to tell true sweetness or bitterness from false ones. This philosophy, insisting on the sheer idiosyncrasy of taste, seems most

challenging to Hume's ambition to establish a standard for taste. It is striking, however, that the 'species of philosophy' that seems to frustrate his aesthetic project is, as discussed below, nothing less than Hume's own epistemological position as fully detailed in his *Treatise*. His argument in the essay on taste is written in the manner of, as it were, a dialogue with himself. There is the smack of theatricality, therefore, in the way Hume describes the difficulty inherent in his own system, as if it were in opposition to his own philosophy. It seems that Hume is trying to defend his position through rhetorical manoeuvres rather than through rational argument.[6]

The dilemma that besets Hume's account of taste results from his premise that morality is not a matter of reason but of sentiment and the passions. The great importance the notion of taste assumes in eighteenth-century British ethics and aesthetics is due to the fact that in these fields the sole criterion of value judgment is sought not in the rationality but in the emotionality of man. As Norman Kemp Smith has suggested, the most important feature of Hume's moral philosophy is that he places sentiment over reason, reversing the traditional order.[7] In Hume's system the role of reason is markedly minimized; the function of reason is reduced to judgment of truth and falsehood by comparing ideas or inferring matters of fact. Since it is by means of certain impressions—pleasure and pain—that virtue and vice are known, reason can have no influence on our moral decisions:

> Truth or falsehood consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the *real* relations of ideas, or to *real* existence and matter of fact . . . . Now 'tis evident our passions, volitions, and actions, are not susceptible of any such agreement or disagreement; being original facts and realities, compleat in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions, and actions. 'Tis impossible, therefore, they can be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason. (*Treatise* 458)

It is difficult to distinguish the contention made in this passage from that of the 'species of philosophy' Hume mentions as the most formidable challenge to his programme of finding the standard of taste. Morality is practical in the sense that it is concerned with our social behaviour and is expected to offer prescriptive standards, but reason is 'wholly inactive, and can never be the source of so active a principle as conscience, or a sense of morals' (458). Only sentiment and passions can motivate us to actions: 'Morality, therefore, is more properly felt than judg'd of'

(470). It is important, however, that for Hume to say that the judgment of taste is based on sentiments as 'original facts and realities' does not mean that it is impossible to make judgments of taste. Actually, in day-to-day life, we never cease making judgments: 'Nature, by an absolute and uncontroulable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel' (183). To stop making judgments would be as fatal as stopping breathing. The purpose of the essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' is to demonstrate that judgments of taste made in everyday life are in fact based on general and transpersonal principles. David Miller, discussing the problem of Hume's ideology, observes that Hume's philosophy should be called 'mitigated scepticism':

> This mitigated scepticism can be summed up in three propositions: (1) moral judgments cannot be based entirely on reason, and so are incapable of justification in the strong sense of rational demonstration; (2) we should not, however, embrace the sceptical view that such judgments are entirely arbitrary, for they have a secure foundation in human nature; (3) moral judgments are capable of correction and improvement, but such improvement cannot consist in giving them a fully rational justification; it is limited by the necessary role that sentiment plays in such judgments, and by the general properties of the understanding. (Miller 41)

Hume avers, it is true, that moral judgments cannot be rationally justified, but at the same time he believes that moral judgments have a general validity that makes them improvable. Hence comes his belief in the progress of civilization and in the superiority of the modern over the ancient. But how can moral judgments that are based on seemingly capricious and idiosyncratic sentiment attain the status of a general standard? The problem that Hume faces in his account of taste is how particular judgments are presided over by general rules. It is this problem that forms the central theme of his 'Of the Standard of Taste.'

After surveying the sceptical position that seems to deny the possibility of finding standards of taste, Hume proceeds to construct a theory that aims to overcome the difficulty. He begins his discussion with some 'general observations,' namely, that people in common life are actually unanimous, for instance, about the merits of great authors. To be sure, people's taste seems capricious and idiosyncratic enough to frustrate any ambition in literary critics to find common criteria, but, he urges, over the long passage of time transpersonal and unanimous judgments are actually formed. For example, the judgment that places

Milton over Ogilby, or Addison over Bunyan, is universally accepted, and 'no one pays attention to such a taste' (*Essays* 231) as goes against the decision of general taste. Even though trivial authors gain temporal and transient fame, they are destined to be forgotten with time. On the contrary, the long passage of time never impairs the permanent renown of great authors: 'The same HOMER, who pleased at ATHENS and ROME two thousand years ago, is still admired at PARIS and at LONDON.' Hume thinks that the conspicuous unanimity of people's opinions about the merits of great authors implies that apparently disparate taste is really subordinate to 'certain general principles of approbation or blame' (233). Taste is the name given to the mental faculty that discerns the general principles of arts.

Hume next tries to clarify how the individual practice of tasteful judgment leads to the formation of general taste. Given Hume's fundamental claim that rules of taste are not 'fixed by reasoning a priori,' it is natural that his science of taste begins with 'experience' (231). But his empirical method is, he admits, troubled by great difficulties. Because taste is concerned with very delicate matters and because the judges are often disturbed by such contingent elements as personal predilections or the prejudices of the age, their judgments are prone to be distorted. Moreover, even if the judge is free from such prejudices, his physical condition or some accidental circumstances possibly mar his sensibility. It is therefore awfully difficult to have both an ideal judge and ideal conditions for making reliable judgments. Each individual judgment therefore cannot be expected to be legitimate and credible. Needless to say, if every individual judgment of taste is necessarily fallible, an accumulation of them can never reach the status of universal validity. To overcome this difficulty, Hume postulates taste as 'the delicacy of imagination' (234)—the power to make infallible judgments both in art and in life and manners. To illustrate how the delicacy of imagination works, he cites the story of the kinsmen of Sancho that appears in *Don Quixote*; the two kinsmen who were celebrated for their acute palate were asked their opinions of a supposedly excellent old vintage. The wine was really good, but the two men found respectively a hint of leather and of metal in it. They were at first ridiculed, but an old key with a leather thong was found at the bottom of the cask, and their delicacy of taste was thus reconfirmed in the end. Excellent taste is nothing less than the faculty to discern certain subtle qualities mixed among many other heterogeneous ingredients. According to Hume, the story of Sancho's kinsmen's acute taste is very helpful in understanding how

spiritual taste functions. Even in great works of art, such disturbing elements as the author's predilections and the prejudices of the times are always mixed. Delicate taste distinguishes the valuable qualities that meet universal rules from other accidental and trivial ingredients. The general rules of taste are induced from such individual practice of tasteful judgment:

> To produce these general rules or avowed patterns of composition is like finding the key with the leather thong; which justified the verdict of SANCHO'S kinsmen, and confounded those pretended judges who had condemned them.   (235)

The task of true critics is therefore to contribute to forming general taste by pointing out real merits in a work of art. By analogy with the bodily sense of palate, the story of Sancho's kinsmen makes plain why the power of judgment is called 'taste.'

The persuasive anecdote from *Don Quixote* is introduced, however, at the cost of the logical consistency of Hume's own philosophy. In the anecdote, it is the old key that is supposed to authorize Sancho's kinsmen's delicacy of taste. This means that the legitimacy of one's tasteful judgment is confirmed by the physical quality of the object. But, in fact, such causal linkage between inner perception and outer object is prohibited by the premise on which the whole system of Hume's epistemology is constructed. His epistemology begins by refusing to refer to the material cause of sense perception, regarding all our mental phenomena, such as passions or emotions, as 'original facts and realities' (*Treatise* 458) independent of physical objects.[8] Of course, the premise is so contrary to people's common sense that most of them can never be free from the natural belief that the origin of sense perception can be found in external things: 'the vulgar confound perceptions and objects, and attribute a distinct continu'd existence to the very things they feel or see' (193). When Hume introduces the story of Sancho's kinsmen, therefore, he runs the risk of making himself seem one of 'the vulgar.' He recognizes the risk, but his comment on this point sounds ambiguous:

> Though it be certain, that beauty and deformity, more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in objects, but belong to the sentiment, internal or external; it must be allowed, that there are certain qualities in objects, which are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings.   (*Essays* 235)

Beauty and ugliness, like sweetness and bitterness, are not the properties

of things. However, Hume recommends us to behave as if we could find certain qualities in the object that legitimize our judgments. From the standpoint of Humean epistemology, this is a fiction that cannot be theoretically verified, but without that fiction we cannot have any idea of how the delicacy of imagination works. The story of Sancho's kinsmen shows that the judgment of taste is made possible only on the assumption that sentiment represents something in the object, but the fictitiousness of this assumption makes judgments of taste not only dubious but also impracticable. In actual judgments, Hume admits, it is impossible for critics to identify in the work of art the element—the equivalent of Sancho's kinsmen's key and leather—which guarantees the validity of their own judgments. This means that it is also impossible to distinguish between good and bad critics:

> But where are such critics to be found? By what marks are they to be known? How distinguish them from pretenders? These questions are embarrassing; and seem to throw us back into the same uncertainty, from which, during the course of this essay, we have endeavoured to extricate ourselves.
>
> But if we consider the matter aright, these are questions of fact, not of sentiment. Whether any particular person be endowed with good sense and a delicate imagination, free from prejudice, may often be the subject of dispute, and be liable to great discussion and enquiry: But that such a character is valuable and estimable will be agreed in by all mankind. . . . It is sufficient for our present purpose, if we have proved, that the taste of all individuals is not upon an equal footing, and that some men in general, however difficult to be particularly pitched upon, will be acknowledged by universal sentiment to have a preference above others.   (241-42)

This awkward passage reveals a tension in Hume's account of taste. If we are unable to identify ideal critics who can bridge individual and general taste, we are forced to return to the very starting point of the inquiry. What Hume resorts to as the most reliable criterion for tasteful judgment is again the general taste which has stood the test of history: 'And though prejudices may prevail for a time, they never unite in celebrating any rival to the true genius, but yield at last to the force of nature and just sentiment' (243). It starts to seem as if Hume's discussion of taste ends up as circular; the general agreement on the genius of great authors is the end product of a series of innumerable individual tasteful judgments, but the only criterion available for individual judgments is nothing but the authority of the general taste formed in the long process of time.[9] Hume's argument in practice rarely proceeds beyond the general contention that

the validity of individual taste must be tested by history.

The anecdote of Sancho's kinsmen, introduced to illustrate how taste works, makes Hume's text unreliable as a purely theoretical argument. However, it should be remembered that what Hume aims at in the essay is not strict accuracy of theoretical knowledge. He avows that '[his] intention in this essay is to mingle some light of the understanding with the feelings of sentiment' (234). In order to understand what he means by these words, it is illuminating to refer to a passage in the essay entitled 'Of Essay-Writing,' in which he likens himself to an 'Ambassador from the Dominions of Learning to those of Conversation' and says that his business is to promote 'a good Correspondence betwixt these two States' (535). In Hume's view, the taste and manners of 'the conversible World,' with no connection with the world of learning, is destined to become rude and barbarous on the one hand while philosophy in the 'moping recluse Method of Study,' separated from 'the World and good Company' is always prone to become 'as chimerical in her Conclusions as she was unintelligible in her Stile and Manner of Delivery' (534-35). He thus tries to construct a new kind of discourse in which the affairs and manners of common life are examined and improved by the light of philosophy. The style of his essay is not that of scholastic philosophy, and the most appropriate name for Hume's writing practice, I believe, is 'ideology,' in the sense that it persuades the reader to believe in the universal validity of certain ideas—in this case, the judgment of taste—that cannot be rationally verified. The central point Hume tries to make in 'Of the Standard of Taste' is that general principles which legitimize particular judgments can be found. It is true that his assertion cannot stand sceptical examination, but this is hardly fatal to Hume's ideological programme. For he has already demonstrated shockingly enough in Book I of his *Treatise* that the rigor of philosophical analysis dissolves every kind of common belief that constitutes our day-to-day life. The progress of society is achieved less through rigorous reasoning than through the refinement of sensibility. What is important in this context is that Hume's practice of essay writing is inextricably bound up with the social and political problems of the age. His argument concerning 'justice' in Book III of *Treatise* forms an illuminating point of entry for our inquiry into the problem of how Hume's account of taste is determined by the social and the political.

In modern civil society, justice—a virtue that regulates our social behaviour—plays a crucial role in maintaining social order. In Hume's

account, all virtues are divided into two different categories, natural and artificial. The natural virtues have their origin in our original constitution and primordial organic need, and the artificial ones are created by education and customs. Hume thinks that justice is classified as an artificial virtue because it is by no means based on the original qualities of the human constitution. In his analysis of the origin of justice Hume focuses on the two important problems: (1) by what process the rules of justice are invented through human artifices and (2) what makes us regard the observance and neglect of justice as 'a moral issue' (*Treatise* 484). Hume thinks that justice originates from self-interest and is grafted into moral sentiments later. It is remarkable that he argues that the sole function of justice is to secure and stabilize the right of property. In his analysis of justice, it seems, we can identify the aesthetic moment at which imagination and taste begin to function as regulating principles of the order of civil society by harmonizing antagonistic interests in it.

In order to illustrate the process by which justice is invented, Hume introduces the hypothesis of the state of nature. Because human nature is universal and unchanging, he argues, whether in the primitive state of nature or in the refined state of civilization, human happiness is always composed of 'three species of goods,' which are 'the internal satisfaction of our mind, the external advantages of our body, and the enjoyment of such possessions as we have acquir'd by our industry and good fortune' (487). Unlike the two former internal and external 'goods,' possessions can so easily be transferred undamaged from one person to another that they are likely to be the object of other people's desire and to be thus exposed to their violence. 'This avidity alone, of acquiring goods and possessions for ourselves and our nearest friends, is insatiable, perpetual, universal, and directly destructive of society' (491-92). However, disputes over goods and possessions are unavoidable in the state of nature because it is natural for primitive men whose attention is confined to themselves to have desire to plunder one another's possessions. Human nature is unable to control the passions that are rooted in human nature itself: 'The remedy, then, is not deriv'd from nature, but from *artifice*.' The rude and savage, exhausted by incessant conflicts over possessions, eventually begin to recognize that their unrestrained desire is harmful to everyone's welfare and contrive an artificial method to control their natural passions:

> This can be done after no other manner, than by a convention enter'd into by all the members of the society to bestow stability on the possession of those external goods, and leave every one in the peaceable enjoyment of what he may acquire by his fortune and industry.   (489)

The convention of justice checks unreflective self-love, puts an end to the antagonism over possessions, and makes society possible. Justice, therefore, far from being derived from philanthropic principles, comes from the '*selfishness and confin'd generosity of men, along with the scanty provision*' (495). The rules of justice, of course, cannot alter human nature itself, but only change the course of the heedless movement of passions by teaching the greater profit gained by deferring the gratification of desires.[10] The right of property is thus formed.

If justice has its origin not in altruistic considerations but in self-love, what transforms justice into a moral good which is approved by moral sentiments? This is the second question Hume addresses in his discussion of justice. After the establishment of the artificial convention of justice, men begin to follow the law of property in consideration of their own long-term profit. This conduct motivated by enlightened self-interest, however, cannot be called virtuous, for justice at this stage is not based on moral sentiments, but on a rational calculation made through the comparison of short- and long-term interests. In Hume's account, the transformation of justice into a moral beauty is facilitated by the expansion and complication of society. In the simple and primitive state of nature, it is easy to see the larger profit gained by restraining reckless passions. However, this enlightened self-interest becomes ineffective as an action-guiding force in complicated modern society, for as society grows larger, the reward for restraining reckless desires becomes invisible. In order for justice to function as an effective as well as authentic motivating force in modern society, it has to assume a more compelling and universal force. Justice attains this strong motivating force by being built into the mechanism of moral sentiments.

It is 'sympathy' that plays a crucial role in the sentimentalization of justice. According to Hume's epistemology, human perceptions—the contents of thought—consists of two types, 'impressions' and 'ideas.' What distinguishes these two psychic elements is their 'force,' 'liveliness,' or 'vivacity'; that is, their difference is not in kind but in degree.[11] Impressions have more energy, but when they have lost their force and vivacity, they become 'ideas.' Ideas, on the other, when invested with force and vivacity, transform into impressions. When we observe other people's behaviour, what we receive is only ideas, since we cannot

directly know their inner states. However, sympathy changes ideas into vivid impressions by giving them force and liveliness. Sympathy is the mechanism that allows us to participate in the inner state of other people and to feel their sentiments as if they were our own. Once the convention of justice is established, when we see someone's right of property being violated, we have sympathy with the sufferer and feel pain as if the unlawful deed were done to ourselves, even though the injustice done has no direct bearing on us. Sympathy, so providing justice with emotional energy, transforms it into a strong motivating force. Justice is thus built into the sentiments of approbation and blame and, as a result, becomes 'a moral issue':

> Thus self-interest is the original motive to the establishment *of jus -tice: but a* sympathy *with public interest is the source of the* moral approbation, *which attends that virtue.* (499-500)

Hume successfully concludes that justice is, in spite of its scandalous origin, a matter of moral beauty and ugliness. His inquiry into the origin of justice reveals a fascinating mechanism by which sentiment is fused into the system of social regulation. It is taste or refined imagination that plays a crucial role in bridging individual sentiment and social rules. Hume's civil society is the kind of society in which individual citizens, driven by passions and desires, are successfully united into a harmonious whole by the rules of polished sensibility.

    Hume's analysis of justice offers a clue to understanding how social and political problems are registered in his account of taste. In order to clarify fully the ideological implications of his moral philosophy, however, we have to pay attention to the rhetorical aspect of his argument. In Hume's story about the origin of civil society, we can locate a few interesting sites where his political statements are constructed and at the same time subverted by his own rhetoric, and, as we shall see below, the twisted movement of his text is symptomatic of the ambiguous origin of Hume's civil society. Because it is impossible that humans remain in the primitive state for long, Hume argues, the state of nature is really 'a mere philosophical fiction.' But for Hume, fiction is, far from being a trivial trapping for his philosophical argument, an indispensable tool in his analysis of moral and political problems, for fiction makes possible the 'experimental method of reasoning' which corresponds to the experimental method in natural philosophy.[12] The fiction of the state of nature, for example, allows Hume to consider separately 'the affections

and understanding'—the two really inseparable compositions of human nature (493). Hume hypothesizes the state of nature as a world where only natural sentiments motivate man's behaviour, and from this thinking experiment he draws the conclusion that justice is not a product of natural sentiments but of human artifice. The reliability of Hume's thinking experiment is, however, put into question by his own remark on the commonality of philosophical and literary fiction. In his account, the state of nature is not different from the story of the golden age in its fictitousness; the former hypothesizes man's 'confin'd generosity' and 'the scanty provision,' and the latter presupposes the limitless fertility of nature and infinite altruism of man. The story of the golden age implies, on the one hand, that if man is free from avarice and selfishness, thanks to the plentifulness of provision, the law of justice is unnecessary, while the hypothesis of the state of nature teaches us, on the other hand, that when food is scarce and man is selfish, the invention of the law of justice is inevitable. These fictions, to be sure, describe two contrary worlds, but they are, far from being mutually exclusive, complementary to each other. It thus begins to seem as if Hume's thinking experiment is epistemologically of the same status as imaginative literary fictions. But why does Hume run the risk of making his philosophical argument seem indistinguishable from fictions invented by poets' imaginations? It is because these modern social institutions including the right of property are for Hume nothing less than the product of imagination.

    In his analysis of justice Hume not only discusses what inaugurates the right of property, but also what makes its transfer possible. The stability of property forms the foundation of a mercantile society, but as we have seen, the law of property is not natural but the product of human artifice. According to Hume, the most important methods of determining property are 'Occupation, Prescription, Accession, and Succession' (505); in each of which what is crucial is to establish a strong connection between the person and the object in our 'imagination.' In fact, Hume claims that the disputes concerning property 'can be decided by no other faculty than the imagination' (507). For example, a person who first reaches a desert island can make the island his possession by 'occupation,' and there is no other foundation for the establishment of his property than the fact that the man and the object become inseparable in people's imaginations.

> A person who lands on the shore of a small island, that is desert and uncultivated, is deem'd its possessor from the very first moment,

> and acquires the property of the whole; because the object is there bounded and circumscrib'd in the fancy, and at the same time is pro-portion'd to the new possessor. (507)

This means that the institution of property is sustained by the working of imagination. But the mission of imagination in social regulation does not stop here. After explaining how imagination establishes the right of property in such cases through 'Prescription, Accession, and Succession,' Hume proceeds to clarify what mechanism makes their transference possible. In a commercially-based society, property becomes a commodity transferable from one possessor to another, and the action of transference must be on no less secure a basis than the establishment of property. However, the strong imaginative connection established between one particular person and his property makes it all the more difficult to understand how one's property can be so smoothly shifted to another person. The object of transference is visible, and has a strong appeal to the imagination, but because the right of property is invisible, its transference is likely to be unconvincing. But here again, artificial methods are invented to assist the working of imagination. For instance, when property is transferred, civil laws demand 'delivery' because '*symbolic* delivery' helps the imagination effectively enough to convince it of the fact that the property is alienated. As Hume puts it:

> In order to aid the imagination in conceiving the transference of property, we take the sensible object, and actually transfer its pos-session to the person, on whom we wou'd bestow the property. The suppos'd resemblance of the actions, and the presence of this sensi-ble delivery, deceive the mind, and make it fancy, that it conceives the mysterious transition of property. (515)

The words 'deceive' and 'mysterious' used in this passage are sympto-matic of the obscure origin of justice. The civil law that enables the smooth transference of property is the cornerstone of a mercantile soci-ety, but civil laws are nothing but a fiction invented to 'deceive' man in a 'mysterious' way. However, it must be stressed that the fact that civil society is a product of imagination does not mean to Hume that it is fragile. For refined imagination can be wiser than philosophy. It is, therefore, on the refinement of taste that the stability of social and politi-cal systems of modern society rests.

