ANATOMY OF CRITICISM

Four Essays

Anatomy of Criticism

FOUR ESSAYS

With a Foreword by Harold Bloom

NORTHROP FRYE

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Foreword

NORTHROP FRYE IN RETROSPECT

The publication of Northrop Frye's Notebooks troubled some of his old admirers, myself included. One unfortunate passage gave us Frye's affirmation that he alone, of all modern critics, possessed genius. I think of Kenneth Burke and of William Empson; were they less gifted than Frye? Or were George Wilson Knight or Ernst Robert Curtius less original and creative than the Canadian master? And yet I share Frye's sympathy for what our current "cultural" polemicists dismiss as the "romantic ideology of genius." In that supposed ideology, there *is* a transcendental realm, but we are alienated from it. The genius is a person at least more open to that transcendence than most of us are.

Historicists assert that genius is only an eighteenth-century idea, in which the saint and the hero were replaced, as they were by Goethe, widely renowned as "the genius of happiness and astonishment." There had been at least three earlier meanings of genius: one's attendant spirit or natural endowment or aspiration. Frye's declaration of genius prompts me to an impish archaism: was this Magus of the North attended by a spirit? It seems likelier that Frye, a formidable ironist, would refer to his aspiration, more even than to his natural endowment.

I fell in love with Frye's *Fearful Symmetry*, his study of William Blake, when it was published in 1947, my freshman year at Cornell. I purchased the book and read it to pieces, until it was a part of me. A decade later, when *Anatomy of Criticism* was published, I became one of its first reviewers. I am not so fond of the *Anatomy* now, as I was more than forty years ago, but I probably absorbed it in ways I no longer can apprehend. In later years, whenever I lectured at Toronto, Frye would introduce me with considerable polemical fervor, making clear that his Methodist Platonism was very different from my Jewish Gnosticism. I place this upon record, since I have come to praise Frye in this foreword, though with a certain ambivalence. Frye disliked the idea of an anxiety of influence, and told me that whether a later writer experienced such an affect was due entirely to temperament and circumstances. When I replied that influence anxiety was not an affect in a person, but the relation of one literary work to another, and so the result, rather than the cause, of a strong misreading, my heroic precursor stopped listening. He had

formulated a Myth of Concern, his version of Shelley's notion that imaginative literature was one vast poem with many authors, and so the matter was settled. Borges, going beyond Shelley, suggested that all authors were one author anyway, named Shakespeare. As extreme literary Idealism, that is extravagant enough for me to accept (sometimes) more readily than I can entertain Frye's Myth of Concern.

Frye began as a rebel against the Formalist schools of criticism that dominated Anglo-American academies in the 1940s and 1950s: the Aristotle-influenced theorists of Chicago, and the more practical New Critics of T. S. Eliot's various persuasions, including his High Church Neo-Christianity. As a young scholar starting to teach at Yale in the mid-fifties, I welcomed Frye as a sage who, unlike most of the Yale faculty in literary study, did not believe that T. S. Eliot was Christ's vicar upon earth. All this is now quaint: Frye and his opponents have been folded together, as antique Modernists inundated by the counter-cultural flood of feminists, queer theorists, sub-Marxists, semioticians, and the ambitious disciples of Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, and other Parisian prophets. Aesthetic and other cognitive values doubtless still exist, but not in the universities, where the new multiculturalists denounce the aesthetic as a colonialist and patriarchal mask. Poetry, demystified, has been leveled. Elizabeth Barrett Browning is taught more frequently than Robert Browning, and Charlotte Armstrong has obscured William Wordsworth. As we turn into the new century, I wonder if I should summon up Frye at a séance, to ask him if he still feels that overt value judgments have no place in criticism? What would he say when told that Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, and Lady Mary Chudleigh have usurped the eminence of John Milton and Andrew Marvell? His high sense of irony doubtless would sustain him, even when informed that Shakespeare's plays were shaped, not by a highly individual imagination, but by the same "social energies" that molded the dramas of George Chapman and Philip Massinger. All this will pass (not soon enough) and the study of genius will return, though doubtless in modes unknown to Frye, or to me. *Anatomy of Criticism*, in this year 2000, is not much of a guide to our current wilderness; yet, what is?

Frye, setting aside the question of his genius, moves me still because his blend of Protestant Dissent and Platonism is securely allied to what remains strongest in our poetic tradition. I am well

aware that "our" is a very vulnerable term, when all difficult poets, who require mediation, are in considerable jeopardy. Blake's *Jerusalem,* like *Paradise Lost* and *King Lear,* is regarded as "sexist" by feminist sectaries. Frye, expounding on Blake's vision of the Female Will, is no longer an acceptable exegete to many who call themselves apostles of that Will.

The "good old days," in fact, were not so good: universities, in my youth, were staffed mostly by an assemblage of know-nothing bigots, academic impostors, inchoate rhapsodes, and time-serving trimmers, while Neo-Christian ideologues were no wiser than the current commissars of Cultural Studies. And yet literary study, in what I am prepared to call the Age of Frye, nevertheless flourished. Students were taught to read closely, and what they read indeed was the best that had been written. I fretted that *Paradise Lost* frequently was reduced to the Mere Christianity of C. S. Lewis, and I was even more annoyed that T. S. Eliot first exiled Milton (and the Romantics, and Victorians) and later reinstated *Paradise Lost* and its descendants. Frye, reviewing the Eliotic Allen Tate, charmed me by calling Eliot's critical vision the Great Western Butterslide, in which a large blob of Christian, Classical, and Royalist butter melted down and congealed at last into *The Waste Land.* I enjoyed also Frye's observation that Eliot and Pound had emerged from Missouri and Idaho to announce that the true tradition of English poetry proceeded from origins in medieval Provence and Italy through later developments in France.

One learned from Frye to be wary of extra-poetic persuasions, particularly those that founded their Modernism upon a rather shallow rejection of Romanticism. And yet Frye had essentially irenic tendencies; when I first met him, in London in 1958, I urged him on to fiercer battles against High Church Modernists, but to no avail. As a Low Church minister (United Church of Canada) he shared the Blakean belief that Error would expose itself, and then self-destruct. Since I was, in his explicit view, a Judaizer of Blake, he assured me that Blake's symmetries counted for more than the Blakean Apocalypse. I do not wish to over-emphasize Frye's pieties: when I asked what he did as a minister, he dryly answered that he married and buried his students.

Symmetries abound in *Anatomy of Criticism,* and mount into obsessive patterns in his large Biblical studies *The Great Code* and

Words with Power. Fonder than Frye was of Hermetic tradition, I once compared him in print to the neo-Platonists Proclus and Iamblichus. Though my comparison was amiable enough, he thundered down from Toronto that those worthies were neither Christians nor first-raters. Belatedly, I revise the similitude now to Plotinus, distinctly not a Christian but certainly not second-rate. Frye's precursors were the poets rather than Plato: Milton and Blake had found him, and would not let him go. Yet, he became a literary critic and not a poet, perhaps in the conviction that an Age of Criticism could produce a Milton of exegesis. Such figures exist in the great scholars of esotericism: Hans Jonas, Gershom Scholem, Henry Corbin, and Moshe Idel. I suspect, though, that the relation between imaginative literature and its best critics is rather different. I do not agree wholly with the contention of the learned Christopher Ricks, that the English critics who matter most are the poet-critics: Ben Jonson, Dryden, Samuel Johnson, Coleridge, Arnold, T. S. Eliot. Where are William Hazlitt, John Ruskin, Walter Pater, George Saintsbury and the neglected Churton Collins? Where, in our time and out of England, are Kenneth Burke and E. R. Curtius? And yet I find Ricks's argument suggestive in regard to the stance of Northrop Frye. Perhaps in response to Eliot, Frye tended to write as if he were a poet-critic. But so did Ruskin, and lesser Victorian prophets, Carlyle included. Frye, more devout though oddly less Biblical than Ruskin, is probably best thought of as Ruskin a century later, though centered, unlike Ruskin, wholly upon literary study. *Anatomy of Criticism* some day may seem rather like Ruskin's *The Queen of the Air,* another work less categorical than rhapsodic, though Frye's pitch is more subdued than Ruskin's.

In my gathering old age, the Frye I like best is the Romantic essayist of *Fables of Identity,* rather than the grand homogenizer of literature in *The Secular Scripture,* one of the *Anatomy*'s ultimate offshoots. Systematic approaches to literary works were congenial to Frye's aspiring genius, but transmit poorly to his partisans. Since his Myth of Concern saw literature as a benignly cooperative enterprise, Frye blinded himself to the agonistic element in Western tradition that has been chronicled from Longinus through Jakob Burckhardt and Nietzsche down to the present. Frye really saw Blake as attempting to "correct" Milton, rather than to overgo him, which is to repeat Blake's idealistic self-deception. You could not

know from reading *Anatomy of Criticism* that the struggle for sublimity can be savage, and then takes no prisoners. I am moved, despite myself, when Frye writes as if we had all eternity to absorb the Great Code of Art. And yet, following Emerson and Kenneth Burke, I feel obliged to be pragmatic. What shall I reread? Quite aside from the School of Resentment's canonizings of all those, past and present, who cannot write their way out of a paper bag, I am confronted daily by a tidal wave of books, proofs, manuscripts, and letters that vary from no to considerable literary value. Overpopulation in literature has gone beyond Malthusian dimensions, and soon the world's computers will enhance a Noah's flood of productivity. If I live long enough, I fully expect individual computers themselves to declare their possession of personality and genius, and to bombard me with the epics and romances of artificial intelligence. In all this proliferation, I hardly will turn to Frye for comfort and assistance. But, where shall I turn?