Modern civil society as recounted by Hume is one that gives primacy to private desire and gratification. The power to maintain the order of such a society is not entrusted to reason but to imaginative faculties like sensibility, fancy, and sympathy. Like other British moral philosophers, Hume denies reason the authority to govern a highly civilized commer-cial society, for the attempt to direct citizens by rational reasoning toward public virtue would, he insists, end up spoiling the energy that drives the progress of commerce and civilization.[13] It is the delicacy of sensibility that is expected to check violent passions that are prone to run away with themselves. Hume's civil society is thoroughly aestheti-cized in the sense that it is supported by the artifices invented by imagination. It is a moral obligation of the citizens to polish their sensi-bility because the stability and welfare of society depend on its refinement. Hume's moral philosophy, it can be said, demarcates the limit at which the legislation of reason ends and the rule of imagination begins. That is why his writings—both philosophical and political—are among the most important texts of aesthetic and social theory, and are texts to which we must return again and again as long as we live in a commercial society.

Notes

[1] For illuminating accounts of the social and ideological background of the for-mation of aesthetics in eighteenth-century Britain, see Caygill; de Bolla; Eagleton; Guillory 303-325; Robert Jones; Starr. For informative accounts of Hume's position in the context of British aesthetic thought, especially his relationship with Shaftesbury and Francis Hutcheson, see Townsend; Rivers.

[2] Aesthetics and political economy formed the central part of the project of the Scottish Enlightenment. See, for example, Bryson; Hont & Ignatieff.

[3] Baier 1-27 presents an enlightening analysis of Hume's self-reflective moment in the conclusion of Book I of *Treatise*.

[4] For recent references to Hume's theory of taste, see, for example, Peter Jones; Herrnstein Smith 54-84; Poovey 169-74; Baillie 189-216.

[5] All references to Hume's essays including 'Of the Standard of Taste' are to *Essay*s, ed. Miller.

[6] Some literary critics have paid attention to the problem of Hume's prose style. See Richetti 183-263; Christensen.

[7] Hume famously observes: 'Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them' (*Treatise* 415) .

[8] Hume's sheer separation of the inner perception from external objects clearly derives from John Locke's notion of the 'secondary qualities' of things. Locke divides the qualities we attribute to things into two classes; the 'primary' and 'sec-ondary.' (See *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 132-43.) The primary

qualities, 'Solidity, Extension, Figure, Motion, or Rest, and Number,' are inherent in things in themselves, and the ideas of the qualities we have in mind are representations of the things; in this case, there is resemblance between things and ideas. Unlike them, the secondary qualities of things, 'Colours, Sounds, Taste, etc' (135), are self-contained and independent of things; there is no similarity or representational relationship between things and qualities. Hume abandons the distinction of primary and secondary qualities that Locke made and regards all perceptions as self-contained and non-representational. For references to this point, see Bennett 89-123; Noonan 51-89.

[9] Herrnstein Smith 54-84 sees in Hume's account of taste the infinitely regressive and circular logic into which traditional axiological discussions are destined to fall.

[10] Hirschman argues that eighteenth-century social theorists held the view in common that the action-guiding principle in civil society must be assigned to passions over reason. Therefore, they had to face the question of how it is possible to regulate the reckless movement of violent passions by other passions. Particularly relevant to this agenda is Hume's idea of an enlightened self-interest that can check and control violent passions. For studies on the problem of Hume's notion of passion, see also McKenzie 118-47; Pinch 17-50. For helpful comments on Hume's account of justice, see Cottle; Bricke.

[11] As recounted by Hume, we receive original impressions through our bodily senses ('impressions of sensation'), but thinking of or remembering these original impressions can create secondary impressions ('impressions of reflexion') (*Treatise* 275-77). Passion is the name Hume gives to the secondary impressions that are violent enough to drive man into action.

[12] The subtitle attached to *Treatise*, 'The Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning to Moral Subjects,' testifies to Hume's intention to construct his new science of human nature on the model of Newtonian natural philosophy. Cassirer gives an account of the influence of the experimental method of natural science on the moral philosophy of the age of Enlightenment. Poovey 144-213 presents an interesting analysis of the methodological impasse inherent in British experimental moral philosophy.

[13] Hume's refutation of the classical notion of public virtue is fully developed in 'Of Refinements in the Arts' (*Essays* 268-80). As Pocock (333-505) explains, in eighteenth-century Britain the notion of public virtue is inseparably bound up with the doctrine of civic humanism. See also Barrell's illuminating argument that it is the civic notion of 'public virtue' that provided the theory of taste in the eighteenth century with its main conceptual framework.

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Poetic Quaternaries:
William Blake's Unsystematic System

Catalin Ghita

1. Introduction

The purpose of my study is to sketch a critical approach evincing the existence of four levels of significance within Blake's poetry. Obviously, this goal cannot be achieved without starting from the assumption that there exists essentially a unity of significance within what I call Blake's *unsystematic system.* The title syntagm (*poetic quaternaries*) epitomizes my approach to the subject. As all Blake students know, the poet states that there exist four specific types of vision: single, twofold, threefold, and fourfold. I intend to demonstrate that these classes of vision correspond to four distinct yet convergent levels of meaning, i.e. social, metaphysical, aesthetic, and religious, which underline Blake's artistic structure from a conceptual point of view.[1] This hermeneutic scheme, which should be viewed as text-oriented and flexible, can be extended, so that it may comprise the whole Blakean production. It must be remembered that the components of this *Literaturwissenschaft*[2] pattern are interrelated, even symbiotic, and, even if they represent something in themselves, their general function is to be discovered only within the integrity of the system.

2. Blake's Unsystematic System

From a methodological perspective, my general approach to Blake's work draws concurrently on theory of literature, hermeneutics, metaphysics, the history of ideas, and visionarism. My first task is to demonstrate that, although Blake makes no attempt at explicitly creating a system, he does implicitly attempt to create one. In point of fact, in *Jerusalem*, Los, Blake's metonymy of the creative self, states boldly: 'I

must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another MansI will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create (E 153).[3] Herein lies the crux of the argument, for Blake's attitude towards composition in general and poetry in particular is rather transparent. The statement seems to be concerned neither with synthetic presentation nor with analytical parallelism, being merely a plea for the absolute exercise of imagination, which hinges on nothing except itself. Therefore, the question which arises as soon as a critic has started his hermeneutic endeavour concerns the logicality of Blake's poetry: can the latter be analyzed as a unitary construction, a pattern endowed with both purpose and meaning? I strongly believe that it can. Whilst a sagacious scholar like Damrosch, Jr.[4] gives a rather strange verdict, which acknowledges Blake's incomprehensibility, three brilliant Blake exegetes, Damon,[5] Frye,[6] and Erdman,[7] prove conclusively the existence of a variety of Blakean systems.[8] Although a number of postmodern currents frown upon any systematic attempts at explaining Blake, and subvert unitary paradigms, I do not rally to these efforts, and, rather, believe that the exegetic basis is to be sought not only in the dissemination of details, but also in the overall textual organization.

The whole controversy concerning Blake's readability beyond *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* commenced as early as 1924, with the publication of *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* by Damon, who found it necessary to underline the purpose of his exegesis in the *Introduction*: 'This book is an attempt to give a rational explanation of Blake's obvious obscurities, and to provide a firm basis for the understanding of his philosophy' (IX). Further on, the critic stated, rather metaphorically, that Blake 'gives us the Keys of Paradise. But he conveys them in symbols whose meaning he stipulates we must first learn. We *must* find the meaning' (X). This last assertion constitutes a case in point, for, insofar as I am concerned, the ultimate goal of a critical approach to Blake's work is the demonstration of an articulate structure of thought within his apparently self-contradictory poetry. Subsequently, Frye, in *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake*, and Erdman, in *Blake: Prophet against Empire: A Poet's Interpretation of the History of His Own Times*, forged two different, albeit systematic, interpretations of Blake's work as a *whole*. Whilst the former's discourse concerned itself with myths and archetypes, discussing Blakean poetry in terms of a 'cosmology in movement,' the latter's settled for a an account of Blake's historical and political intellectual development (although, in the great epics, the historical and political perspectives are diminished by the anguished outbursts of the poet's elementals). The latest critic to have offered a systematic approach to Blake's philosophy was Damrosch, Jr., who, in *Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth*, after trying to prove the presence of a coherent structure in the poet's work, decided that the aforesaid structure is under a permanent threat of break-up: 'But it would be idle to pretend that Blake's prophetic poems are not, in the end, very strange as well as very difficult' (349). Aside from these critics, Kathleen Raine deserves an honourable mention. Her *Blake and Tradition* fell just short of its exegetic target, the critic having failed to unify the otherwise well-defined pieces of the hermeneutic puzzle.[9]

In an attempt to offer a definite response to Blake's putative system creation, Mark Trevor Smith resorts to paradox as an ultimate explanatory formula: 'it is impossible to decide *either* to build systems *or* to destroy them. We must, as Los learns in *Jerusalem*, simply decide to do both' (158). A similar dictum is pasted at the end of his demonstration: 'Blake is constructing systems most coherently when he is smashing systems; Blake is smashing systems most vigorously when he is constructing systems' (175).

In my interpretation, Blake's general attitude towards poetry, what one may call his rhetoric of poetry, parallels a practice of poetic discourse. In a letter to Thomas Butts, dated July 6 1803, the poet offers his definition of poetry: 'Allegory addressed to the Intellectual powers while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding is My Definition of the Most Sublime Poetry' (E 730). Elsewhere (in *Jerusalem*), he wishes 'To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes / Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought . . . (E 147).[10] As Blake himself claims in an indisputable manner that poetry must be invested with significance, a scholarly approach to his work cannot disregard so important a statement, or overlook the relevance of a systematic unity of significance within Blake's frame of thought. The various pieces of poetry, albeit characterized by semantic cross currents, parallel plots, ideological idiosyncrasies, and rhetorical repetitions, are essentially logical, even unitary, constructions.

Moreover, it should be noted that the so-called *obscurity* of Blake's works is a common critical fallacy, strongly refuted by the poet himself. In his *Annotations to the 'Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds,'* Blake writes: 'Obscurity is Neither the Source of the Sublime nor of any Thing Else' (E 658). Once the poetic paradigms have been identified, the critic's doubts regarding Blake's logicality are dispelled, and the subsequent exegesis becomes an ordinary hermeneutic act.

To sum up, I believe that Blake's system of thought is indeed unsystematic, since it is diffused throughout a variety of textual productions, of unequal length and poetic value (main works and *paralipomena*). Nevertheless, as I shall make an attempt at proving, all these may be unified in a convergent hermeneutic enterprise, which should be viewed neither as reductive nor as absolute.

3. Rhetorical Encoding and Scholarly Decoding

In the foregoing phase of interpretation, I stated that Blake's intellectual challenge lies not only in the details of poems, in their careful rhetorical dismemberment, but also in their overall tone, in their general architecture. If one's perspective on Blake's thought is solely microscopic, irregularities and illogical plot developments are striking. But if one is mainly concerned with Blake's ideas as they shift their tone from one poem to another, then a coherence and even a convergence of interpretative layers is at hand.

At this point, I find that one particular problem looms large: Blake's rhetorical encoding, which implies a series of complex literary ciphers, some intentional, some haphazard. It pays to give a succinct account of the most important of them, since such a systematization has not been the concern of any Blakean exegesis so far.

Concretely, a first series of difficulties rises from textual organization. Blake's *chresmology* (oracular prophetic mode), combined with a shrewd use of *significatio* (implying more than he says), in his two continental prophecies, *America* and *Europe*, is sybillinic enough to baffle even the most stubborn critic. The absence of *metabasis* (a technique whereby the writer at once recapitulates the plot and points out directions of its development) on some particular occasions in *The Four Zoas* and *Milton* has a double effect: on the one hand, it accelerates the turn of events, on the other, it obscures the function of the characters and their intellectual liaisons. Various *deleted*, as well as *insititious* (inserted), *passages* complicate the textual organization of certain epics to the point of total obscurity.[11] At other times, Blake's *acryology* (incorrect language) is evident, but this fact, neutral in itself, becomes malignant in some passages where exactness and lack of verbosity are requirements for an apposite hermeneutic act on the part of the reader. Blake's *open punctuation and seemingly random capitalization* constitute yet another formal difficulty, along with the constant employing of *hypotaxis*, espe-

cially in the larger poems, a fact resulting in multi-layered constructions, with numerous subplots and rhetorical ramifications. The presence of *effiguration* (minute descriptions) in Blake's epics, especially in *The Four Zoas* and in *Jerusalem*, also diverts the reader's attention from the broad spectrum of plot development. Simultaneously, the poet makes use of *commoratio* (dwelling upon a point by means of repetition), especially in the early prophecies: e.g. the whole plot of *The Book of Los* is a retelling of *The Book of Urizen* from Los's viewpoint. Last but not least I should mention Blake's *asphalia* (emphatic underlining of one's words) in the Bard's Song (*Milton*),[12] wherein the Bard assures the Eternals that his voice is inspired and therefore demands attention and obedience.

Having clarified the initial hurdles to interpretation, i.e. those concerning Blake's relevance as a creator of systems as well as those regarding Blake's rhetorical obscurities, I may now move on to demonstrate the existence of his poetic quaternaries.

4. Four Types of Vision

Blake states that there exist four main types of vision, which, in my interpretation, correspond to a similar number of hermeneutic levels, affording the reader a quadripartite interpretation of the poetic discourse.

Strange as it may seem, critics' theoretical stances are rather inconsistent with regard to a clear and conclusive definition of the four visionary classes. Starting from what I believe is a correct assumption, i.e. that, in its broad sense, vision 'is the perception of the human in all things' (*Blake Dictionary* 436), Damon asserts almost the same thing in relation to twofold vision, i.e. that the latter is 'the perception of the human values in all things' (*Blake Dictionary* 437), thereby creating, rather than dispelling, confusion.[13] John Beer speaks of four 'states' (corresponding to the four types of vision): the first is that of 'darkness,' 'in which Reason alone holds sway' (27), the second is that of 'Fire' or 'Wrath,' wherein 'energy is freely exercised' (27), the third is that of 'Light' or 'Paradise,' reserved for 'the state of sexual pleasure' (27), and the fourth 'reconciles all the others' (28), being recoverable only *post mortem*. In my view, the third 'state' is mistaken for the fourth, the Edenic experience being the attribute of the mystic, whilst the fourth is actually a very present reality *ante mortem*, constituting an ecstatic oasis for the deeply religious. Nevertheless, as I shall show further on, I also believe that the

fourth class brings about the reconciliation of the preceding three.

The only tentative definition that is essentially in concordance with my own interpretation is that offered by Alexander Goulray in *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake*: 'Blake distinguishes ordinary, 'single vision,' mere optical reality, from higher forms of vision that perceive things metaphorically, imaginatively and eternally' (286). Nonetheless, the presentation is too brief to clarify Blake's position. In my definition, the types of vision are as follows: single (common sight, ordinary visual perception), twofold (perception 'through' the eye, not 'with' it, functioning on the premise of phenomenological substitution), threefold (artistic en- and decoding, premised on the powerful exercise of imagination and/or inspiration), and fourfold (religious rapture, ecstatic trance, which recaptures and surpasses the essence of all the three preceding stages).

Before proceeding with the quadripartite pattern exegesis, I must also present the context wherein the poet presents the four types of vision explicitly. In a letter to Thomas Butts, dated 22 November 1802, Blake includes a 12-month-old versification describing a rather complex vision, interspersed with seemingly trivial happenings. It is also apparent that it is fourfold vision that allows its recipient to acknowledge its own existence, as well as that of the other three categories:

> Now a fourfold vision see
> And a fourfold vision is given to me
> Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
> And three fold in soft Beulahs night
> And twofold Always. May God us keep
> From single vision & Newton's sleep   (E 722)

5. Four Levels of Interpretation

This subsection of my research is aimed at demonstrating how Blake's patterns of thought are instanced in his works. I hold that there is a gradual development from his early prophecies, wherein, more often than not, the dominant 'social' level is constantly subverted by incipient elementals, to his fully-fledged epics, wherein atemporal phenomena dictate the course of action. So the whole process is chronological, ranging from *America a Prophecy* (1793) to *Jerusalem* (1804-20).

Thus, I start from the assumption that Blake has a quadripartite perspective upon phenomenal reality, a fact which generates four levels of significance. In the subsequent lines, my critical discourse will be cen-

tred on the four main intellectual levels, which correspond to the aforementioned four types of vision, and on the textual realisations of the four levels. Concurrently, I shall try to demonstrate that Blake deploys certain *paradigmatic figures*, whose role is that of *action-converging icons*. The simultaneity of the two processes (the creation of levels of significance and of paradigmatic figures) is, paradoxically, a mode of encoding, since there is an increase in text complexity, as well as of decoding, a poem or an epic, since the plot, the characters, and the underlining tone become all the more transparent in the process.

I shall introduce one more factor in my hermeneutic equation, i.e. Blake's plot pattern. Strangely enough, critics have failed to point out that, throughout both the early prophecies and the epics, Blake uses a three-step scenario development: an initial state of crisis, which escalates up to a climax, followed by a gradual stage of regeneration, ending in a retrieval of harmony. On the social level, crisis is represented by the sleep of reason, regeneration by the unfolding of revolution (Orc's apotheosis), and harmony by the community utopia regained. On the metaphysical level, war among man's underlining metaphysical aspects constitutes the crisis, the Apocalypse is regeneration, and true intuitive knowledge represents the retrieval of harmony. On the aesthetic level, the crisis is comprised of Milton's errors in *Paradise Lost*, the war against Satan, the corrupter of visionary art, is regeneration, and the reunification with Ololon constitutes the retrieval of harmony. Finally, on the religious level, the crisis is Albion's jealousy of Jerusalem, who is destined to be the Bride of the Lamb, regeneration is represented by the rejection of his own selfhood, and the retrieval of harmony is the accomplishing of the Brotherhood of Man in the spiritual body of the Christ. In point of fact, the systematic presence of the three-step scenario proves once again the factuality of the poetic quaternaries.

5.1. The Social Level: *America*, *Europe*, *The Song of Los*

The first level is the social one. Since it focuses on concrete realities (in an allegorical albeit clear form), it corresponds to single vision, and, as such, records events which involve real history, and knowledge of the human elements in their gross interactions. Its basic conceptual element is revolution, since this is the ultimate ferment of social evolution. One may find its textual application in some of Blake's 'minor prophecies,' i.e. *America a Prophecy* (1793), *Europe a Prophecy* (1794), and *The Song of Los* (1795).[14] *The French Revolution* (1791) may also be treated

as a textual application of the social level, but I preferred to leave it aside for two main reasons: 1. It is incomplete (of the intended seven Books, only one is extant, the other six having been lost) and 2. *America a Prophecy*, *Europe a Prophecy*, and *The Song of Los* form an independent whole, narrating related and even consecutive events.

As I have already suggested, the aforecited 'minor prophecies' are premised on an explicit qaudripartite pattern, and constitute an allegorical outline of social history, set on the stern and immutable principles of revolution. My idea is not unique in this context, Stephen Behrendt, among others, defending a related thesis: 'In *America*, *Europe* and *The Song of Los* Blake reconstitutes the history of the human world' (105).[15]

The paradigmatic figure of the revolutionary cycle is Orc, whose role is that of an action catalyst. Damon writes that 'Orc is Revolution in the material world' (*Blake Dictionary* 309), but the formula is incomplete. Briefly, Orc truly embodies Blake's idea of Revolution in the perishable universe, but he is uncontrollable. One can neither reason with nor tame Los's son, for the latter is *spontaneous*, *devastating*, and *rule-challeng-ing*, these being, in my opinion, the three seminal features of any social uprising. Orc is more than any other Blakean figure the expression of his creator's *Zeitgeist*, an age obsessed with pseudo-religious formulae, as Jon Mee convincingly points out: 'The prophetic platform, expressing social grievances and utopian visions in terms of biblical paradigms of Babylonian oppression and millenarian expectation, was in fact one long established in the rhetorical resources of the popular culture by the time Blake wrote' (28).

The Song of Los contains two sections, the first (*Africa*) and the fourth (*Asia*). According to Erdman, they 'seem to be preludes to unwritten prophecies' (*Prophet against Empire* 258). Harold Bloom adds that the poem is the weakest of all Blakean revolutionary prophecies, 'because of the merely pedestrian *Africa* section that begins it' (E 905). Pedestrian though it may be, the section dedicated to the Black Continent points out that the latter stands for the supreme expression of conservatism, imperialism, and oppression, since it embodies slavery, as the ultimate form of domination. The African continent is carefully translated into a metonymy of seclusion. In fact, these are the first lines of what will prove to be an exquisite account of intellectual architecture in Europe, whose fallacy resides in that it focuses on man's outer interactions (the social layer) whilst denying the spiritual communion which alone guarantees liberty: 'These were the Churches: Hospitals: Castles: Palaces: / Like nets & gins & traps to catch the joys of Eternity' (E 67).

I am of the opinion that the mere 'pedestrian' character of *Africa* is yet another rhetorical device employed by Blake with the sole purpose of demonstrating the intellectually castrating feature of single vision. As 'Newton's sleep' is elsewhere defined as seeing with the eye, not through it, the poet intentionally describes the whole plot and its corresponding atmosphere in fading contours. There is a series of nouns, adjectives (usually used as epithets), and verbs which make up a picture of extreme uncertainty, of delusion generated by the singularity of perception: 'Noah faded! Black grew the sunny African' (E 67), 'Noah shrunk' (E 67), 'forms of dark delusion' (E 67), 'The human race began to wither' (E 67), 'as they fled they shrunk' (E 68), 'two narrow doleful forms' (E 68), 'closing and restraining' (E 68). Simultaneously, the elements in the fallen, material universe are gradually diminishing, suggesting their petty role in the course of forthcoming events. There is also a slightly derisive undertone, for the action unfolding on the material layer is doubled by an increasingly developed plot on a superior scale, involving supernatural agencies. In my opinion, this whole piece constitutes Blake's response to physical-eye vision, and to its inevitable intellectual errors.

The second part, *America a Prophecy*, comprises a *Preludium* and *A Prophecy*, being constructed in a manner similar to *Europe a Prophecy*. The *Preludium* deserves a brief analysis, as Blake amalgamates here all his ingredients of an extreme social revolt. The lines are suffused with dark tones, and the characters' movements are leaden, due to the influence of a heavy materiality, evoking at once a narrow perspective and spiritual fallacy: 'dark abode' (E 51), 'iron baskets' (E 51), 'cups of iron' (E 51), 'dark air' (E 51), 'iron tongue' (E 51), 'dark virgin' (E 51), 'tenfold chains' (E 51), 'fathomless abyss' (E 51), 'dark limbs' (E 51), 'black cloud' (E 52), 'darkness of Africa' (E 52), 'dark death' (E 52), 'nether deep' (E 52), 'silent deep' (E 52). At the same time, there can be encountered certain tropes (metaphors, metonymies, and epithets) which evoke blood: 'red Orc' (E 51), 'red eyes' (E 51), 'wrists of fire' (E 52), and conflict: 'struggling womb' (E 52), 'struggling afflictions' (E 52). All these textual elements are symbolic of primary perception, which renders reality incomprehensible if not absurd in its gratuitous violence. The end of the *Preludium* brings about one of Blake's favourite contrasts of elementals: fire and frost mingling 'in howling pains, in furrows by thy lightnings rent' (E 52).

On the whole, *America* records Orc's apotheosis.[16] The Orcan energetic impulse is, primarily, sexual in nature, the writer being seduced by

a masculine form of violence (cf. Aers 172). Orc's omnipotent revolutionary force[17] grips Europe, destroying boundaries and upsetting obstacles. The prophecy is fulfilled: the American Revolution prevails. The visionary panorama displays a complex set of crude and brutal images, revolving around Orc's menacing silhouette:

> Stiff shudderings shook the heav'nly thrones! France Spain & Italy,
> In terror view'd the bands of Albion, and the ancient Guardians,
> Fainting upon the elements, smitten with their own plagues
> (E 57)

The third piece, *Europe a Prophecy*, which, according to Bloom, is 'the subtlest and most difficult of Blake's poems, outside of the three epics' (E 903), constitutes a social allegory, comprising a broad spectrum of phenomena, ranging from the historical sphere to the political one.

Just as in the case of *America*, the *Preludium* deserves a concise analysis. The lyrics are infused with numerous syntagms evoking consummation: 'first born & first consum'd' (E 60), 'Consumed and consuming' (E 60), 'sieze the burning power' (E 61), 'Devouring & devoured' (E 61). As a construct, the whole piece translates Blake's idea that social arousal is contagious, and that this contagion consumes the backward reactionary forces. Blake's scenario is rather simple: dogmatic sleep brings about rejection of imposed patterns of social behaviour, and the violent outcome of the surging masses is sheer rebellion. Single vision is again mocked in the compound metaphor of Enitharmon's sleep and of the eighteen century of dogmatic fallacy: 'Enitharmon slept, / Eighteen hundred years: Man was a Dream!' (E 63). In my opinion, the key to this primary level of interpretation lies in an explicit figure of speech, an ironical metonymy of Newton ('mighty Spirit'), whose pernicious mediation accounts for the subsequent emergence of spiritual barrenness and of extreme dejection:

> A mighty Spirit leap'd from the land of Albion,
> Nam'd Newton; he siez'd the Trump, & blow'd the enormous blast!
> Yellow as leaves of Autum the myriads of Angelic hosts,
> Fell thro' the wintry skies seeking their graves;
> Rattling their hollow bones in howling and lamentation   (E 65)

Europe gives a picture of Orc's tempestuous arrival in France, where the background is set for a consuming uprising.[18] The atmosphere is gory, its hues ranging from golden to crimson. It is interesting to note that the accompanying characters are ferocious beasts, as in Hindu iconography (according to various artistic representations, each and every god of the Indian pantheon is ascribed a certain animal vehicle – *vāhana*):

> The Lions lash their wrathful tails!
> The Tigers couch upon the prey & suck the ruddy tide:
> And Enitharmon groans & cries in anguish and dismay   (E 66)

The second portion of *The Song of Los*, and the fourth of the general plot, *Asia*, describes the hectic assault of the counter-revolutionary forces. It is the intellectual, not the empirical, nature of Orc's fire that poses the real threat: 'For the darkness of Asia was startled / At the thick-flaming, thought-creating fires of Orc' (E 68).

However, the dynamics of the Revolution cannot be subdued. The archetype of any form of rebellion, Orc, proves to be invincible, paving the way for spiritual freedom, and anticipating the conciliatory finale of *Jerusalem*. According to William Richey, Blake's Revolution is 'a rebirth of ancient vitality, a return to the glory of primitive times' (75). It is essential to note that these 'primitive times' translate the concomitantly religious and ontological concept of *illud tempus*, which is the trans-temporal aspect of reality described in *Jerusalem*:

> Orc, raging in European darkness,
> Arose like a pillar of fire above the Alps,
> Like a serpent of fiery flame!   (E 69)

The chromatic pattern in *Asia* is the reverse of *Africa*, the hues ranging from yellow through red to crimson. This palette is suggestive of the gradual force of Revolution, a transparent metaphor expressing the poet's intense criticism, levelled against scholastic narrow-mindedness and spiritual cecity. The series of nouns, adjectives, and verbs pertain to an imaginary of incipient if luminous rebellion, the spiritual permanently bordering the material: 'The howl rise up' (E 68), 'the thick-flaming, thought-creating fires of Orc' (E 68), 'fires in the City' (E 68), 'red flames' (E 69), 'pillar of fire' (E 69), 'serpent of fiery flame' (E 69).

5.2. The Metaphysical Level: *The Four Zoas*

The second level is the metaphysical one. Its counterpart is twofold vision, for its purpose is to reveal the concealed aspects of the universe,

the first principles of things. The underlying concept is that of 'science,' perceived not as *doxa*, but as *apokalypsis*, which is the supreme expression of *episteme*. One may find its textual application in the *The Four Zoas* (1795-1804).

The paradigmatic figure in Blake's unfinished epic is the iconic ensemble of the four zoas: Tharmas, representing man's corporeal dimension, Urizen, man's intellect, Luvah, man's feelings, and Urthona, man's creativity. It is also worth noting that Urthona fails to acquire a temporal manifestation, being replaced by its poetry-embodying avatar, Los. The whole plot of *The Four Zoas* is concerned with the description of man's metaphysical aspects, since, in Blake, knowledge, just like historical development, cannot be separated from the anthropic element.

Max Plowman, followed by Damon and Bloom,[19] brilliantly epitomized the epic action. In the following lines, I shall try to synthesize my own global interpretation of *The Four Zoas*. Whereas the first four *Nights* focus on the gradual disruption and dispersion of the zoas: Tharmas, Luvah, Urizen, and Urthona respectively, *Night the Fifth* presents Orc's tribulations. Whilst *Night the Sixth* and *Night the Seventh* centre on Urizen's continuous decay, as he, the embodiment of reason, turns into a fallen god of the universe of error, *Night the Eighth* sums up the universal fallacies, suggested metaphorically by the hermaphrodite's portrait. *Night the Ninth* brings about Judgment Day, and thereby the restoration of knowledge as metaphysics of harmonious truth.

As I have hitherto tried to show, *The Four Zoas* is, in its author's teleology, a complete description of the world's ontological components and of their relationships. Moreover, one should bear in mind the fact that, as twofold vision must be understood in its relationship with single vision (the former continually substituting the perceptive data furnished by the latter with essentially new, metaphorically-designed phenomena), the metaphysical level must be identified in its similar relationship with the social level. Thus, the social conflict unfolding in the material world (the fierce contagion of revolution) is transferred to a superior ontological scale, and is replaced by intellectual war, waged among man's inner qualitative aspects. The pivotal element shared by both the social and the metaphysical levels is the anthropic one, for man is at the centre of the entire Blakean phenomenology.

That this is the case is evident from the very beginning of *The Four Zoas*. In *Night the First*, Los proclaims in a peremptory tone that the unfolding metaphysical drama, encompassing war among furious elementals, takes place in man's brain: 'I see the shower of blood: I see the sword & spears of futurity / Tho in the Brain of Man we live, & in his circling Nerves' (E 306). Since reason mistakes geometrical constructions for true ontological knowledge, it is destined to fall, along with all imaginable shapes and figures. Blake's metaphors translate both the sterility of any organized rational compounds and the latter's incapacity to grasp spontaneous harmony as the ultimate meaning of phenomena:

> . . . . Trapeziums Rhombs Rhomboids
> Parallelograms. triple & quadruple. polygonic
> In their amazing hard subdued course in the vast deep   (E 322)

Blake's symbol of inert reason is, of course, Urizen. Thus, I think that Blake's extended metaphor depicting the Urizen's ruins in *Night the Fourth* actually evokes the sheer débâcle of the rational faculty refusing to shift its perspective. Only through transfiguration can the bounds of reason be surpassed: 'Terrified Los beheld the ruins of Urizen beneath / A horrible Chaos to his eyes. a formless unmeasurable Death' (E 335). Reason craves for knowledge, but, since the former's conceptual unity is disrupted by dichotomous entities, it is denied access to the latter. The conflicting apparitions are metonymically translated into the feminine triangle in *Night the Sixth*: 'Lo three teriffic women at the verge of the bright flood / Who would not suffer him to approach. But drove him back with storms' (E 345).

The cosmic rage reaches its denouement in *Night the Ninth*. Due to the implacable nature of Urizen, Science is no longer illuminated, but autological, and, consequently, self-destructive: 'Thy self-destroying beast formd Science shall be thy eternal lot' (E 390). This compels Urizen to accept his intellectual errors, but, quite predictably in Blake's metaphysical scheme, he is not instantly purged as a result of his cathartic act: 'Urizen said. I have Erred & my Error remains with me' (E 391). The gradual process of understanding on the part of one zoa involves a regaining of harmony on the part of another. Urthona, a personified hypostasis of the metaphysical faculty in man, is restored to its erstwhile glory: '. . . . Urthona rises from the ruinous walls / In all his ancient strength to form the golden armour of science' (E 407). In the end, knowledge prevails, and bad science, that of Bacon, Newton, and Locke, abstract and experimental in its scope, is discarded. In the last line of *Night the Ninth*, the visionary self cannot conceal an optimistic tone in what I believe constitutes the rhetorical key to the entire epic: 'The dark Religions are departed & sweet Science reigns' (E 407).

5.3. The Aesthetic Level: *Milton*

The third level is the aesthetic one. Being designed with a view to exemplifying the principles of artistic creation, it is analogous to three-fold vision. Its underlining element is spontaneous creation, which may be aroused due to the exercise of two faculties, imagination and inspiration. One may find its textual application in *Milton* (1804-08).[20] The paradigmatic figure at this level is Los, who, as the archetype of Poetry, becomes Blake himself, thereby helping Milton purge his artistic, as well as spiritual, sins: 'And I became One Man with him arising in my strength: / Twas too late now to recede. Los Had enterd into my soul' (E 117). Blake expounded the genesis of *Milton* in two epistles to Thomas Butts (25 April 1803, and 6 July 1803). In the first letter, the poet merely acknowledges his lack of involvement in the actual process of creation, attributing the completion of the latter to a superior agency: 'I have written this Poem from immediate Dictation twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time without Premeditation & even against my Will. the Time it has taken in writing was thus renderd Non Existent. & an immense Poem Exists which seems to be the Labour of a long Life all producd without Labour or Study.' (E 728-29). The encomium in the second letter is not farfetched, since Blake can assume no authorship: 'I may praise it since I dare not pretend to be any other than the Secretary the Authors are in Eternity I consider it as the Grandest Poem that This World Contains' (E 730). The divine assistance reaches even farther, in that it imposes its omnipotent will upon the very production of the finite artwork, i.e. its verbal-pictorial form, the illuminated manuscript: 'This Poem shall by Divine Assistance be progressively Printed & Ornamented with Prints & given to the Public' (E 730).

At once displaying the spiritual tribulations of two poetic personae, i.e. Milton and Blake, and offering reflections on the nature of art, *Milton* is an aesthetic manifesto, defending the autonomy of the creative process. It is a powerful plea for imagination unbound and unlimited, as well as for true inspiration, since these represent the foundations of all artistic manifestations. In *A Descriptive Catalogue* (1809), which was innocently devised as an introduction to a seemingly capital exhibition, heralding nothing less than 'the birthday of the Renaissance of English art' (Frye 410), Blake axiologically conceives of two essentially negative classes of men. The former class refers to ethics, the latter – to aesthetics: 'As there is a class of men, whose whole delight is the destruction of men, so there is a class of artists, whose whole art and sci-

ence is fabricated for the purpose of destroying art' (E 538). The *Preface* to *Milton* is directed against the aesthetically-disruptive individuals, and calls for a visionary awakening of all artists: 'Painters! On you I call! Sculptors! Architects! Suffer not the fash[i]onable Fools to depress your powers . . . believe Christ & his Apostles that there is a Class of Men whose whole delight is in Destroying' (E 95).

That Blake sees art as being able to perform a cathartic function is, to my view, a fact beyond any shadow of doubt. This can be proved by calling attention to a particular trope, i.e. a repetition found no less than six times (E 96, E 98, E 100, E 101, E 102, E 105) in the Bard's Song in *Book the First*: 'Mark well my words! they are of your eternal salvation' (E 96). Not only does Blake believe art to lead one to catharsis, but he also employs the Bard's discourse as a medium of personal communication. Blake's Bard is turned into a metonymy of the creative self. Through the lens of this reading, the relationship between Blake and his *leitmotifs* appears formulaic within the artist's system of reference. Conjoined images depicting a flaming state of *afflatus* portend the imminent exclusion of craft and artifice from visionary art:

> The Bard replied. I am inspired! I know it is Truth! for I sing
>
> According to the inspiration of Poetic Genius   (E 107-8)

In order to expiate his spiritual sins, Milton is forced to return to the material universe ('eternal death'), which brings about distress and confusion. The state of 'unannihilation' is the fallen state of the artist who has not renounced his selfhood and, consequently, has not subjected himself to the potency of Poetic Genius. The whole scenario is set in *Book the First*: 'I will go down to self annihilation and eternal death, / Lest the Last Judgment come & find me unannihilate' (E 108).

The complex metaphor of Satan's bosom, one of Blake's favourite stylistic techniques, depicts the utter ruin of fallen art. Since man is at the centre of Blake's poetic enterprise on all levels, art is personified, and the reader is opened to the perspective of a barren anthropomorphic construct: 'I also stood in Satans bosom & beheld its desolations! / A ruind Man: a ruind building ofGod not made with hands' (E 139). In *Book the Second*, *sub finem*, Milton renounces his ego, which symbolizes error and, implicitly, the figure of Satan, so as to embrace true art, i.e. the product of the omnipotent force of imagination and/or inspiration. His discourse is a pathetic aesthetic apologia, a flamboyant piece of rhetoric which differentiates between visionary and non-visionary arte-

facts, between *afflatus* and *labor*. The underlying idea is that the supreme artist, who is incapable of performing perfunctory tasks, should be completely devoid of egotism, for he merely follows a sacred generative instinct, and is under total divine control. This genuine state of *enthousiasmos* can be misinterpreted as lunacy by those whose only calling is elusive reasoning or dissemination of uncertainty:

> I come in Self-annihilation & the grandeur of Inspiration
> To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the Saviour
> To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspiration (E 142).

5.4. The Religious Level: *Jerusalem*

Finally, the fourth level is the religious one. Its target is the totality of ontological contents, and, therefore, this *niveau* is similar to fourfold vision. Its defining element is spiritual redemption, perceived as cosmic unity. One may find its textual application in *Jerusalem* (1804-20), whose symbolism 'is based on a combination of English and Biblical imagery' (372), according to Frye.[21] Quite predictably, the paradigmatic figure at this level is Jesus, whose redemptive presence is invoked more than once, and who marks the entire plot of the epic as the materialization of visionary harmony: 'Come then O Lamb of God and take away the remembrance of Sin' (E 200). *Jerusalem*, Blake's intended *magnus opus*, is centred on the idea of spiritual liberty, its end being soteriological. In Blake, knowledge, art, and religion are part and parcel of the vast domain of visionary Imagination, which constitutes the Body of Christ. Thus, the three classes of vision, as well as the three levels of significance, are reconstructed within the fourth, and the circle is complete (social liberty too is reorganized, on a superior scale, as spiritual liberty). The whole epic brilliantly narrates Albion's self-sacrifice (the sacred annihilation of the gross ego stands for the rejection of Satan) and the restoration of the pristine unity of all forms of being.

That the poem must be viewed as an actualization of a religious teleology becomes evident from the introductory passage in *Chapter I*, *To the Public*: 'I also hope the Reader will be with me, wholly One in Jesus our Lord . . . (E 145). The propensity for integrating all levels of human manifestation into the 'Saviours kingdom' is again evident in the description of the gnoseological triad ('Wisdom, Art, and Science') which characterizes '[t]he Primeval State of Man' (E 146). Whilst, in the introduction to *Chapter II*, *To the Jews*, the author urges the Hebrews to '[t]ake up the Cross . . . & follow Jesus' (E 174), in the

prefatory lines to *Chapter III*, *To the Deists*, he advises against the heresy of Natural Morality or Natural Religion, whose followers are 'the Enemies of Christianity' (E 200). The preface to *Chapter IV*, *To the Christians*, proclaims Blake's lifelong belief in the imaginative perception of absolute religion, as a free exercise of ultimate visionary power: 'I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination' (E 231).

The opening lines of *Chapter I* evince Albion's selfishness and his jealous rage against his own Emanation, Jerusalem, who is destined to become the Bride of the Lamb. Albion's numerous sons and daughters incarnate his rage, and, concurrently, demonstrate that multiplicity brings about conflict and desolation: 'They revolve into the Furnaces Southward & are driven forth Northward / Divided into Male and Female forms time after time' (E 148). The series of divisions continues. Los himself divides into a masculine figure and its feminine counterpart, the resulting elements being two incomplete entities, i.e. a Spectre and an Emanation:

> Los heard her lamentations in the deeps afar! his tears fall
> Incessant before the Furnaces, and his Emanation divided in pain,
> Eastward toward the Starry Wheels. But Westward, a black Horror,
> His Spectre driv'n by the Starry Wheels of Albions sons, black and
> Opake divided from his back; he labours and mourns!   (E 148-49)

Chapter II records Albion's endeavour to destroy Jerusalem, aided by his twelve sons, who spring from his bosom as soon as he has fallen asleep. The Giant is deluded by spiritual error, and fails to acknowledge the capital importance of Divine Vision, which is the textual translation of Blake's fourfold vision:

> But they fled to the mountains to seek ransom: building A Strong
> Fortification against the Divine Humanity and Mercy,
> In Shame & Jealousy to annihilate Jerusalem!
>
> Turning his back to the Divine Vision . . .   (E 174-75)

In *Chapter III*, due to the seemingly omnipotent character of error in its spiritual form, the Divine Vision itself undergoes a series of convoluted metamorphoses. My view is that the symbols are growing in intensity, from the innocuous flame (initial stage of grace) through the more elaborate pillar (Moses's guidance) and wheel of fire (Ezekiel's

prophecy) to the globe of blood, suggesting at once human sacrifice and Christ's passions. The restoration of the supreme form of vision lies with Jesus:

> The Divine Vision became First a burning flame, then a column
> Of fire, then an awful fiery wheel surrounding earth & heaven:
> And then a globe of blood . . .   (E 219)

Nonetheless, *Chapter IV* concludes both with Albion's and Jerusalem's religious awakenings through Christ's spiritual mediation, and with the supreme merging of all beings into one total form, infinite in scope and divine in nature. Salvation is achieved by mystical reunification, and the saga of separation ceases. Creation, which constitutes a mere prolongation of an ontological error (primordial division), comes to an abrupt end, as perishable existence is transmuted into Eternity. Basically, everything continues to exist *in illo tempore*:

> All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth & Stone. all
> Human Forms identified, living going forth & returning wearied
> Into the Planetary lives of Years Months Days & Hours reposing
> And then Awaking into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality.
>
> And I heard the Name of their Emanations they are named
>   Jerusalem   (E 258-59)

6. Conclusion

Partly due to space constraints, partly due to a commitment to that principle of economy known as Occam's razor,[22] I conclude this critical approach, not before summing up my attempt. This analysis has started from a basic assumption concerning Blake's unsystematic system, and has proceeded thence by a process of *explication de texte* to the demonstration of the hermeneutic thesis. As I have striven to explain throughout this study, Blake's artistic conception is premised on an intricately devised unsystematic system, comprising four main levels (social, metaphysical, aesthetic, and religious), which are to be discerned and interpreted both ideologically and textually. I have also shown that this quadripartite ensemble and the distinct types of vision (single, twofold, threefold, and fourfold) in Blake's thought are interconnected, and must be analyzed accordingly. Thus, my interpretation evinces Blake's complex profile as a poet and thinker, and, at the same time, attempts to offer a fresh starting point for a systematic academic approach to his work in general.

Notes

[1] Here, I have in mind Damrosch, Jr.'s dictum that 'Blake's art is fundamentally conceptual' (118).

[2] Literature as a scientific method, based on exegetic principles.

[3] All Blake quotations are drawn from *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. Ed. David V. Erdman. Commentary Harold Bloom. Newly revised ed. Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1982, hereafter abbreviated E.

[4] Cf. Damrosch, Jr. passim.

[5] Cf. Damon, *William Blake* and *Blake Dictionary* passim.

[6] Cf. Frye passim.

[7] Cf. Erdman, *Prophet against Empire* passim.

[8] It is no accident that, in his *Foreword* to Damon's *Blake Dictionary*, Morris Eaves points out that three emblematic scholarly figures are to be retained as foremost authorities on Blake studies: Damon, Frye, and Erdman (IX). In my opinion, the same three critics succeeded in offering a logically coherent and fundamentally unitary Blake.

[9] Cf. Raine passim.

[10] As a case in point, Damon too notes that 'thought, animated by passion, is the substance of his verse' (*Blake Dictionary* 351).