Frye's criticism will survive because it is serious, spiritual, and comprehensive, but not because it is systematic or a manifestation of genius. If *Anatomy of Criticism* begins to seem a period piece, so does *The Sacred Wood* of T. S. Eliot. Literary criticism, to survive, must abandon the universities, where "cultural criticism" is a triumphant beast not to be expelled. The anatomies issuing from the academies concern themselves with the intricate secrets of Victorian women's underwear and the narrative histories of the female bosom. Critical reading, the discipline of how to read and why, will survive in those solitary scholars, out in society, whose single candles Emerson prophesied and Wallace Stevens celebrated. Such scholars, turning Frye's pages, will find copious precepts and examples to help sustain them in their solitude.

HAROLD BLOOM

PREFATORY STATEMENTS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS book forced itself on me while I was trying to write something else, and it probably still bears the marks of the reluctance with which a great part of it was composed. After completing a study of William Blake (*Fearful Symmetry*, 1947), I determined to apply the principles of literary symbolism and Biblical typology which I had learned from Blake to another poet, preferably one who had taken these principles from the critical theories of his own day, instead of working them out by himself as Blake did. I therefore began a study of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, only to discover that in my beginning was my end. The introduction to Spenser became an introduction to the theory of allegory, and that theory obstinately adhered to a much larger theoretical structure. The basis of argument became more and more discursive, and less and less historical and Spenserian. I soon found myself entangled in those parts of criticism that have to do with such words as "myth," "symbol," "ritual," and "archetype," and my efforts to make sense of these words in various published articles met with enough interest to encourage me to proceed further along these lines. Eventually the theoretical and the practical aspects of the task I had begun completely separated. What is here offered is pure critical theory, and the omission of all specific criticism, even, in three of the four essays, of quotation, is deliberate. The present book seems to me, so far as I can judge at present, to need a complementary volume concerned with practical criticism, a sort of morphology of literary symbolism.

I am grateful to the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation for a Fellowship (1950-1951) which gave me leisure and freedom to deal with my Protean subject at the time when it stood in the greatest need of both.

I am also grateful to the Class of 1932 of Princeton University, and to the Committee of the Special Program in the Humanities at Princeton, for providing me with a most stimulating term of work, in the course of which a good deal of the present book took its final shape. This book contains the substance of the four public lectures delivered in Princeton in March 1954.

The "Polemical Introduction" is a revised version of "The

Function of Criticism at the Present Time," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, October 1949, also reprinted in *Our Sense of Identity*, ed. Malcolm Ross, Toronto, 1954. The first essay is a revised and expanded version of "Towards a Theory of Cultural History," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, July 1953. The second essay incorporates the material of "Levels of Meaning in Literature," *Kenyon Review*, Spring 1950; of "Three Meanings of Symbolism," *Yale French Studies* No. 9 (1952); of "The Language of Poetry," *Explorations* 4 (Toronto, 1955); and of "The Archetypes of Literature," *Kenyon Review*, Winter 1951. The third essay contains the material of "The Argument of Comedy," *English Institute Essays 1948*, Columbia University Press, 1949; of "Characterization in Shakespearean Comedy," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, July 1953; of "Comic Myth in Shakespeare," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* (Section II), June 1952; and of "The Nature of Satire," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, October 1944. The fourth essay contains the material of "Music in Poetry," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, January 1942; of "A Conspectus of Dramatic Genres," *Kenyon Review*, Autumn 1951; of "The Four Forms of Prose Fiction," *Hudson Review*, Winter 1950; and of "Myth as Information," *Hudson Review*, Summer 1954. I am greatly obliged to the courtesy of the editors of the above-mentioned periodicals, the Columbia University Press, and the Royal Society of Canada, for permission to reprint this material. I have also transplanted a few sentences from other articles and reviews of mine, all from the same periodicals, when they appeared to fit the present context.

For my further obligations, all that can be said here, and is not less true for being routine, is that many of the virtues of this book are due to others: the errors of fact, taste, logic, and proportion are poor things, but my own.

N. F.

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Contents

Foreword vii
Prefatory Statements and Acknowledgments xiii

POLEMICAL INTRODUCTION 3

FIRST ESSAY. Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes
Fictional Modes: Introduction 33
Tragic Fictional Modes 35
Comic Fictional Modes 43
Thematic Modes 52

SECOND ESSAY. Ethical Criticism: Theory of Symbols
Introduction 71
Literal and Descriptive Phases: Symbol as Motif and as Sign 73
Formal Phase: Symbol as Image 82
Mythical Phase: Symbol as Archetype 95
Anagogic Phase: Symbol as Monad 115

THIRD ESSAY. Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths
Introduction 131
Theory of Archetypal Meaning (1): Apocalyptic Imagery 141
Theory of Archetypal Meaning (2): Demonic Imagery 147
Theory of Archetypal Meaning (3): Analogical Imagery 151
Theory of Mythos: Introduction 158
The Mythos of Spring: Comedy 163
The Mythos of Summer: Romance 186
The Mythos of Autumn: Tragedy 206
The Mythos of Winter: Irony and Satire 223

FOURTH ESSAY. Rhetorical Criticism: Theory of Genres
Introduction 243
The Rhythm of Recurrence: Epos 251
The Rhythm of Continuity: Prose 263
The Rhythm of Decorum: Drama 268
The Rhythm of Association: Lyric 270
Specific Forms of Drama 282
Specific Thematic Forms (Lyric and Epos) 293
Specific Continuous Forms (Prose Fiction) 303
Specific Encyclopaedic Forms 315
The Rhetoric of Non-Literary Prose 326

TENTATIVE CONCLUSION 341

NOTES 357

GLOSSARY 365

INDEX 369

Polemical Introduction

THIS BOOK consists of "essays," in the word's original sense of a trial or incomplete attempt, on the possibility of a synoptic view of the scope, theory, principles, and techniques of literary criticism. The primary aim of the book is to give my reasons for believing in such a synoptic view; its secondary aim is to provide a tentative version of it which will make enough sense to convince my readers that *a* view, of the kind that I outline, is attainable. The gaps in the subject as treated here are too enormous for the book ever to be regarded as presenting *my* system, or even my theory. It is to be regarded rather as an interconnected group of suggestions which it is hoped will be of some practical use to critics and students of literature. Whatever is of no practical use to anybody is expendable. My approach is based on Matthew Arnold's precept of letting the mind play freely around a subject in which there has been much endeavor and little attempt at perspective. All the essays deal with criticism, but by criticism I mean the whole work of scholarship and taste concerned with literature which is a part of what is variously called liberal education, culture, or the study of the humanities. I start from the principle that criticism is not simply a part of this larger activity, but an essential part of it.

The subject-matter of literary criticism is an art, and criticism is evidently something of an art too. This sounds as though criticism were a parasitic form of literary expression, an art based on pre-existing art, a second-hand imitation of creative power. On this theory critics are intellectuals who have a taste for art but lack both the power to produce it and the money to patronize it, and thus form a class of cultural middlemen, distributing culture to society at a profit to themselves while exploiting the artist and increasing the strain on his public. The conception of the critic as a parasite or artist *manqué* is still very popular, especially among artists. It is sometimes reinforced by a dubious analogy between the creative and the procreative functions, so that we hear about the "impotence" and "dryness" of the critic, of his hatred for genuinely creative people, and so on. The golden age of anti-critical criticism was the latter part of the nineteenth century, but some of its prejudices are still around.

However, the fate of art that tries to do without criticism is

instructive. The attempt to reach the public directly through "popular" art assumes that criticism is artificial and public taste natural. Behind this is a further assumption about natural taste which goes back through Tolstoy to Romantic theories of a spontaneously creative "folk." These theories have had a fair trial; they have not stood up very well to the facts of literary history and experience, and it is perhaps time to move beyond them. An extreme reaction against the primitive view, at one time associated with the "art for art's sake" catchword, thinks of art in precisely the opposite terms, as a mystery, an initiation into an esoterically civilized community. Here criticism is restricted to ritual masonic gestures, to raised eyebrows and cryptic comments and other signs of an understanding too occult for syntax. The fallacy common to both attitudes is that of a rough correlation between the merit of art and the degree of public response to it, though the correlation assumed is direct in one case and inverse in the other.

One can find examples which appear to support both these views; but it is clearly the simple truth that there is no real correlation either way between the merits of art and its public reception. Shakespeare was more popular than Webster, but not because he was a greater dramatist; Keats was less popular than Montgomery, but not because he was a better poet. Consequently there is no way of preventing the critic from being, for better or worse, the pioneer of education and the shaper of cultural tradition. Whatever popularity Shakespeare and Keats have *now* is equally the result of the publicity of criticism. A public that tries to do without criticism, and asserts that it knows what it wants or likes, brutalizes the arts and loses its cultural memory. Art for art's sake is a retreat from criticism which ends in an impoverishment of civilized life itself. The only way to forestall the work of criticism is through censorship, which has the same relation to criticism that lynching has to justice.