[11] Cf., in this respect, the series of omissions, erasures, and deletions in *Milton*: plates 6 (l. 35), 7 (l. 4-5), 27 (l. 60) and in *Jerusalem*: plates 1 (*Frontispiece*), 4 (l. 15), 14 (end of the first chapter), 36 [32] (l. 34), 37 [34] (l. 10), 84 (l. 17-19), etc. Other contexts evince the fact that Blake re-used the material of *The Four Zoas* to shape *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. On the other hand, *The Four Zoas* contains repetitions from previous poems, such as *Tiriel, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, America a Prophecy, The First Book of Urizen, The Book of Ahania*. For more details, cf. Damon, *William Blake* 396-98.

[12] Cf. E 107-08.

[13] For a detailed presentation of the four types of vision, cf. Damon, *Blake Dictionary* 436-37.

[14] The third poem represents, simultaneously, a prequel and a sequel to the two versified prophecies.

[15] Behrendt continues: 'In these three works Blake marshals his verbal and visual forces to present for infernal reading a documentary history that aims to reveal that the events of the latter years of the eighteenth century are presages of the millenium that is imminent, that is in fact unfolding, and that it has been foreshadowed in the artifacts of both Christian and pre-Christian cultures' (105).

[16] For a comprehensive presentation of Orc's paradigm, cf. Hobson passim. It is perhaps significant that Raine equates Orc with Isaac's son, Edom or Esau, holding that Blake's whole symbolism springs from Swedenborg (I 337-38). The same opinion is also held by Tannenbaum (cf. 131-33 et passim).

[17] George Quasha equates Orc with political revolution (17).

[18] For a perceptive analysis of the poem, cf. Ansari 46-54.

[19] For more details in this respect, cf. Damon, *Blake Dictionary* 143, and E

948-67.

[20] For a summary of the plot, cf. Frye 316.

[21] For a cogent presentation of the structure, cf. Frye 357-58.

[22] William of Occam expressed his doubts in relation to the futile multiplication of interpretative patterns, and defended a thesis according to which the simplest explanation is the best.

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Mary Shelley, an Autobiographer

Takami Hirai

The whole story in the first edition of *Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus* in 1818 (hereafter abbreviated as *Frankenstein*) is told by three concentric pairs of tellers and addressees. The novel starts in the journal letters of a seafarer Robert Walton to his only living sister, Margaret Saville, reporting an incident he witnessed on his way to the Pole. He tells how Victor Frankenstein, the protagonist, has confessed to him in anguish the story of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter, and the consequences it brought to him. He has tracked 'nature' relentlessly in order to satisfy his egotistic desire for conquest, violating her 'hiding places' (37). [1] The monster, 'a being' like him (37), his double, is the product of his strong self-assertion, his self-consciousness, and its monstrousness is symbolic of his failure in 'soul-making.' [2] Within Victor's confessional narrative, the monster tells him of his miserable loneliness after he was abandoned. It is placed in the central part of the novel, and the originality in describing the monster is often praised as Mary Shelley's most impressive achievement. [3] This creature, a 'symbolic agent of Frankenstein's egotism' (Poovey 90), finally brings about the collapse of all the Frankenstein domestic tranquility. The journal letters of Walton to Saville appear again at the end of the novel, thus forming and closing the outer-frame for the whole story. In the course of the novel, each member of the family, involved in the incidents and the problems underlying them in his or her own peculiar way, plays an important part.

The monster has a dual, autobiographical meaning to its author, Mary Shelley. By creating a symbolic image, she could successfully relocate anxiety about her identity as a woman and author, placed in the family system of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie; [4] she could also reflect her ambivalent feeling about her own 'monstrosity' as the offspring of a unique family of literary celebrities. She had for her parents William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft and for her husband Percy Bysshe

Shelley. Establishing her identity as an authoress by writing *Franken-stein* had entailed a 'monstrous externalization' of her inner phantasies (Bronfen 36). Her success in writing would mean, for her, the affirmation of the spiritual legacy of her family; but, at the same time, it would not free her from the sense of guilt since her identity as an authoress was established at the price of another woman writer, her mother, who died giving birth to her. Besides, Mary, when writing this novel, was something of a social outcast, severely criticized for the politically radical ideas of her parents to which she seemed to be a truly legitimate heir as endorsed by her own subversive behavior.[5]

The aim of this paper is to make clear what Mary Shelley tells us about her identity as a woman writer placed in the family system of the age, mirroring herself in the image of the monster. Hers is the age of Sensibility, or Romanticism, the period of 'affective individualism' as Allen Richardson calls it, based on the arguments of Lawrence Stone (Richardson 14). According to Stone, each individual in a family is tied to the others through 'the affectionate bonding' (Stone 22). This is one of the key features of the modern family conceived as a functional organization. It should be noted, as Richardson also explains, that, during this period, the distinctly separated gender roles —characterized by the public, exposed sphere of the male and the private, domestic sphere of the female— was still largely preserved.

I will look at the Frankensteins, a typical bourgeois family, in the perspective of Stone's 'mentalité,' or Philippe Ariès's 'feeling.' According to Stone, due to the transformations of 'mentalité' in the middle and upper classes of English society, the modern family as an organization has been well established by 1750. Ariès claims that in Europe by the eighteenth century 'the members of the family were united by feeling, habit and their way of life,' so that the family structure could gratify 'a desire for privacy and also a craving for identity' (Ariès 413). Stone's 'mentalité' and Ariès's 'feeling' point to the ground where the English Romantic Poets tried to complete a vital, dialectical movement of 'soul-making,' struggling with the desire to overcome self-consciousness (Hartman 49-53).[6]

I

To the third edition of *Frankenstei*n, published in 1831, fourteen years after the first, Mary appends an Introduction (175-181) in which she explains in her own words why she, 'then a young girl, came to think of, and to dilate upon, so very hideous an idea.' Although she had apparently been unwilling to bring herself forward in print as an authoress, she tells how she hit upon the idea of writing a story while traveling with 'the cares of a family' on her mind. Here she tells us how she 'thought of a story,' a germ which was to grow into *Frankenstein.* In a 'waking dream'(180) that came unbidden, as if possessed and guided by her imagination, in the summer of 1816, she saw a student of 'unhallowed arts' finally complete his creation of an autonomous being, by infusing a spark of life into inanimate matter. She tells us the terror she felt in her dream before she is awakened:

> I saw *the pale student of unhallowed arts* kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from *his odious handywork, horror-stricken*. He would hope that, left to itself, the slight spark of life which he had communicated would fade; that this thing, which had received such imperfect animation, would subside into dead matter; and he might sleep in the belief that the silence of the grave would quench for ever the transient existence of the hideous corpse which he had looked upon as the cradle of life. He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes.
>
> (179-180, emphases mine)

Then she explains how this weird phantasm, having possessed and haunted her, was finally transformed into her ghost story. At the end of the Introduction she calls *Frankenstein* her 'hideous progeny' which she bids go forth and prosper, and for which she has affection (180). Here Mary's intention in writing and her attitude toward the finished product are clearly delineated.

Obviously she analogizes the 'pale student' of her dream with Victor, the protagonist of *Frankenstein*, and 'his odious handywork, horror-stricken,' with the monster. As soon as his 'waking dream' is successfully actualized and spontaneously worked out, Victor reacts in exactly the same way as the student did in Mary's 'waking dream':

> now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room, and continued a long time traversing my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep.   (40)

When he is awakened by the creature, he turns away and flees from it, abandoning it to its fate. Here is another analogy with the author's account in the Introduction, allowing us to read the story as her autobiography. Johnson suggests that *Frankenstein* is 'the story of the experience of writing *Frankenstein*.' (Johnson 62-63).

In each narration of the three concentric pairs of tellers and addressees in the story, Mary presents one artistic persona, a first-person narrator: Walton, Victor, and the monster. Victor and Walton share the glorious ambition of benefiting mankind by accomplishing some great purpose, and a desire to have the company of a man who can sympathize with him, a brother of the heart, whose eyes would reply to the other's (13). The monster's accusation of Victor is suggestive of two of a kind:

> Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God in pity made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of your's, more horrid from its very resemblance.   (97)

Listening to the distress of this 'filthy type' of his own self, Victor must have felt the same horrible misery as did 'the student of unhallowed arts' in the dream. When the student saw the creature looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes, he must have seen his own wretched image reflected in them (180).

Thus, Victor and the monster are halves of the same self; and Victor and Walton are sympathetic and compassionate to each other, as to a brother or a friend. However, they all are solitary figures, far removed from the domestic tranquility of the fireside. We can only expect that some relationship based on 'the affectionate bonding' is to be established between Walton and Margaret. He is the only character in the novel leading a happy, family life with lovely children. He needs her to support his lonely spirits (15), and, though he is on a voyage and as far from the peace of his home as are the other narrators, he never forgets 'keeping' (13), which means 'conformity' in painting, and is always greatly in need of a friend who would show affection. He feels genuine sympathy for Victor's deep, habitual grief, as if he were his brother. Living in the real world without having anything to do with Victor's

creation, he informs his sister of his friend's misery. It can be said that he, as a mouthpiece of the author, is telling us, by means of Victor's creation, her own life story and her longing for the family in which she hopes she could live a happy life.

II

The monster in the Alphonse Frankenstein family is not born as a blessed child but is produced in the laboratory of Victor, a scientist whose desire is not to serve others, but to assert his own selfhood, searching for the quintessence of life and death. The monster can never be an organic member of the family; it is by nature made to destroy their domestic harmony.

The Frankensteins have been distinguished members of the bourgeoisie of Geneva and Alphonse has apparently established a typical happy home, with a beautiful, submissive wife and three children, surrounded by heartwarming friends and faithful servants. Henry Clerval who is constantly with the Frankensteins, is included in their domestic circle (24). The overall image reminds us of William Hogarth's *The Strode Family* (Praz 101), a painting from the genre called Conversation Pieces popular in the eighteenth century. There the configuration of the family looks exactly like the Alphonse Frankensteins, all of them enjoying blissful moments at the fireside. If Victor had married Elizabeth Lavenza, following the expectation of his mother, Caroline Beaufort, the continuance of the Frankensteins would have been secured. Caroline would have ever been holding 'an air of her dignity and beauty,' assured of domestic stability, even when she is kneeling by the coffin of her dead father in despair (56). Victor equates this image of his mother with the guardian angel in the picture standing over the mantelpiece in the library when he returns home.

Alphonse's family seems to be well-organized with a patriarchal father at its center and modest, self-devoted women, who love and guard their home as 'heaven-sent' beings (191), encircling him, shining like 'a shrine-dedicated lamp' (194). In addition to this, we can see some typically patriarchal characteristics or virtues of the nineteenth-century bourgeois family in Alphonse's marriage with Caroline, in the adoption of Elizabeth, and in the antecedents of Justine Moritz, a faithful servant. But, at the same time, it should be noted that here is no indication of that 'intensified affective bonding' with which the modern

family is associated.

After his obsessive desire has been ultimately satisfied, Victor is so convinced of the success of his frenzied undertaking that he boasts in exaltation that 'No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs' (37). However, after this moment of exultation, his bold self-assertion brings the ego's destructiveness upon him; his strong ego-consciousness has never made him glorious in his adolescence in the course of 'soul-making.' It brings him a nightmare, in which his future wife, Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, is transformed in his arms into the corpse of his dead mother, Caroline. She is enveloped in a shroud, and in the folds of her flannel the grave-worms are crawling (40). This is clearly contrasted to her image in the picture in the library at home, and suggests that domestic tranquility is no longer expected in the future. His indulgence in his selfish desire has made him pay no attention to the worries and concerns that have been made known to him by other members of the Alphonse family. Elizabeth is not free from the misgiving that Victor regrets their connection and, seeing him so lonely and unhappy, is compelled to ask him, 'Do you not love another?' (144). Here she is effectively exposing Victor's lack of sympathy and love, but the significance of the conversation is not developed. Richardson regards Victor in this state as assuming 'the extreme pose of a feminized Romantic creator,' in attempting to bear a child with the aid only of rationality and science. 'Victor can create a kind of life, but what he cannot give is precisely what the reproduction of mothering in women assures: sympathy, love, nurturing' (Richardson, 22). Anne K. Mellor sees him as a typical male, living in the sphere of public (masculine) power separated from that of private (feminine) power; as Victor cannot work and love at the same time, he fails to feel empathy with others (Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* 116). Neither the tenderness nor the beauty of Elizabeth can redeem his soul: he says that 'the very accents of love were ineffectual' (210). As she cannot actively engage in his life after all, they can never be genuine companions for each other in the nuclear family. Kate Ellis points out that Elizabeth is not a real force in the novel, being too superficial and monotonous, although she is meant to be 'the living spirit of love to soften and attract'(194); she is simply performing one of the chief duties of the female sex as Thomas Gisborne puts it in *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797) (Ellis, *The Contested Castle* 194-5). The lovely Caroline also never plays the role of 'the model of all excellence'(46), an angel mother in a bourgeois family. Although she is adored by other women, it is her portrait that, afterwards, is to lead the monster to the murdering of his victims one by one (56); she turns out to be an effective accomplice in their deaths. Not only Caroline and other female members of the family but also the males, for example, Alphonse, are helpless, failing to take active preventive measures against a time of crisis, when Justine is suspected of being William's murderer.

Neither Victor nor his monster can gratify Ariès's 'a desire for privacy and also a craving for identity' in their home. Victor cannot establish his identity in his own family but the monster is in a more difficult predicament. Having no father, mother, friends, and relations, he is always compelled to wonder who he is, what he is, whence he comes; these questions recur to him without offering any answer (96). Because of his ugliness, he is driven away by the De Laceys, an apparently ideal family of which the monster wishes to be an adopted member. The De Laceys, descended from the prosperous bourgeoisie of France, are an archetype of the egalitarian, interdependent, benevolent, and mutually loving nuclear family (Mellor, 'Possessing Nature: The Female in *Frankenstein*' 229-230). Safie, who is taught by her mother to aspire to higher powers of intellect and an independence of spirit, is enchanting 'in a country where women were allowed to take a rank in society' (92). She seems to be an independent, ideal woman in a modern family, quite different from other female members of the Frankenstein household. But she and the De Laceys, the idealized figures of sexual equality and mutual affection, cannot survive long in the novel; they are a temporarily glimpsed hope which vanishes all too soon. Mellor suggests that for Mary Shelley this ideal archetypal family cannot be found anywhere in the Western Europe of the nineteenth century, the world she lives in (Mellor,'Possessing Nature: The Female in *Frankenstein*' 223). After being exiled from their home, the monster is forced to recognize itself in its true monstrosity. Then Victor refuses his demand for a female companion, an indispensable requirement for creating a family. Thus, decisively denied domestic affection as a child or as a husband, the monster's hatred of his creator mounts to an uncontrollable degree, and he embarks on acts of vengeance, murdering all that are dear to Victor: William, Justine Moritz, and Clerval. Finding the marks of fingers left around each neck, Victor recognizes in anguish that he himself is the true murderer; the being who is endowed with the will and power to do such deeds is nothing but his 'own spirit,' his 'own vampire,'; it was he who let it 'loose into the world' (55).

Elizabeth who would have borne him children is finally killed by the monster on their wedding night. Victor's whole family is destroyed by his creation, and, in this way, his egotistic quest for nature, violating her 'hiding places,' is given just punishment. Nature's revenge on his attempt to transgress her boundaries is complete, when Victor's chase of the monster ends in the killing of both halves of one self, on the field of ice and snow in the Arctic.

III

It is often pointed out[7] that, in the description of the monster's birth, Mary alludes to a phantom lady in the Poet's waking dream from Percy Shelley's *Alastor, or, The Spirit of Solitude* (1816) .[8] The lady has fled from him before she, the Poet's ideal beauty, is made flesh (*Alastor* 148-191). Here a single narrator, unlike in *Frankenstein*, tells the story of the Poet who eagerly tries to pursue a fleeting shade that fluctuates between illusion and reality. It is a dream-image in the real world, a beautiful shape that fails to be incarnated. Duncan Wu explains in the footnotes that the Poet's love is 'narcissistic, directed to an ideal conceived within his own mind' (Wu 829). In *Alastor* the Poet is struggling to overcome his selfhood as symbolized by the phantom lady. The same doomed Romantic quest can be seen in Keats' *Endymion* IV 406-483, one of the archetypal poems of English Romanticism. Endymion sees an unknown goddess in his dream on Mount Latmos, whose charmed touch makes him faint and distracted. After wandering around to search for her, he seems to find her identified with Phoebe, the moment he awakes. He cries perplexedly, 'Is there nought for me, / Upon the bourne of bliss, but misery?' (460-461), and, being so distraughtly enchanted with the fair goddess, he wonders doubtfully what, from whence, and where is that soul. His pursuit of her is brilliantly described until he is united with Cynthia, his selfhood melting into a radiance at the end of the poem. In Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', the Mariner blesses, in his waking dream, the water snakes unconsciously and spontaneously, which appear to be participating in the serene order of the universe and to be in the fulfillment of their being. At this moment he passes from the purgatorial self trapped in the isolation of a heightened self-consciousness to regain control of his imagination, and his soul is led to salvation.

In contrast to the protagonists of these poems, Victor adheres to an elevated degree of egotistic consciousness, and is never able to 'forget his guilt in creating a lonely consciousness' (Bloom 7). The monster is an almost literal embodiment of 'the monster of narcissism' (Homans 139). Victor's creation can never be a healing power, a guide that will free him from the prison of the self and lead him to immortality, because it has no natural ground upon which to make its abilities function. It is the projection of Victor's egotistic pursuit and does not reflect his inner world but is objectified, and miserable, far from being brilliant.

Thus, Victor's imaginative product in his waking dream, a metaphor of the imagination, proves to be quite different from that of the Romantic poets. They have fought against self-consciousness, trying to transcend early limitations by means of imaginative vision. They explored the possibilities of transition from self-consciousness to imagination (Hartman 49-53). But Victor's egotism cannot share the higher imaginative world of the poets. What he enjoys is not creation itself, but only the processes leading up to it. Homans explains this as 'the seemingly endless chain of signifiers that constitute his true, if unrecognized, desire (Homans 141). The creature is the undesired embodiment of a Romantic imaginative desire.

Meanwhile, the product of Victor's imagination, the monster, recognizes his monstrosity for the first time when he sees his own image mirrored in a transparent pool. Terrified at his own reflection, he becomes completely convinced that he is nothing but what he looks like, a monster (85). Here Mary alludes to *Paradise Lost* IV 456-462 where Eve reflects herself in 'the clear / smooth Lake'. Milton's suggestion is that her absorption in her own beautiful image hints plainly at her moral ugliness, her potential for spiritual deformity (Gilbert and Gubar 240). Mary supplements the description of Eve in *Paradise Lost* by introducing a physically ugly monster. It is actually a representation of a woman with her self-conceit and monstrosity laid bare. This Eve turns out to be not so luminous as the Eve in Adam's dream, which Keats compares to imagination (Letter to Benjamin Bailey, *22 November, 1817*, Rollins, Vol. I 185). The monster, 'a filthy type' of the creator's 'more horrid from its very resemblance,' finally comes to the revelation that, comparing himself with Adam, Satan, and God, he deserves the name of nothing but Eve, in helplessness, isolation, and the bitter gall of Satanic envy. The monster is perfectly identified with a vile, monstrous woman. He is nothing less than a symbolized figure of a woman in patriarchal society. Though given a human's nobler aspirations, this monstrous woman 'cannot enter the human commu-

nity it longs to join, and it cannot earn the sympathy it can all too vividly imagine' (Poovey 90). Gilbert and Gubar also see the monster's physical ugliness as representing, in addition to moral deformity, social illegitimacy, bastardy, and the namelessness of a woman (Gilbert and Gubar 241).

When in the Introduction to the 1831 edition Mary, a woman traveling preoccupied with 'the cares of a family', tells us how she got the idea for writing a story, she is expressing her anxiety metaphorically in the image of the artist's creature. Similarly, we can find that the monster in the novel symbolizes insecurity and tension within her identity. *Frankenstein* is born as a 'hideous' work like the creature itself, produced by a woman writer, whose image is also as wretched as is the creation of her pen. It can be said that Mary succeeded in bringing into the daylight the anxieties of an authoress. As she can only write about her own act of writing, about her own life, she is always an autobiographer. Here lies the true significance of the novel. Victor, a man living in patriarchal society, has irreverently deluded himself that he is given a woman's biological prerogative to bear children. Mary made her literary creation and literary activities overlap with Victor's creative act. He transgresses and violates the bounds of humanity with his egoism, and she can succeed only in the Gothic style, expressing her conflict in the image of a miscreated monster. The Gothic novel is a type of fiction with a brooding atmosphere of gloom and terror, dealing with aberrant psychological states (Abrams 78).

It should be examined in more detail whether Mary, leading a real, everyday life, has identified the image of an ideal family with the Romantic imagination. But at least in *Frankenstein* she must have had doubts or uncertainties concerning Romantic desire, as it could lead to the collapse of a family. Bronfen claims that since 'in *Frankenstein* the desired object turns out to be a monster and is accordingly repudiated by its own father' it can be 'interpreted as Mary's radical critique of romantic desire' (Bronfen 33).

IV

In spite of Mary's radical critique of Romantic desire, it is clear that what Mary criticizes and ultimately denies is not the Romantic imagination itself. There are many instances which show us that she has deep sympathy with Romantic sensitivity to natural beauty and Romantic

aesthetics. For examples, she describes Clerval, who is devoted to the wonders of nature, as a beloved friend of Victor, citing lines 76-83 from Wordsworth's 'Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey': The sounding cataract / Haunted him like a passion; the tall rock, / The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood, / The colours and their forms, were then to him / An appetite; a feeling, and a love' (120). Moreover, it is not too much to say that Mary possesses 'Negative Capability', as is evident in the following description by Walton of the noble-minded Victor who is in misery, his spirits broken:

> no one can feel more deeply than he does the beauties of nature. The starry sky, the sea, and every sight afforded by these wonderful regions, seems still to have the power of elevating his soul from earth. Such a man has a double existence: he may suffer misery, and be overwhelmed by disappointments; yet, when he has retired into himself, he will be like a celestial spirit, that has a halo around him, within whose circle no grief or folly ventures.   (19)

Here one can see that Keats' Negative Capability helps us identify a characteristically Romantic aesthetic sensibility.

What Mary criticizes is not the Romantic imagination but its possible consequences and especially the actual product which it may bring forth. She warns it not to go too far. In Mellor's view, she has perceived that the Romantic imagination, grounded on a never-ending, perhaps never successful, effort to marry the finite and the infinite, is too frequently indifferent to the progeny of that union. The Romantic ideology represents its own poems as self-consuming artifacts within a never-ending dialectical process, and values the creative act above the created product. Mary believes that a poet must take responsibility for his actions, for the predictable consequences of his poems, as well as for the abstract ideals he serves (Mellor, *Mary Shelly: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* 80).

In her criticism she offers conservative views where she was expected to be a radical. In the Introduction to the 1831 edition, she explains that she shall answer the question of how she, 'then a young girl, came to think of, and to dilate upon so very hideous an idea.' As quoted above in Section I, in Mary's dream, the bold student who has mocked the stupendous mechanism of the Creator is frightened at his temerity, and strongly desires to stifle for ever the transient existence of such a hideous corpse in the grave. These passages prove that Mary does not dare to create such a horrible creature for herself and it consti-

tutes a suitable answer to the question posed by general readers of the novel. This justifies Poovey's explanation: that 'she once pursued metaphysical speculations now seems, first of all, a defiance of one's proper place—here the male's in relation to God, but also, by extension, woman's in relation to the family' (Poovey 101). Poovey considers the boldness of the student here as, not only the boldness of the male in relation to God, but also, by extension, a defiance of the woman in her proper place in relation to the family. I agree with Poovey that 'by 1831 Mary was no longer a defiant child who dared to introduce a monstrosity which might lead to the collapse of the family bonds, but, as a grown woman, seeking herself within the humility proper to a lady' (Poovey 100). It was precisely because she wanted to express and emphasize this attitude more clearly that she considerably revised the former production in 1831. In the novel she is more gravely concerned with Victor's egotistic, monstrous self-assertion than with the social conventions that inhibit her creativity.

When finishing her writing of *Frankenstein*, Mary would inevitably return to her own real family bonds. Bronfen says that 'in her own life she was forced to learn that the intellectual legacy of her parents was inextricably interwoven with the monstrosity of being socially outcast' (Bronfen 36). Bronfen examines Mary's text of the novel in intertextual terms, showing how it establishes and deconstructs her family bonds at the same time, and claims that she, while recognizing the spiritual legacy of her politically radical parents, makes an extraordinarily conservative plea for real family bonds (Bronfen 36). She reads *Frankenstein* as Mary Shelley's family romance[10], in which she misreads or rewrites the works of her parents and her husband. It has made her realize the spiritual legacy of her parents and, at the same time, allowed her to come to terms with some unconventional behavior of her own, a materialization of the liberal political ideas of her parents that had resulted in an unbearable ostracism. Shelley wrote in the Preface to the 1818 version, in the character of Mary, that 'my chief concern' in the story is 'the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection' (8). But does this reflect Mary's real intention? When the monster is rejected by Victor, is not the pain it feels Mary's own? Could she not sense that she is being rejected by her husband, as, even if she embodies the goal of his poetic quest, he, as a poet, has disowned any form of embodiment?

Godwin recorded a happy image of his family life with Wollestoncraft and Fanny, in Chapter Nine of *Memoirs of the Author of 'a Vindication of the Rights of Woman'*:

> She was a worshipper of domestic life. She loved to observe the growth of affection between me and her daughter, then three years of age, as well as my anxiety respecting the child not yet born.
>
> (*Memoirs* 262)

Although his plain-speaking about his own wife in this book was severely attacked at the time, Tamae Mizuta puts a high value on the bonds between members of his family (Mizuta 126-127, 152-154). The domestic peace which produced 'a sort of opening of the heart, a general expression of confidence and affectionate soul, a sort of infantile, yet dignified endearment'(*Memoirs* 262) is taken to be an essential element of modern family as characterized by Stone and Ariès. Mizuta points out that Godwin's encounter with Wollstonecraft and his marriage with her modified his radical theory which had entirely denied the marriage system and he was finally converted. In contrast to the family of the author's parents, there is no close bond, no 'amiableness of domestic affection' at all in the family presented in *Frankenstein.*

The narrative strategy in *Frankenstein* is to separate Victor's self-assertion from its consequences by transmitting the story in three distinct narratives each told from a single definitive viewpoint. Poovey explains that this technique enables Mary to express her profound ambivalence toward Victor's creative act: 'she is able to dramatize both her conventional judgment of the evils of egotism and her emotional engagement in the imaginative act' (Poovey 93). Here Mary is effectively shown to be conflicting between self-assertion and social acceptance, between self-expression and effacement, not only in the novel itself, but also in her relation to her own family bonds. Mary Wollstonecraft, on the publication of *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), commented on the fact that she always writes in the first person:

> I…determined to let my remarks and reflections flow unrestrained, as I perceived that I could not give a just description of what I saw, but by relating the effect different objects had produced on my mind and feelings, whilst the impression was still fresh.
>
> (Advertisement 62)

In the 1831 Introduction, Mary Shelley is unwilling to bring herself forward in print. Her ambivalent story-telling strategy shows us that she is not so straightforward and unrestricted in writing her autobiographical novel, *Frankenstein,* as her mother was in the travelogue.

Notes

* This paper is an expanded revision of my essay in Japanese: '*Frankenstein or, the Modern Prometheus* no Kazoku-zo (The Family Bonds in *Frankenstein or, the Modern Prometheus*)'in *Roman-ha Bungaku no Sugata II: 'Michinaru sonzai yosiki' wo motomete* (*The Image of Romantic Literature II: In Quest of 'the Unknown Forms of Existence'*, Tokyo: Eihosha, 2004) 171-185.

[1] All quotations are taken from Nora Crook, ed., *The Novels and Works of Mary Shelley, Vol.1, Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1996).

[2] The 'soul-making', so designated by Keats, is a process through which the human mind realizes its identity, each one becoming personally itself and attaining immortality. (*Letter to the George Keatses, 21 April 1819*. Rollins, Vol.II 102.)

[3] For example, see Poovey 91 and Bloom 7.

[4] Though the Frankensteins set up their home in Geneva, it is clearly a representation of an English upper middle-class family. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall assert that the study of the family of this period is not meant to be purely local. Such a study addresses questions pertinent to the whole of English society even though the answers mainly concern a specific section of the provincial middle class (Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall 34-35). The basic argument about the family structure can be generally applicable, even though the specific case may be located in Switzerland or in England.

[5] For instance, her elopement with Percy Bysshe Shelley who had a pregnant wife, her disownment by Godwin, her own pregnancy, her children's deaths one after another, poverty, the infidelities of her husband, etc.

[6] Kate Ellis, a feminist, foregrounds the home in this novel as a fortress where the feminine sphere of domesticity and the masculine sphere of discovery are separated. She interestingly argues that the Gothic novel creates 'a resistance to an ideology that imprisons them even as it posits a sphere of safety for' women (Ellis, *The Contested Castle* Introduction x). Although her ideas are full of useful suggestions, I think she is so involved in the ideology that she does not refer to the Gothic elements in this novel, where Mary represents her anxiety in dynamic terms as a woman placed in a bourgeois family (Ellis, *The Contested Castle* 181-206).

[7] For example, Homans 139 and Bronfen 33.

[8] References to the poems are as follows: *Alaster* to *Romanticism: An Anthology* edited by Dunkan Wu, *Endymion* to *The Poems of John Keats* edited by Miriam Allott, *Paradise Lost* to *Paradise Lost* edited by Elledge Scott, and *The Rime of The Ancient Mariner* and 'Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey' to *Romantic Poetry and Prose* edited by Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling.

[9] 'Negative Capability' is the quality which Keats believes as essential in forming 'a Man of Achievement especially in Literature.' Thus endowed, a man 'is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts'; he 'would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge.' (*Letter to George and Tom Keats, 27 December, 1817*. Rollins, Vol. I 193.)

[10] Bloom says that 'Poetry is the anxiety of influence,' meaning that poets are always intimidated by the shadow of a strong poet who came before them, as sons are oppressed by their fathers; in this sense, he also says that 'Poetry is Family Romance' (*The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* 95). Bronfen applies this theory to *Frankenstein.*

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'A blank to me':
Thomas Hardy and the Loss of Meaning

Peter Robinson

1

We understandably think of books as places in which to find added meaning, as compensation, perhaps, for the fear that life is, however implausibly, short of it. As is well known, the young Thomas Hardy suffered a loss of faith in the established religion of his native land. However, the loss I want to look at here is the kind that can happen to a person of any or no creed, and can happen, what's more, at moments not necessarily of epoch-making cultural change, but when least expected. In order to live and have social relations we need to invest other people with meaning — with a meaning for us. Hardy, as both poet and novelist, appears to have been peculiarly sensitive to occasions when these investments would suddenly lose value. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* he assembled the circumstances in which such a loss could occur with tragic consequences, through errors of belief. Later, in *The Well-Beloved*, he concocted a theory-driven plot about its happening serially in relations between an artist at different phases in his life and three different generations of women — one which, in its preposterousness, points all the more sharply towards the bewildering anguish and disorientation that such losses produce.

Hardy's poem 'At Waking' has the word 'blank' in its final line:

> O vision appalling
> When the one believed-in thing
> Is seen falling, falling,
> With all to which hope can cling.
> Off: it is not true;
> For it cannot be
> That the prize I drew
> Is a blank to me!   (224)[1]

This conclusion depends upon ambiguities in uses of the word. These are prepared for in the opening quatrain when the dawn is compared to a dead body, in a line recalling 'The Darkling Thrush', where 'The land's sharp features seemed to be / The Century's corpse outleant' (150). 'At Waking', from Hardy's next collection of poems, begins:

> When night was lifting,
> And dawn had crept under its shade,
>   Amid cold clouds drifting
> Dead-white as a corpse outlaid

This blank lack of colour, the 'Dead-white' of the clouds at dawn, is developed with the suggestion of a letter's white paper — one which Hardy has, characteristically, half-revealed and half-concealed: 'With a sudden scare / I seemed to behold / My Love in bare / Hard lines unfold.' The hint of a lovers' communication remains in the 'Hard lines' that conclude this opening verse. In the published version, it is only as if he were reading a letter delivered to him in the morning. A surviving manuscript draft of 'At Waking', though, makes this letter an element of the scene with its tenth line: 'Those words she had written awry'. Hardy's first version places another blank before readers in the sheet of paper on which have been written some words that 'Killed her old endowment / And gifts that had cheapened all nigh' (224).

Hardy further subjectivizes the moment in revision. He conceals the indication of a critical judgement about a hand-written text which has been badly shaped, miss-spelt, or uses ungrammatical constructions, replacing it with a perception of the speaker's alone: 'An insight that would not die / Killed her old endowment / Of charm that had capped all nigh'. The revision also alters the reason for the loss of meaning. In the draft, it's caused by critically reacting to the sign that the woman does not have a literary education. In the printed text, it is an insight about her self, as the speaker views it. The change of 'gifts' to 'charm' reinforces this effect, and it means that the phrase 'bare / Hard lines' in the first verse can signify the woman's physical appearance, the lines of her face, and her power to 'charm', rather than 'gifts' of verbal skill or other talents.

This, then, gives the reader three blanks to bear in mind. There are the 'cold clouds drifting' in the dawn. There is the face, or perhaps the whole body, of 'My Love in bare / Hard lines'. And there's the letter, which remains as a trace element in the word 'lines', but has been more or less revised out with the cutting of 'words she had written awry'.

These different whitenesses, with their added sense of emptiness, of something lacking, are summed up in the poem's concluding lines: 'it cannot be / That the prize I drew / Is a blank to me!' Here the meaning of 'blank' is that of a lottery ticket. You pick pieces of paper at random, and if a 'prize' has been won it will be written on the paper; if not, the paper will be a blank. Here Hardy is punning too on the word 'prize', used in a romantic sense, referring to the Love as valuable, a prize, or referring to the prize in a lottery.

Glowry's advice to Scythrop in Thomas Love Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) leans upon precisely this metaphor:

> Marriage is, therefore, a lottery, and the less choice and selection a man bestows on his ticket the better; for, if he has incurred considerable pains and expense to obtain a lucky number, and his lucky number proves a blank, he experiences not a simple, but a complicated disappointment; the loss of labour and money being superadded to the disappointment of drawing a blank, which, constituting simply and entirely the grievance of him who has chosen his ticket at random, is, from its simplicity, the more endurable.[2]

The more painful insight in Hardy's poem is in the recognition that the value written on the paper, the prize, can disappear even as you are reading it — for love, Hardy seems be saying, is a lottery in which the tickets don't necessarily retain their significance. They can suddenly become 'blank'. Unlike the worldly-wise anti-romantic advice in the Peacock, Hardy's psychologized sense of the lottery makes its workings not merely a matter of judgement but also change produced by time, or circumstance, or failures of sensibility, understanding, or even fate. It is such a loss of meaning that he has tried, in the penultimate verse, desperately to avoid: 'I covered my eyes / As to cover the thought, / And unrecognize / What the morn had taught.' But the verb 'unrecognize', a Hardyism, indicates how hopeless the attempt is: the verb does not exist because the concept is alien to us, or vice versa. Once you have thought something, you can forget it, try to ignore it, or put it out of your mind, but you can't unthink it. Hardy invents the word to indicate an effort that will prove vain. Just as he won't be able to 'unrecognize' his 'insight that would not die', so it seems all the more likely that 'the prize I drew / Is a blank to me!'

The woman whose words and features are shadowed in the poem (they are hardly described) could well have some reason for feeling upset. She had been 'the one believed-in thing', but has come to seem

'but one / Of the common crowd' and 'a sample / Of earth's poor average kind'. Yet the poem concentrates on the man's predicament, and reveals a source of his problem in that she may have been asked to bear too much meaning for him — being, as it says, 'the one believed-in thing'. 'At Waking' emphasizes that the anguish is produced by a change in perceived value not in that of some supposed essential quality: it states that 'I seemed to behold'. Removing her words 'written awry', it insists on his 'insight'. The poem notes that 'She seemed but a sample' and reiterates verbs of sight: 'behold', 'vanished', 'showed', 'seen'. The speaker says that 'I covered my eyes' and addresses, as if in desperation, the 'vision appalling'. This insistent subjectivizing, making the problem the speaker's alone, is, as I say, effected by removing the woman's clumsy writing — something that might be judged by independent standards and would amount to a value outside that of the speaker's feelings for his love. It has the advantage too of removing a snobbish calligraphic perfectionism from the speaker's repertoire of reasons for falling out of love.

Earlier literary usages of the word 'blank' would tend to reinforce the perceptual emphasis in 'At Waking'. Hardy's poem was likely composed upon contextual associations of the word. In 'Dejection: An Ode' Coleridge is suffering the frustration of his powers in various forms and gazes at the sky 'with how blank an eye!'[3] Wordsworth took up the note when, responding in his 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality', he praised:

> Blank misgivings of a Creature
> Moving about in worlds not realized,
> High instincts, before which our mortal Nature
> Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprized![4]

When shaping his own early morning vision of lost meaning in part seven of *In Memoriam*, Tennyson collocates the word 'blank' with a 'guilty thing'. Such a combined association was all but effaced in the revision of Coleridge's Ode from its source in 'A Letter to ____', just as Hardy was all but to efface it in 'At Waking':

> And like a guilty thing I creep
> At earliest morning to the door.
>
> He is not here; but far away
>   The noise of life begins again,
>   And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
> On the bald street breaks the blank day.[5]

The Biblical allusion and the divergence from the Gospel phrase 'He is not here: but is risen' (*Luke* 24. 6) in the Tennyson poem indicates how the loss of meaning I'm exploring can be associated with the altering nature of Christian belief over the Century. Hardy recalls *In Memoriam* part seven's final line in 'After a Romantic Day' when he writes that 'the blank lack of any charm / Of landscape did no harm. / The bald steep cutting, rigid, rough, / And moon-lit, was enough / For poetry of place' (641). Just as the 'blank' in Coleridge likely derives from *King Lear* ('the true blank of thine eye'), so 'guilty thing' is drawn from *Hamlet*, where the ghost 'started like a guilty thing'.[6]

Milton's hymn to light from *Paradise Lost* also contributes to this horrid sense of meaning gone:

> But cloud in stead, and ever-during dark
> Surrounds me, from the chearful waies of men
> Cut off, and for the Book of knowledg fair
> Presented with a Universal blanc [7]

Shelley's 'Epipsychidion' employs the word to effect the inspiring contrast of a beautiful woman and a dull surrounding atmosphere:

> The glory of her being, issuing thence,
> Stains the dead, blank, cold air with a warm shade
> Of unentangled admixture, made
> By Love, of light and motion [8]

Hardy adopted a phrase from the same poem, one which appears some forty lines after this passage, for an early working title to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: 'too late / Belovèd'.[9] *The Well-Beloved*, too, has a plot whose indebtedness to Shelley's ideas are clear from the epigraph borrowed from 'The Revolt of Islam', and various allusions to 'Epipsychidion'.[10] Hardy's poem 'At Waking' draws on these various literary uses of 'blank', as well as associations with a 'guilty thing' at dawn from *Hamlet* and Tennyson's lyric. These combinations of verbal echo contribute a psychological and perceptual dismay to the poem's reading of a face and a letter on a dull seaside morning.

However, a further source for 'blank' points towards the woman in 'At Waking'. In *Twelfth Night* Viola, disguised as Cesario and in intimate conversation with Orsino, tells of an 'imaginary' sister — herself:

> My father had a daughter lov'd a man,

>   As it might be, perhaps, were I a woman,
>   I should your lordship.
> *Duke*.   And what's her history?
> *Viola*.   A blank, my lord.[11]

This equally possible allusion prompts thoughts about the reciprocal hurt in such moments when women are obliged to sit 'like Patience on a monument, / Smiling at grief.'[12] It is appalling to have your charms vanish in a loved one's eyes 'Like the gilt of a cloud', and it's hardly far-fetched to hear an echo of 'guilty thing' in 'gilt of a cloud'. It's similarly and equally horrible to experience the loss of meaning in another person taking place before your very eyes, in your own mind, and in the presence of your body.

'At Waking' was first collected in *Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses* (1909). Beneath the poem is a reference to experiences, or perhaps to an occasion of initial poetic composition, from forty years before: '*Weymouth, 1869*'. Critics and biographers have attempted to associate 'At Waking' with what Philip Larkin has called 'a real girl in a real place': [13]

>   Because of the occurrence of 'prize' both here and in the one poem
>   ('Thoughts of Phena') which can confidently be associated with
>   Tryphena Sparks, 'At Waking' has been read as in some sense docu-
>   menting the breakdown of that relationship. But the word is
>   common enough in Hardy's work and the poem probably refers —
>   as both 'Her Initials', also 1869, and the slightly later 'The Wind's
>   Prophecy', appear to do — to the final renunciation of a vainly cher-
>   ished loyalty to Jane Nichols.[14]

Yet, since we're speculating, to add to the inconclusive evidence of the word 'prize' there's also the first line's reference to writing in 'Thoughts of Phena': 'Not a line of her writing have I' (62). As already noted, 'At Waking' contains all-but-suppressed references to a woman's writing. In 'Thoughts of Phena', Hardy also emphasizes that his image of the dead woman has been refined by time not least because he has no relics of Tryphena:

>   Thus I do but the phantom retain
>   Of the maiden of yore
>   As my relic; yet haply the best of her — fined in my brain
>   It may be the more
>   That no line of her writing have I

Hardy perpetually underlines the perceptual relationship between the man and the woman, printed through with psychological complexity. He was ready to weigh the damage to both sexes consequent upon the fluctuations of such perceiving. In a notebook entry for May 1870, the poet wrote just before his thirtieth birthday that 'A sweet face is a page of sadness to a man over thirty — the raw material of a corpse.'[15] Three of the blanks that shape the associations of 'At Waking' are already in place here. Perhaps the poem also contains a vision of professional self-doubt in a writer's fear that his page will lose its meaning, that the blank prize on the lottery ticket, the words 'written awry', will be his own work.

2

The word 'blank' appears in the penultimate paragraph of the chapter describing Tess Durbyfield's 'seduction or rape'[16]:

>   Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as
>   gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have
>   been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why
>   so often   the coarse appropriates the finer thus, the wrong man the
>   woman, the wrong woman the man, many thousand years of analyti-
>   cal philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order.   (77)[17]

The account of Tess's sexual encounter with Alec is evasive to a fault, and necessarily so. Hardy reverts to conventional imagery to indicate a judgment about what has befallen his heroine. The use of 'blank' with the phrase 'traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive' points once again to the besmirching of white paper with ink, as well as the sexual violation that has just taken place. There is thus an uneasy alignment of the author, who has been striving to inscribe on his white pages 'A Pure Woman, Faithfully presented', with Alec d'Urberville — the character who has been writing Tess's history into her own body by tracing his 'coarse pattern' into the 'feminine tissue' which is 'Practically blank as snow'.