There is another reason why criticism has to exist. Criticism can talk, and all the arts are dumb. In painting, sculpture, or music it is easy enough to see that the art shows forth, but cannot *say* anything. And, whatever it sounds like to call the poet inarticulate or speechless, there is a most important sense in which poems are as silent as statues. Poetry is a *disinterested* use of words: it does not address a reader directly. When it does so, we usually feel that the poet has some distrust in the capacity of readers and critics to

interpret his meaning without assistance, and has therefore dropped into the sub-poetic level of metrical talk ("verse" or "doggerel") which anybody can learn to produce. It is not only tradition that impels a poet to invoke a Muse and protest that his utterance is involuntary. Nor is it strained wit that causes Mr. MacLeish, in his famous *Ars Poetica*, to apply the words "mute," "dumb," and "wordless" to a poem. The artist, as John Stuart Mill saw in a wonderful flash of critical insight, is not heard but overheard. The axiom of criticism must be, not that the poet does not know what he is talking about, but that he cannot talk about what he knows. To defend the right of criticism to exist at all, therefore, is to assume that criticism is a structure of thought and knowledge existing in its own right, with some measure of independence from the art it deals with.

The poet may of course have some critical ability of his own, and so be able to talk about his own work. But the Dante who writes a commentary on the first canto of the *Paradiso* is merely one more of Dante's critics. What he says has a peculiar interest, but not a peculiar authority. It is generally accepted that a critic is a better judge of the *value* of a poem than its creator, but there is still a lingering notion that it is somehow ridiculous to regard the critic as the final judge of its meaning, even though in practice it is clear that he must be. The reason for this is an inability to distinguish literature from the descriptive or assertive writing which derives from the active will and the conscious mind, and which is primarily concerned to "say" something.

Part of the critic's reason for feeling that poets can be properly assessed only after their death is that they are then unable to presume on their merits as poets to tease him with hints of inside knowledge. When Ibsen maintains that *Emperor and Galilean* is his greatest play and that certain episodes in *Peer Gynt* are not allegorical, one can only say that Ibsen is an indifferent critic of Ibsen. Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* is a remarkable document, but as a piece of Wordsworthian criticism nobody would give it more than about a B plus. Critics of Shakespeare are often supposed to be ridiculed by the assertion that if Shakespeare were to come back from the dead he would not be able to appreciate or even understand their criticism. This in itself is likely enough: we have little evidence of Shakespeare's interest in criticism, either of himself or of anyone else. Even if there were

such evidence, his own account of what he was trying to do in *Hamlet* would no more be a definitive criticism of that play, clearing all its puzzles up for good, than a performance of it under his direction would be a definitive performance. And what is true of the poet in relation to his own work is still more true of his opinion of other poets. It is hardly possible for the critical poet to avoid expanding his own tastes, which are intimately linked to his own practice, into a general law of literature. But criticism has to be based on what the whole of literature actually does: in its light, whatever any highly respected writer thinks literature in general ought to do will show up in its proper perspective. The poet speaking as critic produces, not criticism, but documents to be examined by critics. They may well be valuable documents: it is only when they are accepted as directives for criticism that they are in any danger of becoming misleading.

The notion that the poet necessarily is or could be the definitive interpreter of himself or of the theory of literature belongs to the conception of the critic as a parasite or jackal. Once we admit that the critic has his own field of activity, and that he has autonomy within that field, we have to concede that criticism deals with literature in terms of a specific conceptual framework. The framework is not that of literature itself, for this is the parasite theory again, but neither is it something outside literature, for in that case the autonomy of criticism would again disappear, and the whole subject would be assimilated to something else.

This latter gives us, in criticism, the fallacy of what in history is called determinism, where a scholar with a special interest in geography or economics expresses that interest by the rhetorical device of putting his favorite study into a causal relationship with whatever interests him less. Such a method gives one the illusion of explaining one's subject while studying it, thus wasting no time. It would be easy to compile a long list of such determinisms in criticism, all of them, whether Marxist, Thomist, liberal-humanist, neo-Classical, Freudian, Jungian, or existentialist, substituting a critical attitude for criticism, all proposing, not to find a conceptual framework for criticism within literature, but to attach criticism to one of a miscellany of frameworks outside it. The axioms and postulates of criticism, however, have to grow out of the art it deals with. The first thing the literary critic has to do is to read literature, to make an inductive survey of his own field and let his critical

principles shape themselves solely out of his knowledge of that field. Critical principles cannot be taken over ready-made from theology, philosophy, politics, science, or any combination of these.

To subordinate criticism to an externally derived critical attitude is to exaggerate the values in literature that can be related to the external source, whatever it is. It is all too easy to impose on literature an extra-literary schematism, a sort of religio-political color-filter, which makes some poets leap into prominence and others show up as dark and faulty. All that the disinterested critic can do with such a color-filter is to murmur politely that it shows things in a new light and is indeed a most stimulating contribution to criticism. Of course such filtering critics usually imply, and often believe, that they are letting their literary experience speak for itself and are holding their other attitudes in reserve, the coincidence between their critical valuations and their religious or political views being silently gratifying to them but not explicitly forced on the reader. Such independence of criticism from prejudice, however, does not invariably occur even with those who best understand criticism. Of their inferiors the less said the better.

If it is insisted that we cannot criticize literature until we have acquired a coherent philosophy of life with its center of gravity in something else, the existence of criticism as a separate subject is still being denied. But there is another possibility. If criticism exists, it must be an examination of literature in terms of a conceptual framework derivable from an inductive survey of the literary field. The word "inductive" suggests some sort of scientific procedure. What if criticism is a science as well as an art? Not a "pure" or "exact" science, of course, but these phrases belong to a nineteenth-century cosmology which is no longer with us. The writing of history is an art, but no one doubts that scientific principles are involved in the historian's treatment of evidence, and that the presence of this scientific element is what distinguishes history from legend. It may also be a scientific element in criticism which distinguishes it from literary parasitism on the one hand, and the superimposed critical attitude on the other. The presence of science in any subject changes its character from the casual to the causal, from the random and intuitive to the systematic, as well as safeguarding the integrity of that subject from external invasions. However, if there are any readers for whom the word "scientific"

conveys emotional overtones of unimaginative barbarism, they may substitute "systematic" or "progressive" instead.

It seems absurd to say that there *may* be a scientific element in criticism when there are dozens of learned journals based on the assumption that there is, and hundreds of scholars engaged in a scientific procedure related to literary criticism. Evidence is examined scientifically; previous authorities are used scientifically; fields are investigated scientifically; texts are edited scientifically. Prosody is scientific in structure; so is phonetics; so is philology. Either literary criticism is scientific, or all these highly trained and intelligent scholars are wasting their time on some kind of pseudo-science like phrenology. Yet one is forced to wonder whether scholars realize the implications of the fact that their work is scientific. In the growing complication of secondary sources one misses that sense of consolidating progress which belongs to a science. Research begins in what is known as "background," and one would expect it, as it goes on, to start organizing the foreground as well. Telling us what we should know about literature ought to fulfil itself in telling us something about what it is. As soon as it comes to this point, scholarship seems to be dammed by some kind of barrier, and washes back into further research projects.

So to "appreciate" literature and get more direct contact with it, we turn to the public critic, the Lamb or Hazlitt or Arnold or Sainte-Beuve who represents the reading public at its most expert and judicious. It is the task of the public critic to exemplify how a man of taste uses and evaluates literature, and thus show how literature is to be absorbed into society. But here we no longer have the sense of an impersonal body of consolidating knowledge. The public critic tends to episodic forms like the lecture and the familiar essay, and his work is not a science, but another kind of literary art. He has picked up his ideas from a pragmatic study of literature, and does not try to create or enter into a theoretical structure. In Shakespearean criticism we have a fine monument of Augustan taste in Johnson, of Romantic taste in Coleridge, of Victorian taste in Bradley. The ideal critic of Shakespeare, we feel, would avoid the Augustan, Romantic, and Victorian limitations and prejudices respectively of Johnson, Coleridge, and Bradley. But we have no clear notion of progress in the criticism of Shakespeare, or of how a critic who read all his predecessors could, as

a result, become anything better than a monument of contemporary taste, with all *its* limitations and prejudices.

In other words, there is as yet no way of distinguishing what is genuine criticism, and therefore progresses toward making the whole of literature intelligible, from what belongs only to the history of taste, and therefore follows the vacillations of fashionable prejudice. I give an example of the difference between the two which amounts to a head-on collision. In one of his curious, brilliant, scatter-brained footnotes to *Munera Pulveris*, John Ruskin says:

> Of Shakspeare's names I will afterwards speak at more length; they are curiously—often barbarously—mixed out of various traditions and languages. Three of the clearest in meaning have been already noticed. Desdemona—"δυσδαιμονία," *miserable fortune*—is also plain enough. Othello is, I believe, "the careful"; all the calamity of the tragedy arising from the single flaw and error in his magnificently collected strength. Ophelia, "serviceableness," the true, lost wife of Hamlet, is marked as having a Greek name by that of her brother Laertes; and its signification is once exquisitely alluded to in that brother's last word of her, where her gentle preciousness is opposed to the uselessness of the churlish clergy:—"A *ministering* angel shall my sister be, when thou liest howling."