The epigraph to *Tess* is from Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*: '... Poor wounded name, my bosom as a bed / Shall lodge thee'. These lines are spoken in Act 1 by Julia about Proteus, one of the two gentlemen, who all-but rapes Silvia in a forest in Act 5:

> *Pro.*   Nay, if the gentle spirit of moving words
>   Can no way change you to a milder form,

I'll woo you like a soldier, at arm's end,
And love you 'gainst the nature of love: force ye.
Sil. O heaven! [18]

It is only the fortunate intervention of the other gentleman, Valentine, which saves her from this fate. Hardy's novel has its two gentlemen too; but it may be that the author imagined himself as the one doing the intervening, notably on his book's title page. Yet, as already suggested, the detail of his novel shows him necessarily compromised on all sides. In *Tess* Hardy is obliged to keep away from describing in detail the course of his heroine's violation, from making it clear exactly what has happened. The question about whether it is a 'rape or seduction' won't issue in a convenient answer because the equivocation between these possibilities, and their uncertainty, is required for what is subsequently to happen.[19] Whatever the constraints imposed by his editors' readership expectations, Hardy's reticence, the narrative lacuna, is essential for the workings of his plot. It is equally necessary that Tess should not be, in some unequivocal way, entirely and simply innocent — even if she is a pure woman. Angel has to have something to recoil from; and, though in error, he mustn't be absurdly so. If he were, Hardy's criticism of the young man's beliefs would have no bite, and his 'too late' change of heart would not actually be one. This necessary equivocation is established in the novel's ambiguous subtitle. Those words can mean that Tess is an unsullied and sincere woman, or that she is nothing but a woman in all the vicissitudes of her history.

Adrian Poole has noted ways in which Hardy's attribution of Shakespeare allusions to Alec — including one to the 'Patience on a monument' passage from *Twelfth Night* — works to align his literary readers with the seducer. He reports the scene in which Alec shows the still innocent Tess how to whistle: 'He suited the action to the word, and whistled a line of 'Take O take those lips away.' But the allusion was lost upon Tess' (63). While it is quite true, as Poole notes, that 'This is awkward for readers on whom Alec's allusions are not lost, in so far as it makes us complicit with him'[20], it is also plain that Hardy conspires in the literary nudge and wink. He is complicit with Alec as well. Yet equally he lets on to us that Tess doesn't know her Shakespeare, drawing readers to the woman's side of the partial exchange at the very same moment. Poole points out that 'the same is true, more painfully so, when it comes to Tess's rupture with Angel after the wedding.' Angel's echoing words from *Hamlet* and *Lear* 'are between the two of them just so

many lost allusions.'[21] As Poole's pun suggests, and as in the poem 'At Waking', it is characteristic of Hardy to compound the loss of meaning for Angel with a lack of literary education, an absence of perceived meaning, in Tess. This also makes her 'innocent' in at least two senses of the word.

In 'Pure Tess: Hardy on Knowing a Woman', Kathleen Blake begins by referring to Hardy's subtitle, observing that 'the reader knows Hardy's heroine as Tess of the d'Urbervilles and as 'A Pure Woman,' in other words, as individual and as pure abstraction.'[22] Yet the 'individual' is already three-parts idea, since her name is Tess Durbyfield, and, I would like to suggest, Hardy's character is entirely made up in the abstraction of his writing. She is no more nor less than Hardy's words. Though the author sides with Tess, as it were, on his title page, he also draws attention, implicitly, to the links between sexual ethics and writing when he calls her 'Pure' and describes his words as presenting her 'Faithfully'. Hardy in his relations with his heroine is not, readers are to assume, like his main male characters who are differently unfaithful to her at different times. Yet, as I have already indicated, the words in the novel tell a more complex story. The writer is involved in the male activities of helping to produce Tess's history by relating to a figure who is a composite of a distinct person and a creation of their own.

Just as he had written that 'A sweet face is a page of sadness', Hardy frequently returns to describing Tess as if she were a text. He claims, for example, to identify 'the charm which is acquired by woman when she becomes part and parcel of outdoor nature', adding that 'a field-woman ... has somehow lost her own margin' (93). This literary characterization he later attributes to Angel Clare. Praising Tess's qualities to his parents, the vicar's son says that 'she's brim-full of poetry — actualized poetry, if I may use the expression. She *lives* what paper poets only write ...' (166). A little later, Angel presses Tess to marry him, and, when she's unable to speak, he is driven to reading her face:

[']I am in no hurry, Tess, but I want to know — to hear from your own warm lips — that you will some day be mine — any time you may choose; but some day?'
She could only shake her head and look away from him.
Clare regarded her attentively, conned the characters of her face as if they had been hieroglyphics. The denial seemed real.   (176)

Succumbing to his appeals and marrying him, it is as if Tess has received Angel's imprint, imagining herself as he has described her:

'She was a sort of celestial person, who owed her being to poetry; one of those classical divinities Clare was accustomed to talk to her about when they took their walks together.' (211) The novel may close by inviting readers to imagine that 'the President of the Immortals ... had ended his sport with Tess' (384), but they may prefer to think that it is Hardy who has finished playing with conceptions of his heroine. As Kathleen Blake asked, since 'the novel incurs a danger comparable to the one it exposes' and since 'many critics complain about Angel', 'should we also be complaining about the creator?'[23]

Perhaps a first thing to consider is whether, or in what terms, critics should complain about Angel Clare. There is, after all, something absurd about criticizing a character in a novel as if he had a mind of his own. He too, like Tess, is entirely a figure of Hardy's words. There is danger in Angel's idealizing of Tess. Yet she takes part in it and, even when hinting that he may be disappointed to learn her true history, reinforces the idealization — her purity — by contrasting it with an idea of her still implicit degradation by Alec: ''O my love, my love, why do I love you so!' she whispered there alone; 'for she you love is not my real self, but one in my image; the one I might have been.'' (212) The dramatic contrast here implied between imagined purity and a real self is itself a part of the structure that helps destroy Tess. Her 'purity' is then part of what traps her, and Hardy collaborates in this too. This is a further reason why his subtitle has to be ambiguous.

With the words 'she you love is not my real self', Tess is reflecting back to Angel the dualistic pattern which he himself seems to live by. Certainly, just before Tess narrates her relations with Alec, Angel calls himself 'a believer in good morals'. He describes his ethics in terms of contrasts between what he loves and hates: 'I admired spotlessness, even though I could lay no claim to it, and hated impurity, as I hope I do now.' (221) This comes just a page or so before the End of Phase the Fourth, and the dramatic irony which Hardy shapes is agonizing when Angel patronizes Tess, inviting her to begin her confession: ''Now then for it, wicked little one.'' (221) What I find most unendurable is not Tess's or Angel's wickedness, but Hardy's shaping hand.

This is present too in his describing how the objects in the room seem to alter under Angel's regard during Tess's revelation. Readers are invited to imagine them as if in Angel's eyes as his ears receive Tess's words, words which are only reported as having been spoken. Hardy does not give her confession in direct speech. What in the poem 'The Walk' he calls 'that underlying sense / Of the look of a room' (340) appears to change before a reader's imagining eyes:

> But the complexion even of external things seemed to suffer transmutation as her announcement progressed. The fire in the grate looked impish, demoniacally funny, as if it did not care in the least about her strait. The fender grinned idly, as if it, too, did not care. The light from the water-bottle was merely engaged in a chromatic problem. All material objects around announced their irresponsibility with terrible iteration. And yet nothing had changed since the moments when he had been kissing her; or rather nothing in the substance of things. But the essence of things had changed.   (225)

Powerfully persuasive, this paragraph performs various sleights of hand. It begins by emphasizing a process of perception: 'things seemed', 'the grate looked'. Then two 'as if' phrases which would serve to imply that the fender and the water-bottle did care, if either the attribution of feeling or its denial were not equally anthropomorphizing tendencies. And then, as if the next sentences too were governed by an 'as if', Hardy writes declaratively that 'the water-bottle was merely engaged' and 'objects around announced'. The author then aligns these perceptions with his male character's image of his heroine by reminding us of 'the moments when he had kissed her'. This makes the description of the room's altering its appearance into a metaphor for Tess's altering hers. The paragraph concludes by stating that 'the substance of things' had not changed, but that 'the essence of things' had.

This is debatable, and more so if the objects in the room are read as standing for Tess's substance and essence — as the reference to his 'kissing her' suggests. It is at least arguable that not the 'essence' but merely the appearance of things has changed. Nothing essential to the water-bottle, for instance, has altered, only Angel's view of it. The 'essence of things' can only mean Angel's idea of them, not anything intrinsic to these objects. Yet with Tess 'the substance of things' has changed: a woman who has been raped or seduced, and who has then had a relationship with the man involved and born his child is physically different (thanks to the release of hormones in pregnancy, for example) from a virgin. It is important to recognize that Angel does have a point:

> 'I repeat, the woman I have been loving is not you.'
> 'But who?'
> 'Another woman in your shape.'
> She perceived in his words the realization of her own apprehensive foreboding in former times. He looked upon her as a species of impostor; a guilty woman in the guise of an innocent one. Terror was upon her white face as she saw it; her cheek was flaccid, and

her mouth   had almost the aspect of a little round hole. The horrible
sense of his view of her so deadened her that she staggered; and he
stepped forward, thinking she was going to fall.   (226-7)

Tess has not lost meaning for us, but she legitimately has for Clare. Her
substance has not changed because we have known for some time what
has happened to her; but Angel has not, and in this sense her words do
not change her essence, but her substance, for him. Tess had been 'a
species of impostor', but not 'a guilty woman in the guise of an innocent
one', rather a sexually experienced mother in the guise of a virgin.
Angel has two immediate responses that critics could complain about.
First, he is more forgiving, it seems, of his own lapse from purity than
he is of Tess's, and so has different sexual standards for men and
women. Secondly, Tess's physical state, whether virgin or mother,
makes a moral difference to him: he cannot accept her as an experienced
woman and a mother. It is not blameworthy that he feels she is different,
for this is the beginning of his awakening to her real history.

Hardy, though, frames the awakening in such a way as to delay the
acceptance of Tess's substance, of his awakened real view of her, by
having Angel remain in the realm of appearances, appearances which
are mistaken for essences. Angel's reaction to Tess's confession is to
feel something like a physical revulsion: 'She did sit down, without
knowing where she was, that strained look still upon her face, and her
eyes such as to make his flesh creep.' (227) Hardy, in this devastating
scene, is bringing together three distinguishable issues and combining
them into a complexly entangled series of responses on Tess's and
Angel's part. First, as I have suggested, he questions a double standard
in male and female sexual morality whereby it appears more acceptable
for men to 'sow their wild oats' than for women to lose their virginity.
Secondly, he addresses the relationship between a man's attraction to a
woman and his knowledge of her history, by showing how this can be
disturbed by adherance to over-rigid moral categories. The ethical mean-
ing of Tess's history is distinguishable from Angel's moralistic response,
and both are separable from the facts of what she has endured in her life.
Angel, too late it turns out, comes to accept and understand where he
had at first merely reacted. The point I want to emphasize, though, is
that he has reason for reacting. The problem is that though Angel does
have some reason to react, in the fact of Tess's difference, Hardy com-
pounds this reason with his theme of idealization.

This is Hardy's third ingredient. Angel has been described as tem-
peramentally inclined to seek out essences to love, rather than flawed
human bodies:

> Though not cold-natured, he was rather bright than hot; less
> Byronic that Shelleyan. He could love desperately, but with a love
> more especially inclined to the imaginative and ethereal; it was a
> fastidious emotion which could jealously guard the loved one
> against his very self. This amazed and enraptured Tess, whose slight
> experiences had been so infelicitous till now; and in her reaction
> from indignation against the male sex she swerved to excess of hon-
> our for Clare.   (193)

This is beautifully poised by Hardy, indicating that because Tess has
been physically used by Alec, she is peculiarly susceptible to what
appears a disembodied passion for her, a passion by which Angel him-
self thwarts his own sexuality so as to protect and preserve a pure image
of the woman. It is hardly surprising that Tess's face and eyes, after she
has revealed her true history to Angel seemed 'such as to make his flesh
creep.' So, if the novel is read as a study of male sexuality, Alec's fate
dramatizes the punishment of an under-socialized desire, while Angel's
represents a self-punishment inflicted by means of desire's etherealiza-
tion. Tess's role in the novel is to occasion both punishments, and, with
her own cruel fate, to heap further incrimination upon the already mani-
fold sins of the two gentlemen.

3

Again Katherine Blake asked: 'should we also be complaining about the
creator?' Well, frankly, I'm more inclined to praise him — because
Hardy is examining and criticizing his own guilty involvement with an
idealizing tendency that 'guards the loved one against his very self.'
That's a recipe for loneliness and unhappiness, one which Hardy
explored in the next novel he began, his last to be published, *The Well-
Beloved.* Hardy indicates once more a link between writing and a
dynamics and ethics of love in his epigraph to 'Part First: A Young Man
of Twenty' the second verse of which reads:

> Her that dares be
> What these lines wish to see:
> I seek no further, it is She.   (8)[24]

Richard Crashaw's thirty-eighth verse in 'Wishes to His (Supposed) Mistress' expects the woman to risk conforming to what his literary form proposes. Similarly, Jocelyn Pierston, the sculptor protagonist of Hardy's novel, is described as being possessed by a sexual ideal which flits skittishly from person to person, residing most consistently in three generations of the Caro family. *The Well-Beloved* is valuable because it concentrates whole-heartedly upon this seemingly willful and unmotivated changeability in the love object, and it examines once again the loss of meaning summed up in the final stanza to a poem of the same name:

> Thereat she vanished by the lane
>   Adjoining Kingsbere town,
> Near where, men say, once stood the Fane
>   To Venus, on the Down.
>
> — When I arrived and met my bride
>   Her look was pinched and thin,
> As if her soul had shrunk and died,
>   And left a waste within.   (134-5)

The plot of this ballad resembles Angel's awakening in *Tess* because it too concerns a bridegroom meeting his bride. The Well-Beloved is a spirit love who seems to have put a spell on the bridegroom so that when he comes to the real girl in the real place she has been stripped, somehow, of her charm. The poem's conclusion also recalls 'At Waking', except that the fairy-tale setting gives distance and a mysterious pagan arbitrariness to the poem's close.

Though the process of an ideal flitting from body to body is what largely provides the plot, and extensively determines the sculptor's experiences, Hardy allows emotional emphasis to fall, I believe, not on the inspiration that the ideal's arrival in some body implies, but the devastation that its departure effects. Discussing his predicament with his friend Somers, a painter, Pierston asks if he should marry Maria Bencomb, the most recent candidate for the role of well-beloved — who has suddenly supplanted Avice Caro the first:

> 'Certainly not,' said Somers. 'Though, if anybody, little Avice. But not even her. You are like other men, only rather worse. Essentially, all men are fickle, like you; but not with such perceptiveness.'
> 'Surely fickle is not the word? Fickleness means getting weary of a thing while the thing remains the same. But I have always been

faithful to the elusive creature whom I have never been able to get a firm hold of, unless I have done so now. And let me tell you that her flitting from each to each individual has been anything but a pleasure for me — certainly not a wanton game of my instigation. To see a creature who has hitherto been perfect, divine, lose under your very gaze the divinity which has informed her, grow commonplace, turn from flame to ashes, from a radiant vitality to a relic, is anything but a pleasure for any man, and has been nothing less than a racking spectacle to my sight. Each mournful emptied shape stands ever after like the nest of some beautiful bird from which the inhabitant has departed and left it to fill with snow. I have been absolutely miserable when I have looked in a face for her I used to see there, and could see her there no more.'   (40)

Once again, in the simile of the nest filling with snow, Hardy resorts to an image of whiteness to figure this loss of meaning. The loss is also connected with a recognition of imperfection, as Angel's was, and as with the 'words she had written awry' of the 'At Waking' manuscript. Pierston suffers an awful failure of object constancy at the close of the novel's first part: 'For months he would find her on the stage of a theatre: then she would flit away, leaving the poor, empty carcase that had lodged her to mumm on as best it could without her — a sorry lay figure to his eyes, heaped with imperfections and sullied with commonplace.' (51)

On 28 October 1891, Hardy wrote in a diary:

> It is the incompleteness that is loved, when love is sterling and true. This is what differentiates the real one from the imaginary, the practicable from the impossible, the love who returns the kiss from the Vision that melts away. A man sees the Diana or the Venus in his Beloved, but what he loves is the difference.[25]

Pierston, a sculptor of Dianas and Venuses, is at first unable to make such a leap from the Vision to the incomplete, and Hardy gives Pierston's life an absurdly unfortunate cast, bringing home thus the torture and unhappiness to both artist and temporary loved one. The first Avice Caro had suffered like Viola's 'Patience on a monument / Smiling at grief' when Pierston abandoned her, partly because she had sent him a letter: 'Jocelyn, having read the letter, was surprised at the naïveté it showed' (22), Hardy writes. When her daughter realizes that it was the sculptor who had caused her mother to suffer, she exclaims: 'Then I can *never, never* like you again!' (128) This is his punishment, and it prompts in the artist a desire to make amends, though he is sixty-one years old. Yet even here there's a misreading at the heart of relationship:

'Mrs. Pierston, in fearing to be frank, lest she might seem to be angling for his fortune, did not fully divine his cheerful readiness to offer it, if by so doing he could make amends for his infidelity to her family forty years back in the past.' (159) As if to underline the point, Hardy makes sure we realize that there is more to misread now: 'there was history in his face — distinct chapters of it; his brow was not that blank page it once had been.' (159-60)

Hardy, similarly, characterizes Pierston's attraction to women as altering through his life. The sculptor becomes less fastidious about cultural refinement as he reaches forty, making this comparison between the first two Avices thus:

> Judgment, hookwinked as it was, told him that she was colder in nature, commoner in character, than that well-read, bright little woman Avice the First. But twenty years make a difference in ideals, and the added demands of middle-age in physical form are more than balanced by its concessions as to spiritual content.   (99)

Twenty years later, by the time Pierston is sixty, he has reached the state of being able to love incompleteness described in Hardy's diary entry, a passage written when Hardy was himself fifty-one:

> Once the individual had been nothing more to him than the temporary abiding-place of the typical or ideal; now his heart showed its bent to be a growing fidelity to the specimen, with all her pathetic flaws of detail; which flaws, so far from sending him further, increased his tenderness.   (143)

This is, doubtless, a preferable state — even if reached at the cost to Pierston of losing his desire to create works of art.

In a letter to Swinburne, Hardy described his novel as 'my fantastic little tale' and defended his work when writing to a journal by noting: 'There is, of course, underlying the fantasy followed by the visionary artist the truth that all men are pursuing a shadow, the Unattainable, and I venture to hope that this may redeem the tragi-comedy from the charge of frivolity'.[26] As with many of Hardy's general remarks about life, readers may add a pinch of salt to taste. I don't myself believe that 'all men are pursuing a shadow, the Unattainable'. However, it does seem a familiar enough experience, for both men and women, to find the particular incompletenesses of a person either loveable or the source of profound irritation and disturbance, while many have experienced the draining away, whether sudden or more slowly, of love. They have

known those blank misgivings when a seemingly permanent relationship is experienced as a sudden loss of meaning.

Katherine Blake concludes by noting that 'It is easy to say that Angel wrongs Tess by perceiving her not just as herself but as an essence and type of womanhood, harder to face the ultimate force of the fact that he also loves her because of it. So does Hardy.'[27] I have been arguing on the assumption that this is indeed true — but that the novel, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, is a guilty exploration of this fact, while *The Well-Beloved* is an attempted tragi-comic exorcism of a similar essentializing tendency in a creative artist. Hardy's honesty was to focus on occasions of meaning loss and give highly plausible literary shapes to such experiences, while, simultaneously, pointing readers in the direction of a love for the particular. This would mean accepting individuals as the specific consequences of their sometimes shocking histories. So I'm drawn to the manuscript text of 'At Waking' with its reference to the flaws in a woman's writing, and believe the passages describing Angel Clare's responses to Tess's revelation of her 'rape or seduction' to be among Hardy's most challenging scenes. He is asking that we accept the violated among us for what they truly are.

Notes

[1] Citations of poems by Thomas Hardy are from *The Variorum Edition of the Collected Poems*, ed. J. Gibson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), to which page nos. in parentheses refer.

[2] Thomas Love Peacock, *Nightmare Abbey / Crotchet Castle* ed. R. Wright (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 42.

[3] Coleridge, 'Dejection: an Ode', *The Complete Poems* ed. W. Keach (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), 308.

[4] Wordsworth, 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality', *The Poems*, 2 vols., ed. J. O. Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), i. 528.

[5] Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson*, 3 vols. ed. C. Ricks (London: Longmans, 1987), ii. 326.

[6] *Lear* I.i.158 and *Hamlet* I.i.153.

[7] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, III, ll. 45-8. This opening section of Book III also contains the word 'darkling': 'Then feed on thoughts, that voluntarie move / Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful Bird / Sings darkling' (ll. 37-40). The word was taken up by Keats for 'Darkling I listen' in 'Ode to a Nightingale', *The Complete Poems* ed. J. Barnard (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), 347 and Arnold for 'on a darkling plain' in 'Dover Beach', *Poetical Works* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 227. It eventually found a multiply-allusive place in the title to 'The Darkling

Thrush'.

[8] Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Epipsychidion', *Poetical Works* ed. T. Hutchinson (1905), rev. ed. G. M. Matthews (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 414, ll. 91-4.

[9] Ibid., ll. 131-2.

[10] See Thomas Hardy, *The Well-Beloved: The Sketch of Temperament* ed. T. Hetherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 17, 107.

[11] *Twelfth Night*, II.iv.106-10.

[12] Ibid., ll. 114-5.

[13] Philip Larkin, 'Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph Album', *Collected Poems* ed. A. Thwaite (London / Hessle: Faber and Faber / Marvell Press, 1988), 71.

[14] Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1982), 120. See also the footnote on this page.

[15] Thomas Hardy, *Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, ed. E. Hardy (London: Macmillan,1955), 29.

[16] Millgate, *Thomas Hardy*, 307; and long footnote about this issue.

[17] Citations are from Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* ed. J. Grindle and S. Gatrell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[18] *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I. ii. 115-6 (for the novel's epigraph) and V.iv. 55-60.

[19] Adrian Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), 150.

[20] Hardy called it a 'seduction' in his letter of 29 Oct 1891 to Thomas MacQuoid: 'Clare's character suffers owing to a mock marriage having been substituted for the seduction pure & simple of the original MS. —' in *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, 7 vols., ed. R. L. Purdy and M. Millgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1978-88), i, 246. However, the novel's description on p. 77 suggests an enforced sexual act, and Hardy's words 'pure & simple' in the letter, if taken in the light of his title page use of the word 'pure' are anything but elucidatory.