On this passage Matthew Arnold comments as follows:

> Now, really, what a piece of extravagance all that is! I will not say that the meaning of Shakspeare's names (I put aside the question as to the correctness of Mr. Ruskin's etymologies) has no effect at all, may be entirely lost sight of; but to give it that degree of prominence is to throw the reins to one's whim, to forget all moderation and proportion, to lose the balance of one's mind altogether. It is to show in one's criticism, to the highest excess, the note of provinciality.

Now whether Ruskin is right or wrong, he is attempting genuine criticism. He is trying to interpret Shakespeare in terms of a conceptual framework which belongs to the critic alone, and yet relates itself to the plays alone. Arnold is perfectly right in feeling that this is not the sort of material that the public critic can directly use. But he does not seem even to suspect the existence

of a systematic criticism as distinct from the history of taste. Here it is Arnold who is the provincial. Ruskin has learned his trade from the great iconological tradition which comes down through Classical and Biblical scholarship into Dante and Spenser, both of whom he had studied carefully, and which is incorporated in the medieval cathedrals he had pored over in such detail. Arnold is assuming, as a universal law of nature, certain "plain sense" critical axioms which were hardly heard of before Dryden's time and which can assuredly not survive the age of Freud and Jung and Frazer and Cassirer..

What we have so far is, on one side of the "study of literature," the work of the scholar who tries to make it possible, and on the other side the work of the public critic who assumes that it exists. In between is "literature" itself, a game preserve where the student wanders with his native intelligence his only guide. The assumption seems to be that the scholar and the public critic are connected by a common interest in literature alone. The scholar lays down his materials outside the portals of literature: like other offerings brought to unseen consumers, a good deal of such scholarship seems to be the product of a rather touching faith, sometimes only a hope that some synthetizing critical Messiah of the future will find it useful. The public critic, or the spokesman of the imposed critical attitude, is apt to make only a random and haphazard use of this material, often in fact to treat the scholar as Hamlet did the grave-digger, ignoring everything he throws out except an odd skull which he can pick up and moralize about.

Those who are concerned with the arts are often asked questions, not always sympathetic ones, about the use or value of what they are doing. It is probably impossible to answer such questions directly, or at any rate to answer the people who ask them. Most of the answers, such as Newman's "liberal knowledge is its own end," merely appeal to the experience of those who have had the right experience. Similarly, most "defenses of poetry" are intelligible only to those well within the defenses. The basis of critical apologetics, therefore, has to be the actual experience of art, and for those concerned with literature, the first question to answer is not "What use is the study of literature?" but, "What follows from the fact that it is possible?"

Everyone who has seriously studied literature knows that the mental process involved is as coherent and progressive as the study

of science. A precisely similar training of the mind takes place, and a similar sense of the unity of the subject is built up. If this unity comes from literature itself, then literature itself must be shaped like a science, which contradicts our experience of it; or it must derive some informing power from an ineffable mystery at the heart of being, which seems vague; or the mental benefits alleged to be derived from it are imaginary, and are really derived from other subjects studied incidentally in connection with it.

This is as far as we can get on the assumption that the scholar and the man of taste are connected by nothing more than a common interest in literature. If this assumption is true, the high percentage of sheer futility in all criticism should be honestly faced, for the percentage can only increase with its bulk, until criticizing becomes, especially for university teachers, merely an automatic method of acquiring merit, like turning a prayer-wheel. But it is only an unconscious assumption—at least, I have never seen it stated as a doctrine—and it would certainly be convenient if it turned out to be nonsense. The alternative assumption is that scholars and public critics are directly related by an intermediate form of criticism, a coherent and comprehensive theory of literature, logically and scientifically organized, some of which the student unconsciously learns as he goes on, but the main principles of which are as yet unknown to us. The development of such a criticism would fulfil the systematic and progressive element in research by assimilating its work into a unified structure of knowledge, as other sciences do. It would at the same time establish an authority within criticism for the public critic and the man of taste.

We should be careful to realize what the possibility of such an intermediate criticism implies. It implies that at no point is there any direct learning of literature itself. Physics is an organized body of knowledge about nature, and a student of it says that he is learning physics, not nature. Art, like nature, has to be distinguished from the systematic study of it, which is criticism. It is therefore impossible to "learn literature": one learns about it in a certain way, but what one learns, transitively, is the criticism of literature. Similarly, the difficulty often felt in "teaching literature" arises from the fact that it cannot be done: the criticism of literature is all that can be directly taught. Literature is not a subject of study, but an object of study: the fact that it consists of words, as we

have seen, makes us confuse it with the talking verbal disciplines. The libraries reflect our confusion by cataloguing criticism as one of the subdivisions of literature. Criticism, rather, is to art what history is to action and philosophy to wisdom: a verbal imitation of a human productive power which in itself does not speak. And just as there is nothing which the philosopher cannot consider philosophically, and nothing which the historian cannot consider historically, so the critic should be able to construct and dwell in a conceptual universe of his own. This critical universe seems to be one of the things implied in Arnold's conception of culture.

I am not, therefore, saying that literary criticism at present must be doing the wrong thing and ought to be doing something else. I am saying that it should be possible to get a comprehensive view of what it actually is doing. It is necessary that scholars and public critics should continue to make their contributions to criticism. It is not necessary that the thing they contribute to should be invisible, as the coral island is invisible to the polyp. In the study of literary scholarship the student becomes aware of an undertow carrying him away from literature. He finds that literature is the central division of the humanities, flanked on one side by history and on the other by philosophy. As literature is not itself an organized structure of knowledge, the critic has to turn to the conceptual framework of the historian for events, and to that of the philosopher for ideas. Asked what he is working on, the critic will invariably say that he is working on Donne, or Shelley's thought, or the 1640-1660 period, or give some other answer implying that history, philosophy, or literature itself is the conceptual basis of his criticism. In the unlikely event that he was concerned with the theory of criticism, he would say that he was working on a "general" topic. It is clear that the absence of systematic criticism has created a power vacuum, and all the neighboring disciplines have moved in. Hence the prominence of the Archimedes fallacy mentioned above: the notion that if we plant our feet solidly enough in Christian or democratic or Marxist values we shall be able to lift the whole of criticism at once with a dialectic crowbar. But if the varied interests of critics could be related to a central expanding pattern of systematic comprehension, this undertow would disappear, and they would be seen as converging on criticism instead of running away from it.

One proof that a systematic comprehension of a subject actually

exists is the ability to write an elementary textbook expounding its fundamental principles. It would be interesting to see what such a book on criticism would contain. It would not start with a clear answer to the first question of all: "What is literature?" We have no real standards to distinguish a verbal structure that is literary from one that is not, and no idea what to do with the vast penumbra of books that may be claimed for literature because they are written with "style," or are useful as "background," or have simply got into a university course of "great books." We then discover that we have no word, corresponding to "poem" in poetry or "play" in drama, to describe a work of literary art. It is all very well for Blake to say that to generalize is to be an idiot, but when we find ourselves in the cultural situation of savages who have words for ash and willow and no word for tree, we wonder if there is not such a thing as being *too* deficient in the capacity to generalize.

So much for page one of our handbook. Page two would be the place to explain what seems the most far-reaching of literary facts, the distinction in rhythm between verse and prose. But it appears that a distinction which anyone can make in practice cannot be made as yet by any critic in theory. We continue to riffle through the blank pages. The next thing to do is to outline the primary categories of literature, such as drama, epic, prose fiction, and the like. This at any rate is what Aristotle assumed to be the obvious first step in criticism. We discover that the critical theory of genres is stuck precisely where Aristotle left it. The very word "genre" sticks out in an English sentence as the unpronounceable and alien thing it is. Most critical efforts to handle such generic terms as "epic" and "novel" are chiefly interesting as examples of the psychology of rumor. Thanks to the Greeks, we can distinguish tragedy from comedy in drama, and so we still tend to assume that each is the half of drama that is not the other half. When we come to deal with such forms as the masque, opera, movie, ballet, puppet-play, mystery-play, morality, commedia dell' arte, and Zauberspiel, we find ourselves in the position of the Renaissance doctors who refused to treat syphilis because Galen said nothing about it.

The Greeks hardly needed to develop a classification of prose forms. We do, but have never done so. We have, as usual, no word for a work of prose fiction, so the word "novel" does duty for everything, and thereby loses its only real meaning as the name of a genre. The circulating-library distinction between fiction and non-

fiction, between books which are about things admitted not to be true and books which are about everything else, is apparently exhaustive enough for critics. Asked what form of prose fiction *Gulliver's Travels* belongs to, there are few critics who, if they could give the answer "Menippean satire," would regard it as knowledge essential for dealing with the book, although some notion of what a novel is is surely a prerequisite for dealing with a serious novelist. Other prose forms are even worse off. Western literature has been more influenced by the Bible than by any other book, but with all his respect for "sources," the critic knows little more about that influence than the fact that it exists. Biblical typology is so dead a language now that most readers, including scholars, cannot construe the superficial meaning of any poem which employs it. And so on. If criticism could ever be conceived as a coherent and systematic study, the elementary principles of which could be explained to any intelligent nineteen-year-old, then, from the point of view of such a conception, no critic now knows the first thing about criticism. What critics now have is a mystery-religion without a gospel, and they are initiates who can communicate, or quarrel, only with one another.