[21] Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians*, 150.

[22] Kathleen Blake, 'Pure Tess: Hardy on Knowing a Woman' in Harold Bloom (ed.), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 87.

[23] Ibid., 96.

[24] Citations are from Thomas Hardy, *The Well-Beloved: The Sketch of Temperament* ed. T. Hetherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[25] Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891* (London: Macmillan, 1928), 314.

[26] Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892-1928* (London: Macmillan, 1930), 60, and 59-60.

[27] Blake, 'Pure Tess', 102.

Timelessness in Anglea Carter's
The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman

Satoshi Masamune

In spite of the many references to time that occur in the novels of Angela Carter, few studies have focused on the problems of time in her work.[1] Criticism, thus far, has tended to concentrate on the topics of sex or gender, leaving the treatment of time surprisingly unexamined. This study focuses on Carter's novel, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) (henceforth abbreviated as *IDM*), a text that, according to Cornel Bonca, pre-dates Carter's investigation into the problem of sex.[2] Bonca has noted a thematic break between *IDM* and the novel that follows, *The Passion of New Eve* (1977). If Bonca's claim is correct, *IDM* could offer a useful springboard for a critical study of time in Carter's novels.

In the 1960s Carter's novels explored the issue of the past. However, the focus here was not on the problem of history, a topic that, given the decline of Britain as a world power, had been a concern of several British novelists after World War II.[3] These novels focused, instead, on the passage of time and the transformation of present events into past events, resulting in a sense of loss on the part of the protagonists.[4] For instance, in *Shadow Dance* (1966), the awareness that an event has moved into the past is described vividly in a scene in which the two main characters break into an empty house to search for a collection of antiques; the characters are impressed by the contrast between the owners, who have long gone, and their possessions, which remain on the scene. In the 1970s, Carter's style shifted; she moved from realism into science fiction and allegory.[5] With this change in style, the focus on the problem of time also changed; a concern with the functional aspect of time passing emerges alongside a concern with the negative effects that are created as time slips away. Carter's text shows how the lapse of

time can sweep away unpleasant events; however, it also shows that agreeable events can suffer the same fate, against the will of the protagonists. In each case, the passage of time is closely connected with the fixing of an event by means of description; this fixing of a moment and the erosion that is the effect of time are in constant tension. One example of this tension being played out can be seen in *Nights at the Circus* (1984), Carter's only novel of the 1980s. At the beginning of this novel, a newsman interviews a female circus star. He listens to her talking about her life through the night. During the course of the interview, he hears Big Ben tolling three times. This tolling of the time assumes symbolic significance in that it reminds the journalist that the woman's fascinating story, which has been veiling the passage of time thus far, is actually locked in the past, though appearing in the present.[6] Thus, by marking both the fixing and the passage of time, Carter's text elaborates the dynamic aspect of time.[7]

Still more importantly, this elaboration includes, as its objective, a postmodern exploration of a temporal problem, that is, the act of narration. Generally, when one narrates an event, there are two temporal points involved: the point in time at which each event in the narrative actually happened, and the point in time at which the act of narration is fixed. However, when an event is being narrated, the latter aspect tends to become invisible, owing to the fact that it is difficult to be simultaneously conscious of these two different points in time. The result is that the entire narrative seems to exist in a timeless zone,[8] exempt from the signs of the actual pauses that the narrator may well make during the act of narrating, with the result that the narrative emerges as a seamless whole. It is to be expected that postmodern consciousness, with its focus on the medium of transmitting messages rather than the messages themselves, should be attentive to this timeless character of narrative as it emerges in the act of narration. Interestingly, as if to bring the timeless character of narrative to the fore, some of the major British novels of the 1970s and 1980s take the form of a protagonist writing or telling his or her autobiography. In such novels, the autobiography is being completed as it is being narrated, and the time that it took for the narration to be finished is not taken into consideration; no clues relating to that information are left in the novel. This erasure of the duration of narrational time is indirectly problematized by those parts that come before and/or after the main frame of the autobiography. *IDM* is a novel that adopts this pattern. It is a novel in which the protagonist, a national hero because of his part in a war, writes his autobiography fifty years after the war has ended. The novel starts with the hero explaining his current status and the reason why he is writing his autobiography; it ends soon after he finishes writing the autobiography, since he describes how he feels with the completed work before him. Consequently, although information regarding the historical time that his autobiography spans in the narrative is available, how much time the narration itself took cannot be known.

Perhaps, one simple way to determine this narrational information would be to relate each point of the narrative closely to the point of the narrational act; however, this examination of correspondence would obviously make the work look much too complicated. In this respect, Carter may be unique among postmodern novelists. Instead of simply indicating that such timelessness is a clear sign of a narrative that only partially represents reality, *IDM* seems to suggest that our perception of reality is timeless by nature, and that our regular sense of the passage of time, created fundamentally by the use of tense and considered to occur not only when an event is experienced but also when it is narrated, could be an illusion. Indeed, the very adoption of a pseudo science fiction form for *IDM* seems to support this hypothesis, in that such a genre would certainly function to deform reality, as it is normally perceived.

In this connection, *IDM* seems focused on the problem of our perception of reality, as it is related to desire. Her focus on the timeless nature of our reality emerges by denying the time normally assumed to be required for any desire to be formed. In other words, she denies the process by which a subject's desire emerges as a recognizable, material form. In this connection, the arguments of two major postmodern thinkers could be introduced here: Jacques Lacan's thesis that 'desire is desire of another' and René Girard's focus on 'the triangle of desire.' They both emphasize the imitative nature of desire; one desires what someone else desires. The possible elimination of time in this mechanism for the formation of desire seems to have informed aspects of Carter's *IDM*, in that by the time one has clarified the nature of one's desire, that desire is already activated. In other words, desire is not formed after the stipulation of what is desired; stipulation is always after the fact. Furthermore, one can never return to a point in time when one did not, in fact, feel a desire that one ends up actually having. Therefore, seen from this viewpoint, that which is stipulated as desire could be located in a timeless world.

Against this claim, the following counter-argument might be proposed: even if one's desire is stipulated after the fact, whether it is

fulfilled should entail the future; therefore, the whole postulation of a timeless world in relation to desire is faulty. In fact, this hypothetical position highlights another aspect of the nature of desire as it emerges in Carter's text; her text seems to emphasize that desire, in the process of being stipulated, will lose something of its original nature, and that such a stipulation will be, in effect, no different from a simple, related objective fact. Thus, as a number of specific examples in *IDM* illustrate, *IDM* mediates the idea that narrative attempts to grasp the original state of desire, attempts that might create a sense of future, are futile, and that if one depends on narrative to specify one's desire, timelessness must be a key feature of such a narrated world.

The aim of this study, therefore, is to demonstrate the timeless nature of narrative in *IDM* by focusing on the hero's desire. Initially, the after-the-fact nature of stipulating one's desire emerges in her text. Subsequently, there is a focus on the transformation of the original state of one's desire through the process of stipulating it; the loss incurred by this transformation contributes to the embodiment of timelessness in Carter's text. Additionally, in the course of this investigation, some modification to existing interpretations of the hero's motive for killing the enemy leader and his daughter will be offered, and further suggestions as to what the last sentence of the novel means will be made.

I. The Model of Time in the Capital and the Doctor's Plans for Dissolving this Model

The setting of *IDM* seems to be a country in South America. The protagonist and narrator is a man called Desiderio. Fifty years earlier, he became a national hero because he had successfully brought a war, known as the 'Reality War', to an end. It started as a result of a conflict between the Minister, who reigned like a monarch, and Doctor Hoffman, who had been at one time regarded as a great intellectual but who had suddenly dropped out of public life. Although historical descriptions of this conflict already exist, Desiderio begins to write about the journey he was ordered by the Minister to make during the war, a journey that has not been included in the official, documented account of the war. It appears that the different concepts of time supported by the two parties in the war represent, on the one hand, an easily recognizable temporal perception of reality and, on the other hand, another, less recognizable form of temporal recognition with

respect to reality, a form that may well be truer to how we actually recognize reality than the former mode. An examination of this conflict, as part of an investigation into what the Doctor is trying to do, follows.

At the beginning of the war, a messenger the Doctor has sent to the capital announces that the Doctor is in the process of sending out a variety of images; this announcement is made with the claim that the Doctor will release all that has been repressed with regard to people's desires. The energy produced by a number of couples engaging in sexual intercourse in the Doctor's laboratory is used to send out these images. Desiderio reports that he noticed a change in the nature of his day-to-day experiences, soon after the outbreak of the war; he notes that, 'Sugar tasted a little salty, sometimes. A door one had always seen to be blue modulated by scarcely perceptible stages until, suddenly, it was a green color' (15).[9] A feature of the changes he reports is that, despite the fact that only images have been sent out, it appears that these visual signals also modify the messages of senses other than sight. Shocked by a limitless number of strange events, people in the capital begin to panic as a result of their inability to distinguish what is real.

Previous studies of this novel have suggested that the point of conflict between the Minister and the Doctor may be expressed as the repression of desire versus its release, or order versus chaos.[10] The Doctor's attempt to release desire seems to be based on the assumption that the more quickly an individual's repressed desire is released, and its object achieved, the better it is for that person. It appears, therefore, that he tries to minimize or erase the time that it takes for the satisfaction of desire. The Doctor also seems to assume that time itself is oppressed by the model of time that operates in this country and, thus, he tries to set it free. Interestingly, the release of people's desires and the release of time are linked. To examine this connection, a brief look at the order of time operating in this country might be useful. The Minister emphasizes the significance of time to the Doctor's messenger by pointing to a large cathedral in the capital; this cathedral constitutes a good example of how a historical structure embodies the nature of time, as he sees it:

> Time, the slavish time you despise, had been free enough to work in equal partnership with the architect; the masons took thirty years to build the cathedral and, with every year that passed, the invisible moulding of time deepened the moving beauty of its soaring lines. Time was implicit in its fabric.   (34)

However, this vision of the nature of time as repetitious and accumulative obstructs a vision of the past that varies from person to person; in the Minister's monolithic concept of time nondescript individual histories are ignored. The lives that constitute history are limited to those who made a heroic contribution to the nation, a contribution like Desiderio's. Moreover, this concept of time includes a particular feature, a feature that is implied by the Minister's phrase 'with every year'; in this phrase the future of the country is presupposed as never failing to arrive after a certain amount of time has elapsed.[11] In this concept of time there is no room for contingency.

Evidently, the Doctor wants to dismantle this system of time. By way of his messenger, the Doctor tells the Minister and Desiderio that he has already made the capital 'a timeless place outside the world of reason' (36). Later, the Doctor announces to Desiderio, in person, that the 'dissolution of time' (234) is his aim; the Doctor believes that time is repressed under the name of the past. Desiderio describes the scene in the city soon after the war starts: 'Dead children came calling in nightgowns, rubbing the sleep and grave dust from their eyes. Not only the dead returned but also the lost living' (19). He goes on to say:

> Past time occupied the city for whole days together, sometimes, so that the streets of a hundred years before were superimposed on nowadays streets and I made my way to the Bureau only by memory, along never-before-trodden lanes that looked as indestructible as earth itself and yet would vanish, presumably, whenever someone in Dr Hoffman's entourage grew bored and pressed a switch.
>
> (21)

To Desiderio's eyes, not only do the things of the past that are unknown to him appear isolated, they also overlap with images associated with the present. From these examples, it seems clear that the Doctor, in sending his images, wants to make the status of the past equal to that of the present. As can occur in film, which is referred to several times in this novel, he tries to make what happened in another place and time appear here and now. Apparently, he believes that if he continues to emit images, he will eventually succeed in eliminating the distinction between the past and the present, and thus appease those who have had their past buried in darkness.[12]

What is behind this desire? Part of his reason for acting in this way seems to be private; this is clarified towards the end of the novel, when Desiderio reaches the Doctor's castle residence. He finds the Doctor there, caring for his dead wife as she lies upon a sofa; it turns out she has been chemically treated and her body has not decomposed. When their daughter returns home, the Doctor informs his beloved wife of her return in a whisper. Judging from this scene, it may be stated that the Doctor started this conflict because he attributed the cause of his wife's death to the order of time operating in this country, an order that will not allow a person to live forever.[13]

However, the Doctor's plans cannot be completed only by the release of the past; he also needs to release the future. As noted above, where a repetitious and accumulative time order prevails, the future comes to the present after a certain, calculable amount of time. By the time an expected future event becomes the present, a passage of time has occurred, a passage of time that people must experience, and that can only delay the fulfillment of their desire. However, in the situation created by the Doctor's transmission of images, people in the capital have no way of anticipating anything; the images enter an individual's mind directly, without mediation. If the images are those that people desire, a situation obtains in which the desire is instantaneously gratified and no future exists.[14]

Strictly speaking, though, there is some mediation and, thus, it cannot be said that images come directly to the minds of the people in the capital. First, there are a large number of slides that are used as samples of the images; on each slide various items are reflected, including the details of female genitalia and several isolated parts of the female body. Secondly, the Doctor has left his former advisor in charge of these slides, ordering him to wander all over the world with them. Thus, forms of mediation, with respect to the transmission of images by the Doctor, are, in fact, present.[15]

However, when the former advisor encounters a landslide, and the samples are lost, the possibility of mediation disappears. At this point, a transitional period, called Nebulous Time, begins. In this Nebulous Time zone, the Doctor's daughter, Albertina, with whom Desiderio travels, explains to him how desire embodies itself in this transitional period. She says: '[D]esires must take whatever form they please, for the time being' (169). According to this explanation, it seems that, in Nebulous Time, people have learned to see what they want to see, without any need of samples. Concerning this Nebulous Time, the Doctor talks about a cannibal community that Desiderio, together with a Count who is accompanying him in this time zone, has encountered. It emerges that, 'The Cannibal Chief was the triumphant creation of nebu-

lous time. He was brought into being only because of the Count's desire for self-destruction' (212). The masochistic Count has been killed by the Chief, according to the Count's wish. With the advent of this Nebulous Time, therefore, the Doctor's plans approach their successful fulfillment. People no longer need to suffer the experience of the passage of time that occurs before a certain expected future event is realized; nor do they need to worry about the thus far inevitable process of an event moving into the past because, now, whatever they hope for, can be instantaneously obtained.

This, then, constitutes a summary of the Doctor's schemes and how they develop in the text; his plans are clearly directed at the creation of a timeless world, opposed to the world regulated by the time system that prevails in the capital. Two questions, however, arise in relation to the Doctor's ideas. Apparently, the Doctor takes it for granted that the images he sends out are exactly what people in the capital want. It is true that, judging from the devastated state of the capital, these samples seem to have successfully set the people free from their repressed condition, but how could he be certain of the correspondence between the images and people's desires? This is the first question that the above summary of the text invites. Another issue, in relation to what happens in the Nebulous Time zone, arises: despite the fact that people have reached the stage at which they can immediately realize their desires, nothing is problematized with respect to their choice of desires; this process seems to have been deliberately omitted. In order to find solutions to these two problems, we will have to look at some examples of desire formation as represented in *IDM*. All we have available for reference, however, are the cases set down by Desiderio. Few concrete descriptions of the reactions of ordinary people during the war are provided.

II. Desiderio's Journey and the Passivity of Desire

The analysis of desire leads us, naturally, into ideas from the field of psychoanalysis. The discussion of desire in this study will be related to Jacques Lacan's theory in that Desiderio demonstrates Lacan's definition of desire. Lacan's theory of desire may be summarized as follows. At first, a child exists in a condition of complete union with the mother.[16] At this stage, it may be said that the child has not yet entered the world. In due course, however, the child, while looking at him/her-

self in a mirror, wants to know if the one seen in the mirror is him/herself. When the child receives the reply, 'Yes, 'it' is you.' (single quotation marks added are mine), and sees the glance of the responder, the child marks him/herself as in the world. Through this process, the child takes his/her place in the world but, at the same time, the state of union with the mother is lost forever. The child might 'demand' the meaning of 'it' but, owing to the limits of language, no explanation is possible.[17] Thus, this 'demand' is transformed into 'want', while the mother tries to satisfy the child physiologically. On the child's part, 'desire' for something prohibited is born in the gap opened between 'demand' and 'want.'[18] Importantly, Lacan's theory of desire is not peculiar to children. Even as adults, we will never know what 'it' means; we will simply refer to another signifier (Lacan's usage of 'signifier' is indicated here) and continue to remain unsatisfied.[19] It seems, then, that the desire that Desiderio begins to cherish is similar in nature to that described by Lacan's theory, as will be demonstrated in what follows.

Unlike others, who have been disturbed by the Doctor's images, Desiderio has not gone mad before he leaves the capital, under the Minister's orders, to assassinate the Doctor. This was partly because of his indifference to the world surrounding him, an indifference that has caused him to feel his existence as flimsy. As he acknowledges, 'I often felt I was half-breed ghost myself…' (19). Soon after the journey starts, this open-ended sense of self positions him in a no-man's land; even the sense of loyalty that he feels towards the society of which he is a part begins to feel vaporous.[20] Desiderio loses his sense of identity as he moves away from the capital, and it is at this point of separation that he feels the need to ask himself about something that corresponds to 'it' in Lacan's theory of desire.[21] Specifically, what spurs his search for the meaning of 'it' is something that he sees, accidentally, by the seashore before he reaches the town named S:

> It was late August and the shops offered pink rock, coloured postcards, candy floss, straw hats and all the appurtenances of the holiday maker but, though all the doors were open, I could see no shopkeepers within, behind the counters, and the entire place was quite empty of humanity.
> Along the promenade, striped umbrellas cast pools of shade over deserted tables at which no ice-cream eaters sat, though there were plenty of saucers smeared with residual traces and also glasses half full of pink, green and orange drinks in which the ice had not yet melted and the paper straws were still indented at the top from the

pressure of lips. The pale acres of sand were empty but for a few
waddling sea-birds and I noticed a corpse who lay where the sand
had left him, unattended but for a cloud of flies….It was as if the
entire population of the town had slipped off somewhere, called to
witness some event to which I alone had not received an invitation,
and would all be back at their posts in five minutes….   (42)

This scene gives Desiderio an impression of the normal flow of time
having been arrested; it also creates a presentiment that the people who
should have been there might come back in a few minutes. He feels the
future to be uncertain. Moreover, he can hardly have been left unaf-
fected by a dead body lying on the beach. What kind of effect would
the body have had on him? Lacan's analysis of a painting, *The
Ambassadors* by Hans Holbein, might lead us to an interpretation of the
function of the dead body. According to Lacan's analysis, a weather-
beaten skull in the picture, when looked at from a certain angle,
expresses 'our own nothingness.'[22] Looking at the skull, Lacan tells us,
we begin to desire an existence we have lost. Likewise, the dead body
on the beach seems to incite Desiderio to long for a lost existence, in
that after the experience of noticing the body on the beach his original
aim of looking for the Doctor gradually recedes, and a journey that has
no object or sense of specific purpose begins in its place.

    According to Lacan's scenario, the person whom Desiderio ought to
ask for the meaning of 'it' is his mother. At the beginning of the war,
while he is still in the capital, he sees a person who looks exactly like
his dead mother. He instantly judges that she cannot be his true mother
and, therefore, he does not feel any emotional upsurge when confronted
with this mother look-alike. In contrast, he begins to feel enormously
concerned about the Doctor's daughter, Albertina, who appears in front
of him in a mysterious way. In the capital, as well as during the first
half of his journey, Albertina appears in front of him several times, in
disguise. Her history of disguise runs like this: a black swan, the
Doctor's messenger, and the daughter of the mayor of the town S. He
does not notice her existence until after the disguised Albertina disap-
pears, leaving behind a trace that evokes her. She continues to haunt
him in this way, as a mysterious lady, although why he fails to meet her
remains a mystery to him.

    In the second half of the novel, however, her chances of effecting a
disguise lessen. There is even a scene where Albertina, dressed as a
whore, reveals her natural shape before Desiderio. Eventually, she
stops disguising herself altogether and accompanies Desiderio as a

guide to lead him to her father's castle. If Albertina, who seems to fol-
low her father's orders, symbolizes Desiderio's mother, given that he
desires her, then, judging from the history of her appearances in front of
him, it seems that the Doctor is trying to erase the incest taboo, to allow
Desiderio to unite with the mother again. This interpretation is in
accord with the Doctor's general scheme of eliminating the time
required for obtaining what is desired in that the Doctor may have
thought that, through such a union, the future would be deprived of
someone who still retained a sense of incest as a prohibited union.
Desiderio, on the other hand, rejects the Doctor's invitation to have eter-
nal sexual intercourse with his daughter, and kills both the daughter and
her father.[23]

    Why, then, did Desiderio refuse the Doctor's invitation? Previous
studies of this novel have suggested that the hero's motivation for the
killing is based on his love for and loyalty to his country, i.e., the protag-
onist was forced to kill the woman for the sake of his country. In
addition, extending this argument, scholars have also pointed to the last
sentence of the novel 'Unbidden, she comes,' as indicating the strength
of the protagonist's desire for the woman he kills at the end of the war.[24]
Nevertheless, the hero has not been an enthusiastically loyal subject to
the Minister; his immediate mental separation from the capital proves
this point. Rather, as mentioned above, it would be more reasonable to
think that Desiderio rejects life as structured by the Doctor, a life that
would bring him to a timeless world, making love to Albertina forever.
Evidently, Desiderio abhors living in such a world. A new interpreta-
tion of the hero's motivation, then, is offered here: Desiderio rejects the
idea of living in such a timeless world. In other words, on receiving the
Doctor's invitation, Desiderio immediately decided to keep the exis-
tence of an unpredictable future possible; he may even have imagined a
state where, with no intervention by the Doctor, he could continue his
journey.

    With the disappearance of the enemy, Desiderio is forced to return to
the capital; it is as if he were leaving a dream world. His rather hasty
decision in this respect offers a bleak prospect. He describes the pain he
felt on his return thus: 'I crawled like a worm on its belly through the
clinging mud of common time and the bare trees showed only the
dreary shapes of an eternal November of the heart, for now all the
changes would henceforth be, as they had been before, absolutely pre-
dictable' (221). He starts to feel suffocated by the oppressive nature of
such a concept of time, as if the unpredictability of the future, which,

apparently, he had enjoyed during his journey, had been completely lost.

Given that the order of time in the capital is one that makes the future predictable, was it, in fact, the case that the future, as he experienced it on the journey, was genuinely unpredictable? With regard to this point, it should be noted that the unpredictability of the future, as he experienced it during the journey, had a double meaning for Desiderio. On the one hand, the future was unforeseeable to him in the sense that he had no certain foreknowledge as to *when* he might obtain *what* he pursued; this aspect of uncertainty, as it relates to pursuit, mediates Desiderio's active attitude towards the future. On the other hand, this unpredictability with respect to the future could also be linked to Desiderio's passive attitude towards the future, as if he were an onlooker on someone else's life. In some of the communities that he both visits and participates in as a member, plans for his future already exist, plans that he is expected to follow. In such cases he simply performs the roles assigned to him, or, to be more exact, he observes himself playing the roles. For instance, he recalls a time when a community of river people, with a chief named Nao-Kurai, welcomed him. In that community Desiderio's marriage with a nine-year-old girl named Aoi had been arranged, without any consent being sought on his part. He describes the incident thus:

> Because Aoi was only nine years old, I thought there would be a long period of betrothal but everyone assured me she had reached puberty and offered me visual proof if I did not believe them. So I abandoned the last vestiges of my shore-folk squeamishness and Nao-Kurai fixed the date of my wedding for a few weeks ahead …
>
> (81)

Desiderio feels the unpredictability of the future every time others announce such plans, unexpectedly, to him, but it could also be said that it is only in terms of Desiderio's recognition of such events that such unexpectedness arises, in that there are others who already know that these things are going to happen. The events that he experiences have already been determined somewhere beyond his intervention,[25] and that could be the reason why his journey assumes a sense of pseudo-pastness. It is rather strange, though, that plans for him exist in a community to which he has had no connection until he comes to visit it. In connection with Desiderio's conflicted attitude towards his journey, Susan Rubin Suleiman makes this point: 'What further characterizes [Desiderio] is a kind of paradoxically active passivity – for although he

does nothing to initiate action, he is thrown into it; and once in it, he keeps going, as if his very passivity made it possible for adventure to seek him out.'[26] The hero's passivity, which Suleiman labels 'active passivity,' seems to point to something beyond the hero's journey; it points to the problem of how reality, as it is related to desire, is recognized.

III. Desiderio's Discovery

Now that a certain passivity with respect to the hero's formation of desire has been identified in relation to the trajectory of his journey, this section will look at the mechanism of the hero's desire formation in more detail, in order to determine the nature of this passivity. Before beginning that analysis, however, this section will offer an answer to the following question, a question that was raised at the end of the first section: Did the Doctor, in sending images, know in advance what the people in the capital would desire? Theoretically, the answer should be no. Even if the Doctor had specified, through samples, the kinds of images he would send, the number of samples that he had prepared was huge. As Desiderio reports: '[T]he city was no longer the conscious production of humanity; it had become the arbitrary realm of dream' (18). The capital is flooded with images. Under these circumstances, if it was, in fact, true that people had had their repressed desires satisfied, it would have been the case that the people would have specified their desires at the same moment as, or even after, they had had them fulfilled. Thus, these images have been determined and it cannot be said, therefore, that the Doctor knew what the people would want before he started sending the images. Is it possible, then, to find a concrete, practical sequence wherein a recipient of the Doctor's images makes an after-the-fact specification of desire? In this regard, we will again have to resort to Desiderio's reactions to the images, as they constitute the only available evidence for our analysis.

At the beginning of the war, Desiderio still has plenty of confidence in his own judgment with regard to reality; he feels that he can differentiate between what is real and what is not. Once he has started out on his journey, however, his self-confidence in this respect begins to collapse. The seaside scene in which people are absent, and time flows without bringing anything new, causes him to doubt what he sees; so does the exhibition displayed by the Doctor's former advisor near the

same beach. Furthermore, a new scene awaits him when he gets out of the exhibition tent: 'Now the pier was peopled…. And, for so great a number of people, they made very little noise, as if they knew they had no existential right to be here' (47). This is the kind of scene that makes the viewer feel as if he or she is in a movie theater, watching a screen, but with a broken sound system. In addition, the following scene, in which Desiderio boards a ship together with the Count, creates a similar effect; it unfolds like a film projected by a faulty device:

> The sailors would sometimes halt, open-mouthed, in the middle of a shanty, as if they were actors who had suddenly forgotten their lines, and mouth away vacantly for a few seconds, their hands suddenly dangling as if they had forgotten how to hold the ropes. But these lapses of continuity lasted no more than a moment. Then all would be saltily nautical again, in the manner of an old print. But sometimes there was a jarring effect of overlapping, as if the ship that bore us was somehow superimposed on another ship of a quite different kind.…   (144)

Desiderio feels as if his field of vision has become something like the screen of a movie theater. As he does not know where the light source is, or how to get out of the screen, he has no choice but to remain where he is.

During his journey, the reasons for phenomena are sometimes identified in that they may be attributed to the existence of things projected, i.e., samples. At several points during his journey, Desiderio discovers that what he sees as well as what he does have been included, albeit partly, among the samples that the Doctor's former advisor carries. For instance, part of the night that Desiderio shares with the daughter of the mayor of town S has been included in the samples. In addition, as he goes through the experience described below, he is persuaded to think that a correspondence exists between the samples and the world he sees. When Desiderio becomes an apprentice to the Doctor's former advisor, he is held responsible for maintaining the samples while the advisor is away. As he nonchalantly fumbles with some of the samples that relate to an earthquake, an earthquake occurs, and this causes a landslide over the village where he is staying. It turns out that he is able to escape the disaster because he happens to be in a cave on the mountainside. Through this experience, he is presented with evidence confirming that the mechanism of image projection does, in fact, account for part of what he sees around him.[27]

Does this discovery lead him to think, with some relief, that the dis-

tinction between reality and fiction can still be maintained? The answer is no, judging from how he feels when he makes the discovery. Even if he can demonstrate that his vision was a fabrication, the fact that he has already lived out that fabrication cannot be denied; the fiction is not conspicuous enough to be distinguished from reality. The situation might be more accurately described by saying that the distinction between reality and fiction always holds, on the basis of a larger reality, in which Desiderio's whole life up to this point has been lived. Consequently, what he apprehends most powerfully through his discovery is the fact that he is unable to stand at the moment in time that is prior to the advent of a manipulated image, because such a moment cannot possibly exist. It follows that, if the moment prior to the perception of reality does not exist, and if his perception of that reality reflects his desire, then this could well be the reason why desire formation in Desiderio is passive.

In close connection with this realization is another, which he learns from Albertina; he discovers that, even without the samples, some other person could manipulate his life (or, more specifically, his desires). He records her explanation in his autobiography thus: 'And she told me that, according to her father's theory, all the subjects and objects we had encountered in the loose grammar of Nebulous Time were derived from a similar source—my desires; or hers; or the Count's' (186). The reason why the world was derived from the Count's desire at the beginning of the Nebulous Time period is, as Albertina says, because the Count was closer at that point to unconsciousness than anyone else. If Albertina's explanation is true, then what Desiderio has seen since the arrival of Nebulous Time would have been, at times, a reflection of his own desires. He would have been looking at what he liked to watch; if this had been the case, he should have felt satisfied. However, as he cannot recall such a satisfactory state of mind, Desiderio, embarrassed, tries to deny Albertina's words, and points out that what he has experienced in Nebulous Time was simply the objective world; thus, he makes the claim that the world exists independently of individual desire. Clearly, what embarrasses him here is not simply the after-the-fact stipulation of his desire by Albertina; he is also perplexed by the discovery that what Albertina has stipulated as his desire does not seem to constitute his desire but, rather, a plain fact of his past life. He senses a wide gap between his memory of past experiences and her stipulation of them as his desire; this gap suggests the possibility that desire changes its nature when it is specified. That which is specified, then, seems to have no

investment in its own fulfillment in a subsequent moment; thus, even if a number of such specifications are stacked up, temporally speaking, there is still no mediation of the idea of a durational world. The next section of this paper will examine the idea of desire that is subject to change, in order to interpret the last scene of the novel in a new way.

What is intriguing in *IDM* is that it demonstrates, in passing, that this passivity of desire is also constituted in the reader's act of reading. Just before he starts writing his autobiography, Desiderio announces that he remembers everything that happened on the journey, and denies any fading of his memory. In spite of this declaration, however, he finds himself running forward to the conclusion, apparently skipping over details:

> I made a journey through space and time, up a river, across a moun-
> tain, over the sea, through a forest. Until I came to a certain castle.
> And …
>
>   But I must not run ahead of myself. I shall describe the war
> exactly as it happened. I will begin at the beginning and go on until
> the end.   (13)

To set down events according to mere chronological order, however, would have dashed the expectations of a reader who anticipates that the autobiography will be a narrative rather than a history. To the relief of such a reader, Desiderio's announcement that he will follow a chrono- logical order turns out to be merely a rhetorical flourish.

Near the end of the autobiography, though, where Desiderio describes the Doctor's laboratory, he dashes the reader's expectations yet again by telling the reader how his story will end. Once he has dis- closed this information, he attempts to justify his action:

> But there I go again – running ahead of myself! See, I have ruined
> all the suspense. I have quite spoiled my climax. But why do you
> deserve a climax, anyway? I am only trying to tell you exactly, as
> far as I can remember, what actually happened. And you know
> very well already that it was I who killed Dr Hoffman; you have
> read all about it in the history books and know the very date far bet-
> ter than I because I have forgotten it.   (208)

The reader is confused not by the lack of suspense, but by Desiderio's reminder. It may seem, on the one hand, that such a premature announcement of the ending of his story is unnecessary; alternatively, the remark may suggest that the conclusion of the story does not consti-

tute the point of reading it. At any rate, it is at least certain that the reader has not deliberately forgotten how the story will end. The reader simply wants to hear what Desiderio's voice will reveal, without expect- ing anything extraordinary. In this regard, Alison Lee has referred to Desiderio's voice as 'a narrative voice rendered inarticulate by the com- plexity of his desire.'[28]

What I am suggesting is that the narrator's announcement functions to elucidate the mechanism of reading. Without such pronouncements, the reader's self-awareness, in the act of reading, would not be stimu- lated.[29] The narrator's voice in these instances initiates self-awareness on the reader's part, which leads the reader, in turn, to confirm the fact that he or she has have actually chosen something as the object of desire, without noticing it. Lee argues that the relationship between Desiderio and the Doctor overlaps the relationship between the reader and the nar- rator, Desiderio.[30] In psychoanalytic terms, this kind of overlapped relationship is known as transference, and it describes a relationship that pertains between a patient and analyst.[31] The crucial question, however, is this: if the reader were asked what they were after, they would have difficulty giving a concrete answer to this question; they would have to settle with what Lee says would be the case, that is, they would have to answer that they desired just what the narrator had told them and nothing else. What this hypothetical question shows is that there seems to be something lacking from one's desire when it is specified.

IV.   The Last Scene

The final section of this paper examines the last scene of *IDM*; in this section I offer a new way of interpreting this scene, and I develop the idea of loss or omission that is inherent in the specification of desire. After completing his autobiography, Desiderio briefly describes his everyday life thus:

> Old Desiderio lays down his pen. In a little while, they will
> bring me my hot drink before they put me to bed and I am glad of
> these small attentions for they are the comforts of the old, although
> they are quite meaningless.
>   My head aches with writing. What a thick book my memories
> make! What a fat book to coffin young Desiderio, who was so thin
> and supple. My head aches. I close my eyes.
>   Unbidden, she comes.   (221)

After the long story of the journey has been set down, the focus of the novel now shifts to the narrator. In a nod to postmodern consciousness, old Desiderio becomes a person who is, himself, being narrated;[32] the narrator, therefore, is now neither young Desiderio nor old Desiderio, but a spirit-like being. Generally, this transformation of the narrator, as manifested here, is to be expected in that, if we are to be told something about the act of narration, a new narrator would have to come on the scene and be situated in such a way that the narration could be commented on. However, the case of old Desiderio is unique, in that even before he commenced his act of writing, he had come close to being a spirit-like being. This has come about because his life, a life of routine in the complete care of a government grateful to a national hero, has now become the life of a man who is barely alive, one who is hanging on to life only through the glory of the past. In such circumstances, the image of Albertina has been intermittently haunting him, as if it were the only sign that showed that he was still alive. He says that on the verge of death, all he hopes for is a final look at Albertina before he dies; perhaps in part, he has chosen to write the autobiography as the only way he can fix a momentary image of her. Certainly, his hope has been attained, because he seems to have succeeded in visualizing Albertina in words. His words, however, do more than he might have expected; his writing eventually functions as a tool for killing his desire for her, in that his autobiography, as he himself remarks, has functioned to terminate his life.

If we analyze the last scene of the novel in this light, then the last sentence of the whole novel, 'Unbidden, she comes', might be open to a new interpretation. Previous critical studies analyzing this last scene have interpreted the 'she' in the last sentence of the novel as referring to the image of Albertina, as it appears in Desiderio's mind.[33] In the context of this paper, however, I would argue that the ending points to something that has been left out of the hero's attempt to describe his desire. This last scene may well mediate the following: as soon as old Desiderio leaves the scene with a new, unidentifiable narrator taking over his job, the desire that has eluded the act of old Desiderio's description reappears from somewhere invisible. In light of old Desiderio's symbolic death, desire thus revives with no particular anchorage to a specific person. Thus, in the light of this interpretation, the ending assumes an ironic tone, in that as long as Desiderio continues to chase what he desires, something he does in the act of writing about the journey, he never gains it; whereas, once he has given up the hunt, the treasure he has been seeking appears. If we follow this line of thought, it might also be said that the reader, asked a hypothetical question as to what they were after while reading *IDM*, would be able to provide an answer to this question, as long as it did not have to be expressed in words.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on the theme of timelessness in *IDM*, a theme that emerges through the specification of the hero's desire. *IDM* seems to have been written on the presupposition that every perception the hero has reflects his desire. Some readers of *IDM*, though, may have the impression that the Doctor's schemes are too extreme, in that he tries to create a desired reality only; they would say that objective realities exist, other than those that are simply desired. It is a plausible position, but at the same time, readers taking this position may find themselves asking the same question that Desiderio does, in response to Albertina's indication of his desire. As sections III and IV of this paper have shown, one of the salient points of *IDM* is that once one's desire has been stipulated, that stipulation begins to look like an objective fact of life. In fact, as long as this transformation works, it becomes impossible for us to differentiate two kinds of reality. If we relate desire to a sense of future, then, the idea may be that any specification of desire by means of a narrative will deprive us of the sense of future. However, despite this negation of the possibility of grasping desire in its original state, *IDM* also seems to suggest that if we can refrain from any expression of our desire through language, we might be able to obtain a state of desire that is continuously active, as manifested by old Desiderio's image of Albertina, an image that had been haunting him until the moment he completed the autobiography. As long as desire is active, Carter's text seems to suggest, we might find a temporality that differs from that expressed in the time order of the capital in *IDM*, as well as one that differs from the timelessless expressed by a narrative that specifies one's desire.

Notes

[1] For one of the few studies focusing on time in Carter's works, see Lee 16-22.

[2] Bonca 61.

[3] See Connor 134.

[4] Some scholars have pointed out that Carter's characters' sense of loss can be analyzed in relation to their background. Linden Peach, for instance, argues thus: 'Indeed, in her early novels, [Carter] depicts a Britain which is in what one school of psychoanalysis might call 'a depressive condition.'' Peach 13.

[5] For a study that examines each stage of Carter's entire creative career, including her realism in the 60s, see Tucker 7-23. Also, for Carter's themes from the end of the 70s to the 80s, see Palmer 180.

[6] The female protagonist of *Nights at the Circus* feels the same horror as the journalist when she sees her ice-made likeness melting away in the house of a duke who has invited her over. Her horror may be regarded as a fear of the passage of time that will wash away something fixed.

[7] Motoyoshi Irifuji has analyzed the fixation and passing of events. The phrases Irifuji uses to clarify his points, such as 'the for-the-time-being-ness' and 'the each-time-ness,' seem to be usefully applicable to analyses of *Nights at the Circus*.

[8] The way the word 'timelessness' is used in this paper follows the *OED* definition. It is defined as 'not subject to time; not affected by the lapse of time; existing or operating without reference to duration; eternal.'

[9] Angela Carter, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984). All quotations from the novel that appear in this paper are from this edition.

[10] See, for example, Gamble 115; Gąsiorek 126-31; Sage 34.

[11] Elaine Jordan points out that Carter has always hated cultures based on such a concept of time, regarding them as 'coherent societies where belief, ritual and social practice offer no space for individual doubt and speculation.' See Jordan 34-5.

[12] The incessant stream of images, on the other hand, bores Desiderio; he wishes that they would stop, at least for the time being. He says: 'In those tumultuous and kinetic times, the time of actualized desire, I myself had only the one desire. And that was, for everything to stop' (11). The content of the images, as described by Desiderio, initially appears able to last for a certain period of time but, in fact, as he points out, they are superseded by different images that arrive at the capital. This continuous transmission may do much to make people forget the fact that, even if past images can be revived, they soon return to the past again following their revival.

[13] One of Carter's three novels written in the 60s (often called 'The Bristol Trilogy'), *Several Perceptions* (1968), deploys a protagonist who works at a hospital and treats dead bodies. He suffers much because he does not know what he should think about the meaning of life becoming non-existent. His inner feelings are somewhat close to those of the Doctor, who tries to ignore one of the inevitable processes of life.

[14] Alison Lee, after noting the chaotic condition that is created when desire is easily satisfied, suggests that, at the end of such a state, a static condition will emerge that will be close to history. See Lee 68.

[15] Whether there are samples may make no difference to those who receive the images. Hisaki Matsuura has labeled the images in the former age as 'projective realism', thereby differentiating them from the images of contemporary electronic media. While Matsuura focuses on the major differences between computerized, unmediated images and those projected at a movie theater from behind the audience, Matsuura claims that what the latter aims at is the postponing of desire. See Matsuura 115-22.

[16] Note that the state in which a mother and child are not separate can be elaborated only after they have been separated; the concept exists only after the fact.

[17] No matter how many descriptions of the child as a separate being may have been prepared, they would not be enough to represent what the description as a whole signifies. By means of Russell's paradox of 'the impossibility of a group which consists of all groups', Lacan explains this thus: '[I]n a universe of discourse nothing contains everything, and here you find again the gap that constitutes the subject.' Lacan, *Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever* 37.

[18] On the relationship between 'demand' and 'want,' see, for example, Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, XII, Section 2.

[19] The term, 'signifier', is explained in Lacan, *Écrits* 304.

[20] Sally Robinson points out that Desiderio begins to cast doubt on the value of a 'master-narrative' that has supported him thus far, and to evince castration anxiety, once he sets out on the journey. She offers a persuasive analysis of Desiderio's journey in terms of fetishism. See Robinson 159-75.

[21] Lynn Wells also employs Lacan's theory of desire, and of 'metonymy' in particular, to analyze the progress of Desiderio's journey: 'Drawing on psychoanalysis, readers can discern the interrelations among Desiderio's experiences, in particular how they combine to form an archetypal pattern that ultimately fails to restore the originary loss and bring the metonymic slippage of desire to a meaningful stop.' Wells 50.

[22] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 92. The skull in the picture is explained in detail in Chapter VII, Section 3 of the book.

[23] Elizabeth Bronfen points out that the real reason why the protagonist kills Albertina is that he has had his ideal image of her shattered by the intrusion of her real image. See Bronfen 423. In my opinion, however, it seems that the protagonist feels, at this point, a great fear that her presence might swallow his whole existence.

[24] See, for instance, Day 90; Gąsiorek 131; Peach 103.

[25] Desiderio's bystander-like attitude also appears in his desire for Albertina. Clearly, it is not the case that he positively longs for her; rather, it is just that a series of failures to meet her in the first half of the journey functions as a reason for him to see her as his dearest lady in the latter half of his journey.

[26] Suleiman 107.

[27] Subtle differences exist between the samples and the events that Desiderio encounters and sees. He finds them 'teasingly different' (110). Owing to such discrepancies, he cannot make a final decision as to whether there is a complete correspondence between the samples and his sight.

[28] Lee 66.

[29] Lynn Wells comments on the possibility that the reader of *IDM* might become aware of his or her reading processes by a means other than that of the nar-

rator's reminder: 'One of the ways in which *IDM* evokes readerly self-scrutiny is by openly reworking exemplary modernist intertexts which are themselves allegorical representations of reading.' Wells 44.

[30] Lee 69. By contrast, Sally Robinson argues that where male violence towards females appears in *IDM*, the reader has difficulty finding something that they can identify with. The aim of Carter's text, Robinson claims, is to position the reader outside the novel. See Robinson 164. I would suggest, however, that the reader desires such violence without necessarily being conscious of that desire.

[31] Transference is the process by which a patient, whose desire is unknown to himself or herself, tries to fulfill their unidentified desire by something that the Other (the analyst) desires. Lacan analyzes this process and regards the theory of transference not as 'a defense of the analyst,' but as 'the desire of the analyst.' Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 158 (Chapter XII, Section 3).

[32] Mark Currie analyzes the ending of the novel *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* where Jekyll narrates the laying down of the pen by which he writes his confession. The phenomenon happening there is similar to one occurring in the last scene of *IDM* thus: 'The end of the narrative is emphatic, ending as it does on the word 'end', and yet the simultaneity of Jekyll's end and the narrative's end is spoiled by the fact that the sentence draws our attention to Jekyll's continuation beyond the end of the sentence in the act of sealing the confession.' Currie 123.

[33] It is difficult to regard the pronoun 'she' as referring to the physical death of the narrator since, normally, people seldom utter such a sentence at the point of their death.

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