A theory of criticism whose principles apply to the whole of literature and account for every valid type of critical procedure is what I think Aristotle meant by poetics. Aristotle seems to me to approach poetry as a biologist would approach a system of organisms, picking out its genera and species, formulating the broad laws of literary experience, and in short writing as though he believed that there is a totally intelligible structure of knowledge attainable about poetry which is not poetry itself, or the experience of it, but poetics. One would imagine that, after two thousand years of post-Aristotelian literary activity, his views on poetics, like his views on the generation of animals, could be re-examined in the light of fresh evidence. Meanwhile, the opening words of the *Poetics*, in the Bywater translation, remain as good an introduction to the subject as ever, and describe the kind of approach that I have tried to keep in mind for myself:

> Our subject being poetry, I propose to speak not only of the art in general but also of its species and their respective capacities; of the structure of plot required for a good poem; of the number and nature of the constituent parts of a poem; and likewise of

any other matters in the same line of inquiry. Let us follow the natural order and begin with the primary facts.

Of course literature is only one of many arts, but this book is compelled to avoid the treatment of aesthetic problems outside of poetics. Every art, however, needs its own critical organization, and poetics will form a part of aesthetics as soon as aesthetics becomes the unified criticism of all the arts instead of whatever it is now.

Sciences normally begin in a state of naive induction: they tend first of all to take the phenomena they are supposed to interpret as data. Thus physics began by taking the immediate sensations of experience, classified as hot, cold, moist, and dry, as fundamental principles. Eventually physics turned inside out, and discovered that its real function was rather to explain what heat and moisture were. History began as chronicle; but the difference between the old chronicler and the modern historian is that to the chronicler the events he recorded were also the *structure* of his history, whereas the historian sees these events as historical phenomena, to be connected within a conceptual framework not only broader but different in shape from them. Similarly each modern science has had to take what Bacon calls (though in another context) an inductive leap, occupying a new vantage ground from which it can see its former data as new things to be explained. As long as astronomers regarded the movements of heavenly bodies as the structure of astronomy, they naturally regarded their own point of view as fixed. Once they thought of movement as itself explicable, a mathematical theory of movement became the conceptual framework, and so the way was cleared for the heliocentric solar system and the law of gravitation. As long as biology thought of animal and vegetable forms of life as constituting its subject, the different branches of biology were largely efforts of cataloguing. As soon as it was the existence of forms of life themselves that had to be explained, the theory of evolution and the conceptions of protoplasm and the cell poured into biology and completely revitalized it.

It occurs to me that literary criticism is now in such a state of naive induction as we find in a primitive science. Its materials, the masterpieces of literature, are not yet regarded as phenomena to be explained in terms of a conceptual framework which criticism

alone possesses. They are still regarded as somehow constituting the framework or structure of criticism as well. I suggest that it is time for criticism to leap to a new ground from which it can discover what the organizing or containing forms of its conceptual framework are. Criticism seems to be badly in need of a coordinating principle, a central hypothesis which, like the theory of evolution in biology, will see the phenomena it deals with as parts of a whole.

The first postulate of this inductive leap is the same as that of any science: the assumption of total coherence. Simple as this assumption appears, it takes a long time for a science to discover that it is in fact a totally intelligible body of knowledge. Until it makes this discovery, it has not been born as an individual science but remains an embryo within the body of some other subject. The birth of physics from "natural philosophy" and of sociology from "moral philosophy" will illustrate the process. It is also approximately true that the modern sciences have developed in the order of their closeness to mathematics. Thus physics and astronomy began to assume their modern form in the Renaissance, chemistry in the eighteenth century, biology in the nineteenth, and the social sciences in the twentieth. If criticism is a science, it is clearly a social science, and if it is developing only in our day, the fact is at least not an anachronism. Meanwhile, the myopia of specialization remains an inseparable part of naive induction. From such a perspective, "general" questions are humanly impossible to deal with, because they involve "covering" a frighteningly large field. The critic is in the position of a mathematician who has to deal with numbers so large that it would keep him scribbling digits until the next ice age even to write them out in their conventional form as integers. Critic and mathematician alike will have somehow to invent a less cumbersome notation.

Naive induction thinks of literature entirely in terms of the enumerative bibliography of literature: that is, it sees literature as a huge aggregate or miscellaneous pile of discrete "works." Clearly, if literature is nothing more than this, any systematic mental training based on it becomes impossible. Only one organizing principle has so far been discovered in literature, the principle of chronology. This supplies the magic word "tradition," which means that when we see the miscellaneous pile strung out along a chronological line, some coherence is given it by sheer sequence. But even tradition does not answer all our questions. Total literary

history gives us a glimpse of the possibility of seeing literature as a complication of a relatively restricted and simple group of formulas that can be studied in primitive culture. We next realize that the relation of later literature to these primitive formulas is by no means purely one of complication, as we find the primitive formulas reappearing in the greatest classics—in fact there seems to be a general tendency on the part of great classics to revert to them. This coincides with a feeling we have all had: that the study of mediocre works of art remains a random and peripheral form of critical experience, whereas the profound masterpiece draws us to a point at which we seem to see an enormous number of converging patterns of significance. We begin to wonder if we cannot see literature, not only as complicating itself in time, but as spread out in conceptual space from some kind of center that criticism could locate.

It is clear that criticism cannot be a systematic study unless there is a quality in literature which enables it to be so. We have to adopt the hypothesis, then, that just as there is an order of nature behind the natural sciences, so literature is not a piled aggregate of "works," but an order of words. A belief in an order of nature, however, is an inference from the intelligibility of the natural sciences; and if the natural sciences ever completely demonstrated the order of nature they would presumably exhaust their subject. Similarly, criticism, if a science, must be totally intelligible, but literature, as the order of words which makes the science possible, is, so far as we know, an inexhaustible source of new critical discoveries, and would be even if new works of literature ceased to be written. If so, then the search for a limiting principle in literature in order to discourage the development of criticism is mistaken. The absurd quantum formula of criticism, the assertion that the critic should confine himself to "getting out" of a poem exactly what the poet may vaguely be assumed to have been aware of "putting in," is one of the many slovenly illiteracies that the absence of systematic criticism has allowed to grow up. This quantum theory is the literary form of what may be called the fallacy of premature teleology. It corresponds, in the natural sciences, to the assertion that a phenomenon is as it is because Providence in its inscrutable wisdom made it so. That is, the critic is assumed to have no conceptual framework: it is simply his job to take a poem into which a poet has diligently stuffed a specific number of beauties or effects, and

complacently extract them one by one, like his prototype Little Jack Horner.

The first step in developing a genuine poetics is to recognize and get rid of meaningless criticism, or talking about literature in a way that cannot help to build up a systematic structure of knowledge. This includes all the sonorous nonsense that we so often find in critical generalities, reflective comments, ideological perorations, and other consequences of taking a large view of an unorganized subject. It includes all lists of the "best" novels or poems or writers, whether their particular virtue is exclusiveness or inclusiveness. It includes all casual, sentimental, and prejudiced value-judgments, and all the literary chit-chat which makes the reputations of poets boom and crash in an imaginary stock exchange. That wealthy investor Mr. Eliot, after dumping Milton on the market, is now buying him again; Donne has probably reached his peak and will begin to taper off; Tennyson may be in for a slight flutter but the Shelley stocks are still bearish. This sort of thing cannot be part of any systematic study, for a systematic study can only progress: whatever dithers or vacillates or reacts is merely leisure-class gossip. The history of taste is no more a part of the *structure* of criticism than the Huxley-Wilberforce debate is a part of the structure of biological science.

I believe that if this distinction is maintained and applied to the critics of the past, what they have said about real criticism will show an astonishing amount of agreement, in which the outlines of a coherent and systematic study will begin to emerge. In the history of taste, where there are no facts, and where all truths have been, in Hegelian fashion, split into half-truths in order to sharpen their cutting edges, we perhaps do feel that the study of literature is too relative and subjective ever to make any consistent sense. But as the history of taste has no organic connection with criticism, it can easily be separated. Mr. Eliot's essay *The Function of Criticism* begins by laying down the principle that the existing monuments of literature form an ideal order among themselves, and are not simply collections of the writings of individuals. This is criticism, and very fundamental criticism. Much of this book attempts to annotate it. Its solidity is indicated by its consistency with a hundred other statements that could be collected from the better critics of all ages. There follows a rhetorical debate which makes tradition and its opposite into personified and contending forces,

the former dignified with the titles of Catholic and Classical, the latter ridiculed by the epithet "Whiggery." This is the sort of thing that makes for confusion until we realize how easy it is to snip it off and throw it away. The debate is maintained against Mr. Middleton Murry, who is spoken of approvingly because "he is aware that there are definite positions to be taken, and that now and then one must actually reject something and select something else." There are no definite positions to be taken in chemistry or philology, and if there are any to be taken in criticism, criticism is not a field of genuine learning. For in any field of genuine learning, the only sensible response to the challenge "stand" is Falstaff's "so I do, against my will." One's "definite position" is one's weakness, the source of one's liability to error and prejudice, and to gain adherents to a definite position is only to multiply one's weakness like an infection.

The next step is to realize that criticism has a great variety of neighbors, and that the critic must enter into relations with them in any way that guarantees his own independence. He may want to know something of the natural sciences, but he need waste no time in emulating their methods. I understand that there is a Ph.D. thesis somewhere which displays a list of Hardy's novels in the order of the percentages of gloom they contain, but one does not feel that that sort of procedure should be encouraged. The critic may want to know something of the social sciences, but there can be no such thing as, for instance, a sociological "approach" to literature. There is no reason why a sociologist should not work exclusively on literary material, but if he does he should pay no attention to literary values. In his field Horatio Alger and the writer of the Elsie books may well be more important than Hawthorne or Melville, and a single issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal* worth all of Henry James. The critic is similarly under no obligation to sociological values, as the social conditions favorable to the production of great art are not necessarily those at which the social sciences aim. The critic may need to know something of religion, but by theological standards an orthodox religious poem will give a more satisfactory expression of its content than a heretical one: this makes nonsense in criticism, and there is nothing to be gained by confusing the standards of the two subjects.

Literature has been always recognized to be a marketable product, its producers being the creative writers and its consumers the culti-

vated readers, with the critics at their head. From this point of view the critic is, in the metaphor of our opening page, the middleman. He has some wholesaler's privileges, such as free review copies, but his function, as distinct from the bookseller's, is essentially a form of consumer's research. I recognize a second division of labor in literature, which, like other forms of mental construction, has a theory and a practice. The practitioner of literature and the producer of literature are not quite the same, though they overlap a good deal; the theorist of literature and the consumer of literature are not the same at all, even when they co-exist in the same man. The present book assumes that the theory of literature is as primary a humanistic and liberal pursuit as its practice. Hence, although it takes certain literary values for granted, as fully established by critical experience, it is not directly concerned with value-judgements. This fact needs explanation, as the value-judgement is often, and perhaps rightly for all I know, regarded as the distinguishing feature of the humanistic and liberal pursuit.

Value-judgements are subjective in the sense that they can be indirectly but not directly communicated. When they are fashionable or generally accepted, they look objective, but that is all. The demonstrable value-judgement is the donkey's carrot of literary criticism, and every new critical fashion, such as the current fashion for elaborate rhetorical analysis, has been accompanied by a belief that criticism has finally devised a definitive technique for separating the excellent from the less excellent. But this always turns out to be an illusion of the history of taste. Value-judgements are founded on the study of literature; the study of literature can never be founded on value-judgements. Shakespeare, we say, was one of a group of English dramatists working around 1600, and also one of the great poets of the world. The first part of this is a statement of fact, the second a value-judgement so generally accepted as to pass for a statement of fact. But it is not a statement of fact. It remains a value-judgement, and not a shred of systematic criticism can ever be attached to it.

There are two types of value-judgements, comparative and positive. Criticism founded on comparative values falls into two main divisions, according to whether the work of art is regarded as a product or as a possession. The former develops biographical criticism, which relates the work of art primarily to the man who wrote it. The

latter we may call tropical criticism, and it is primarily concerned with the contemporary reader. Biographical criticism concerns itself largely with comparative questions of greatness and personal authority. It regards the poem as the oratory of its creator, and it feels most secure when it knows of a definite, and preferably heroic, personality behind the poetry. If it cannot find such a personality, it may try to project one out of rhetorical ectoplasm, as Carlyle does in his essay on Shakespeare as a "heroic" poet. Tropical criticism deals comparatively with style and craftsmanship, with complexity of meaning and figurative assimilation. It tends to dislike and belittle the oratorical poets, and it can hardly deal at all with heroic personality. Both are essentially rhetorical forms of criticism, as one deals with the rhetoric of persuasive speech and the other with the rhetoric of verbal ornament, but each distrusts the other's kind of rhetoric.

Rhetorical value-judgements are closely related to social values, and are usually cleared through a customs-house of moral metaphors: sincerity, economy, subtlety, simplicity, and the like. But because poetics is undeveloped, a fallacy arises from the illegitimate extension of rhetoric into the theory of literature. The invariable mark of this fallacy is the selected tradition, illustrated with great clarity in Arnold's "touchstone" theory, where we proceed from the intuition of value represented by the touchstone to a system of ranking poets in classes. The practice of comparing poets by weighing their lines (no new invention, as it was ridiculed by Aristophanes in *The Frogs*) is used by both biographical and tropical critics, mainly in order to deny first-class rating to those in favor with the opposite group.

When we examine the touchstone technique in Arnold, however, certain doubts arise about his motivation. The line from *The Tempest*, "In the dark backward and abysm of time," would do very well as a touchstone line. One feels that the line "Yet a tailor might scratch her where'er she did itch" somehow would not do, though it is equally Shakespearean and equally essential to the same play. (An extreme form of the same kind of criticism would, of course, deny this and insist that the line had been interpolated by a vulgar hack.) Some principle is clearly at work here which is much more highly selective than a purely critical experience of the play would be.

Arnold's "high seriousness" evidently is closely connected with

the view that epic and tragedy, because they deal with ruling-class figures and require the high style of decorum, are the aristocrats of literary forms. All his Class One touchstones are from, or judged by the standards of, epic and tragedy. Hence his demotion of Chaucer and Burns to Class Two seems to be affected by a feeling that comedy and satire should be kept in their proper place, like the moral standards and the social classes which they symbolize. We begin to suspect that the literary value-judgements are projections of social ones. Why does Arnold *want* to rank poets? He says that we increase our admiration for those who manage to stay in Class One after we have made it very hard for them to do so. This being clearly nonsense, we must look further. When we read "in poetry the distinction between excellent and inferior . . . is of paramount importance . . . because of the high destinies of poetry," we begin to get a clue. We see that Arnold is trying to create a new scriptural canon out of poetry to serve as a guide for those social principles which he wants culture to take over from religion.

The treatment of criticism as the application of a social attitude is a natural enough result of what we have called the power vacuum in criticism. A systematic study alternates between inductive experience and deductive principles. In criticism rhetorical analysis provides some of the induction, and poetics, the theory of criticism, should be the deductive counterpart. There being no poetics, the critic is thrown back on prejudice derived from his existence as a social being. For prejudice is simply inadequate deduction, as a prejudice in the mind can never be anything but a major premise which is mostly submerged, like an iceberg.

It is not hard to see prejudice in Arnold, because his views have dated: it is a little harder when "high seriousness" becomes "maturity," or some other powerful persuader of more recent critical rhetoric. It is harder when the old question of what books one would take to a desert island emerges from parlor games, where it belongs, into an expensive library alleged to constitute the scriptural canon of democratic values. Rhetorical value-judgements usually turn on questions of decorum, and the central conception of decorum is the difference between high, middle, and low styles. These styles are suggested by the class structure of society, and criticism, if it is not to reject half the facts of literary experience, obviously has to look at art from the standpoint of an ideally classless society. Arnold himself points this out when he says that "culture seeks

to do away with classes." Every deliberately constructed hierarchy of values in literature known to me is based on a concealed social, moral, or intellectual analogy. This applies whether the analogy is conservative and Romantic, as it is in Arnold, or radical, giving the top place to comedy, satire, and the values of prose and reason, as it is in Bernard Shaw. The various pretexts for minimizing the communicative power of certain writers, that they are obscure or obscene or nihilistic or reactionary or what not, generally turn out to be disguises for a feeling that the views of decorum held by the ascendant social or intellectual class ought to be either maintained or challenged. These social fixations keep changing, like a fan turning in front of a light, and the changing inspires the belief that posterity eventually discovers the whole truth about art.

A selective approach to tradition, then, invariably has some ultra-critical joker concealed in it. There is no question of accepting the whole of literature as the basis of study, but a tradition (or, of course, "the" tradition) is abstracted from it and attached to contemporary social values, being then used to document those values. The hesitant reader is invited to try the following exercise. Pick three big names at random, work out the eight possible combinations of promotion and demotion (on a simplified, or two-class, basis) and defend each in turn. Thus if the three names picked were Shakespeare, Milton, and Shelley, the agenda would run:

1. Demoting Shelley, on the ground that he is immature in technique and profundity of thought compared to the others.

2. Demoting Milton, on the ground that his religious obscurantism and heavy doctrinal content impair the spontaneity of his utterance.

3. Demoting Shakespeare, on the ground that his detachment from ideas makes his dramas a reflection of life rather than a creative attempt to improve it.

4. Promoting Shakespeare, on the ground that he preserves an integrity of poetic vision which in the others is obfuscated by didacticism.

5. Promoting Milton, on the ground that his penetration of the highest mysteries of faith raises him above Shakespeare's unvarying worldliness and Shelley's callowness.

6. Promoting Shelley, on the ground that his love of freedom

speaks to the heart of modern man more immediately than poets who accepted outworn social or religious values.

7. Promoting all three (for this a special style, which we may call the peroration style, should be used).

8. Demoting all three, on the ground of the untidiness of English genius when examined by French or Classical or Chinese standards.

The reader may sympathize with some of these "positions," as they are called, more than with others, and so be seduced into thinking that one of them must be right, and that it is important to decide which one it is. But long before he has finished his assignment he will realize that the whole procedure involved is an anxiety neurosis prompted by a moral censor, and is totally devoid of content. Of course, in addition to the moralists, there are poets who regard only those other poets as authentic who sound like themselves; there are critics who enjoy making religious, anti-religious, or political campaigns with toy soldiers labelled "Milton" or "Shelley" more than they enjoy studying poetry; there are students who have urgent reasons for making as much edifying reading as possible superfluous. But a conspiracy even of all these still does not make criticism.

The social dialectics applied externally to criticism, then, are, *within criticism*, pseudo-dialectics, or false rhetoric. It remains to try to define the true dialectic of criticism. On this level the biographical critic becomes the historical critic. He develops from hero-worship towards total and indiscriminate acceptance: there is nothing "in his field" that he is not prepared to read with interest. From a purely historical point of view, however, cultural phenomena are to be read in their own context without contemporary application. We study them as we do the stars, seeing their interrelationships but not approaching them. Hence historical criticism needs to be complemented by a corresponding activity growing out of tropical criticism.

We may call this ethical criticism, interpreting ethics not as a rhetorical comparison of social facts to predetermined values, but as the consciousness of the presence of society. As a critical category this would be the sense of the real presence of culture in the community. Ethical criticism, then, deals with art as a communication from the past to the present, and is based on the conception of the total and simultaneous possession of past culture. An exclusive de-

votion to it, ignoring historical criticism, would lead to a naive translation of all cultural phenomena into our own terms without regard to their original character. As a counterweight to historical criticism, it is designed to express the contemporary impact of all art, without selecting a tradition. Every new critical fashion has increased the appreciation of some poets and depreciated others, as the increase of interest in the metaphysical poets tended to depreciate the Romantics about twenty-five years ago. On the ethical level we can see that every increase of appreciation has been right, and every decrease wrong: that criticism has no business to react against things, but should show a steady advance toward undiscriminating catholicity. Oscar Wilde said that only an auctioneer could be equally appreciative of all kinds of art: he had of course the public critic in mind, but even the public critic's job of getting the treasures of culture into the hands of the people who want them is largely an auctioneer's job. And if this is true of him, it is *a fortiori* true of the scholarly critic.

The dialectic axis of criticism, then, has as one pole the total acceptance of the data of literature, and as the other the total acceptance of the potential values of those data. This is the real level of culture and of liberal education, the fertilizing of life by learning, in which the systematic progress of scholarship flows into a systematic progress of taste and understanding. On this level there is no itch to make weighty judgements, and none of the ill effects which follow the debauchery of judiciousness, and have made the word critic a synonym for an educated shrew. Comparative estimates of value are really inferences, most valid when silent ones, from critical practice, not expressed principles guiding its practice. The critic will find soon, and constantly, that Milton is a more rewarding and suggestive poet to work with than Blackmore. But the more obvious this becomes, the less time he will want to waste in belaboring the point. For belaboring the point is all he can do: any criticism motivated by a desire to establish or prove it will be merely one more document in the history of taste. There is doubtless much in the culture of the past which will always be of comparatively slight value to the present. But the difference between redeemable and irredeemable art, being based on the *total* experience of criticism, can never be theoretically formulated. There are too many Cinderellas among the poets, too many stones

rejected from one fashionable building that have become heads of the next corner.

There may, then, be such things as rules of critical procedure, and laws, in the sense of the patterns of observed phenomena, of literary practice. All efforts of critics to discover rules or laws in the sense of moral mandates telling the artist what he ought to do, or have done, to be an authentic artist, have failed. "Poetry," said Shelley, "and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers, cannot subsist together." There is no such art, and there never has been. The substitution of subordination and value-judgement for coordination and description, the substitution of "all poets should" for "some poets do," is only a sign that all the relevant facts have not yet been considered. Critical statements with "must" or "should" in their predicates are either pedantries or tautologies, depending on whether they are taken seriously or not. Thus a dramatic critic may wish to say "all plays must have unity of action." If he is a pedant, he will then try to define unity of action in specific terms. But creative power is versatile, and he is sure to find himself sooner or later asserting that some perfectly reputable dramatist, whose effectiveness on the stage has been proved over and over again, does not exhibit the unity of action he has defined, and is consequently not writing what he regards as plays at all. The critic who attempts to apply such principles in a more liberal or more cautious spirit will soon have to broaden his conceptions to the point, not of course of saying, but of trying to conceal the fact that he is saying, "all plays that have unity of action must have unity of action," or, more simply and more commonly, "all good plays must be good plays."

Criticism, in short, and aesthetics generally, must learn to do what ethics has already done. There was a time when ethics could take the simple form of comparing what man does with what he ought to do, known as the good. The "good" invariably turned out to be whatever the author of the book was accustomed to and found sanctioned by his community. Ethical writers now, though they still have values, tend to look at their problems rather differently. But a procedure which is hopelessly outmoded in ethics is still in vogue among writers on aesthetic problems. It is still possible for a critic to define as authentic art whatever he happens to like, and to go on to assert that what he happens not to like is, in terms of that definition, not authentic art. The argument has the great

advantage of being irrefutable, as all circular arguments are, but it is shadow and not substance.

The odious comparisons of greatness, then, may be left to take care of themselves, for even when we feel obliged to assent to them they are still only unproductive platitudes. The real concern of the evaluating critic is with positive value, with the goodness, or perhaps the genuineness, of the poem rather than with the greatness of its author. Such criticism produces the direct value-judgement of informed good taste, the proving of art on the pulses, the disciplined response of a highly organized nervous system to the impact of poetry. No critic in his senses would try to belittle the importance of this; nevertheless there are some caveats even here. In the first place, it is superstition to believe that the swift intuitive certainty of good taste is infallible. Good taste follows and is developed by the study of literature; its precision results from knowledge, but does not produce knowledge. Hence the accuracy of any critic's good taste is no guarantee that its inductive basis in literary experience is adequate. This may still be true even after the critic has learned to base his judgements on his experience of literature and not on his social, moral, religious, or personal anxieties. Honest critics are continually finding blind spots in their taste: they discover the possibility of recognizing a valid form of poetic experience without being able to realize it for themselves.

In the second place, the positive value-judgement is founded on a direct experience which is central to criticism yet forever excluded from it. Criticism can account for it only in critical terminology, and that terminology can never recapture or include the original experience. The original experience is like the direct vision of color, or the direct sensation of heat or cold, that physics "explains" in what, from the point of view of the experience itself, is a quite irrelevant way. However disciplined by taste and skill, the experience of literature is, like literature itself, unable to speak. "If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off," said Emily Dickinson, "I know this is poetry." This remark is perfectly sound, but it relates only to criticism as experience. The reading of literature should, like prayer in the Gospels, step out of the talking world of criticism into the private and secret presence of literature. Otherwise the reading will not be a genuine literary experience, but a mere reflection of critical conventions, memories, and prejudices. The presence of incommunicable experience in the

center of criticism will always keep criticism an art, as long as the critic recognizes that criticism comes out of it but cannot be built on it.

Thus, though the normal development of a critic's taste is toward greater tolerance and catholicity, still criticism as knowledge is one thing, and value-judgements informed by taste are another. The attempt to bring the direct experience of literature into the structure of criticism produces the aberrations of the history of taste already dealt with. The attempt to reverse the procedure and bring criticism into direct experience will destroy the integrity of both. Direct experience, even if it is concerned with something already read hundreds of times, still tries to be a new and fresh experience each time, which is clearly impossible if the poem itself has been replaced by a critical view of the poem. To bring my own view that criticism as knowledge should constantly progress and reject nothing into direct experience would mean that the latter should progress toward a general stupor of satisfaction with everything written, which is not quite what I have in mind.

Finally, the skill developed from constant practice in the direct experience of literature is a special skill, like playing the piano, not the expression of a general attitude to life, like singing in the shower. The critic has a subjective background of experience formed by his temperament and by every contact with words he has made, including newspapers, advertisements, conversations, movies, and whatever he read at the age of nine. He has a specific skill in responding to literature which is no more like this subjective background, with all its private memories, associations, and arbitrary prejudices, than reading a thermometer is like shivering. Again, there is no one of critical ability who has not experienced intense and profound pleasure from something simultaneously with a low critical valuation of what produced it. There must be several dozen critical and aesthetic theories based on the assumption that subjective pleasure and the specific response to art are, or develop from, or ultimately become, the same thing. Yet every cultivated person who is not suffering from advanced paranoia knows that they are constantly distinct. Or, again, the ideal value may be quite different from the actual one. A critic may spend a thesis, a book, or even a life work on something that he candidly admits to be third-rate, simply because it is connected with something else that he thinks sufficiently important for his pains. No critical theory known to me takes any real account of the different systems

of valuation implied by one of the most common practices of criticism.

Now that we have swept out our interpreter's parlor in the spirit of the law, and raised the dust, we shall try it again with whatever unguents of revelation we may possess. It should hardly be necessary to point out that my polemic has been written in the first person plural, and is quite as much a confession as a polemic. It is clear, too, that a book of this kind can only be offered to a reader who has enough sympathy with its aims to overlook, in the sense not of ignoring but of seeing past, whatever strikes him as inadequate or simply wrong. I am convinced that if we wait for a fully qualified critic to tackle the subjects of these essays, we shall wait a long time. In order to keep the book within the bounds that would make it possible to write and publish it, I have proceeded deductively, and been rigorously selective in examples and illustrations. The deductiveness does not extend further than tactical method, and so far as I know there is no principle in the book which is claimed as a perfect major premise, without exceptions or negative instances. Such expressions as "normally," "usually," "regularly," or "as a rule" are thickly strewn throughout. An objection of the "what about so-and-so?" type may always be made by the reader without necessarily destroying statements based on collective observations, and there are many questions of the "where would you put so-and-so?" type that cannot be answered by the present writer.

Still, the schematic nature of this book is deliberate, and is a feature of it that I am unable, after long reflection, to apologize for. There is a place for classification in criticism, as in any other discipline which is more important than an elegant accomplishment of some mandarin caste. The strong emotional repugnance felt by many critics toward any form of schematization in poetics is again the result of a failure to distinguish criticism as a body of knowledge from the direct experience of literature, where every act is unique, and classification has no place. Whenever schematization appears in the following pages, no importance is attached to the schematic form itself, which may be only the result of my own lack of ingenuity. Much of it, I expect, and in fact hope, may be mere scaffolding, to be knocked away when the building is in better shape. The rest of it belongs to the systematic study of the formal causes of art.

FIRST ESSAY

Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes

First Essay

HISTORICAL CRITICISM: THEORY OF MODES

FICTIONAL MODES: INTRODUCTION

In the second paragraph of the *Poetics* Aristotle speaks of the differences in works of fiction which are caused by the different elevations of the characters in them. In some fictions, he says, the characters are better than we are, in others worse, in still others on the same level. This passage has not received much attention from modern critics, as the importance Aristotle assigns to goodness and badness seems to indicate a somewhat narrowly moralistic view of literature. Aristotle's words for good and bad, however, are *spoudaios* and *phaulos*, which have a figurative sense of weighty and light. In literary fictions the plot consists of somebody doing something. The somebody, if an individual, is the hero, and the something he does or fails to do is what he can do, or could have done, on the level of the postulates made about him by the author and the consequent expectations of the audience. Fictions, therefore, may be classified, not morally, but by the hero's power of action, which may be greater than ours, less, or roughly the same. Thus:

1. If superior in *kind* both to other men and to the environment of other men, the hero is a divine being, and the story about him will be a *myth* in the common sense of a story about a god. Such stories have an important place in literature, but are as a rule found outside the normal literary categories.

2. If superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of *romance*, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established. Here we have moved from myth, properly so called, into legend, folk tale, *märchen*, and their literary affiliates and derivatives.

3. If superior in degree to other men but not to his natural en-

vironment, the hero is a leader. He has authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours, but what he does is subject both to social criticism and to the order of nature. This is the hero of the *high mimetic* mode, of most epic and tragedy, and is primarily the kind of hero that Aristotle had in mind.

4. If superior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us: we respond to a sense of his common humanity, and demand from the poet the same canons of probability that we find in our own experience. This gives us the hero of the *low mimetic* mode, of most comedy and of realistic fiction. "High" and "low" have no connotations of comparative value, but are purely diagrammatic, as they are when they refer to Biblical critics or Anglicans. On this level the difficulty in retaining the word "hero," which has a more limited meaning among the preceding modes, occasionally strikes an author. Thackeray thus feels obliged to call *Vanity Fair* a novel without a hero.

5. If inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity, the hero belongs to the *ironic* mode. This is still true when the reader feels that he is or might be in the same situation, as the situation is being judged by the norms of a greater freedom.

Looking over this table, we can see that European fiction, during the last fifteen centuries, has steadily moved its center of gravity down the list. In the pre-medieval period literature is closely attached to Christian, late Classical, Celtic, or Teutonic myths. If Christianity had not been both an imported myth and a devourer of rival ones, this phase of Western literature would be easier to isolate. In the form in which we possess it, most of it has already moved into the category of romance. Romance divides into two main forms: a secular form dealing with chivalry and knight-errantry, and a religious form devoted to legends of saints. Both lean heavily on miraculous violations of natural law for their interest as stories. Fictions of romance dominate literature until the cult of the prince and the courtier in the Renaissance brings the high mimetic mode into the foreground. The characteristics of this mode are most clearly seen in the genres of drama, particularly tragedy, and national epic. Then a new kind of middle-class culture introduces the low mimetic, which predominates in English literature from Defoe's time to the end of the nineteenth century. In French literature it begins and ends about fifty years earlier. During the last hundred years,

most serious fiction has tended increasingly to be ironic in mode.

Something of the same progression may be traced in Classical literature too, in a greatly foreshortened form. Where a religion is mythological and polytheistic, where there are promiscuous incarnations, deified heroes and kings of divine descent, where the same adjective "godlike" can be applied either to Zeus or to Achilles, it is hardly possible to separate the mythical, romantic, and high mimetic strands completely. Where the religion is theological, and insists on a sharp division between divine and human natures, romance becomes more clearly isolated, as it does in the legends of Christian chivalry and sanctity, in the Arabian Nights of Mohammedanism, in the stories of the judges and thaumaturgic prophets of Israel. Similarly, the inability of the Classical world to shake off the divine leader in its later period has much to do with the abortive development of low mimetic and ironic modes that got barely started with Roman satire. At the same time the establishing of the high mimetic mode, the developing of a literary tradition with a consistent sense of an order of nature in it, is one of the great feats of Greek civilization. Oriental fiction does not, so far as I know, get very far away from mythical and romantic formulas.

We shall here deal chiefly with the five epochs of Western literature, as given above, using Classical parallels only incidentally. In each mode a distinction will be useful between naive and sophisticated literature. The word naive I take from Schiller's essay on naive and sentimental poetry: I mean by it, however, primitive or popular, whereas in Schiller it means something more like Classical. The word sentimental also means something else in English, but we do not have enough genuine critical terms to dispense with it. In quotation marks, therefore, "sentimental" refers to a later recreation of an earlier mode. Thus Romanticism is a "sentimental" form of romance, and the fairy tale, for the most part, a "sentimental" form of folk tale. Also there is a general distinction between fictions in which the hero becomes isolated from his society, and fictions in which he is incorporated into it. This distinction is expressed by the words "tragic" and "comic" when they refer to aspects of plot in general and not simply to forms of drama.

TRAGIC FICTIONAL MODES

Tragic stories, when they apply to divine beings, may be called

Dionysiac. These are stories of dying gods, like Hercules with his poisoned shirt and his pyre, Orpheus torn to pieces by the Bacchantes, Balder murdered by the treachery of Loki, Christ dying on the cross and marking with the words "Why hast thou forsaken me?" a sense of his exclusion, as a divine being, from the society of the Trinity.

The association of a god's death with autumn or sunset does not, in literature, necessarily mean that he is a god "of" vegetation or the sun, but only that he is a god capable of dying, whatever his department. But as a god is superior to nature as well as to other men, the death of a god appropriately involves what Shakespeare, in *Venus and Adonis*, calls the "solemn sympathy" of nature, the word solemn having here some of its etymological connections with ritual. Ruskin's pathetic fallacy can hardly be a fallacy when a god is the hero of the action, as when the poet of *The Dream of the Rood* tells us that all creation wept at the death of Christ. Of course there is never any real fallacy in making a purely imaginative alignment between man and nature, but the use of "solemn sympathy" in a piece of more realistic fiction indicates that the author is trying to give his hero some of the overtones of the mythical mode. Ruskin's example of a pathetic fallacy is "the cruel, crawling foam" from Kingsley's ballad about a girl drowned in the tide. But the fact that the foam is so described gives to Kingsley's Mary a faint coloring of the myth of Andromeda.

The same associations with sunset and the fall of the leaf linger in romance, where the hero is still half a god. In romance the suspension of natural law and the individualizing of the hero's exploits reduce nature largely to the animal and vegetable world. Much of the hero's life is spent with animals, or at any rate the animals that are incurable romantics, such as horses, dogs, and falcons, and the typical setting of romance is the forest. The hero's death or isolation thus has the effect of a spirit passing out of nature, and evokes a mood best described as elegiac. The elegiac presents a heroism unspoiled by irony. The inevitability in the death of Beowulf, the treachery in the death of Roland, the malignancy that compasses the death of the martyred saint, are of much greater emotional importance than any ironic complications of hybris and hamartia that may be involved. Hence the elegiac is often accompanied by a diffused, resigned, melancholy sense of the passing of time, of the old order changing and yielding to a new

one: one thinks of Beowulf looking, while he is dying, at the great stone monuments of the eras of history that vanished before him. In a very late "sentimental" form the same mood is well caught in Tennyson's *Passing of Arthur.*

Tragedy in the central or high mimetic sense, the fiction of the fall of a leader (he has to fall because that is the only way in which a leader can be isolated from his society), mingles the heroic with the ironic. In elegiac romance the hero's mortality is primarily a natural fact, the sign of his humanity; in high mimetic tragedy it is also a social and moral fact. The tragic hero has to be of a properly heroic size, but his fall is involved both with a sense of his relation to society and with a sense of the supremacy of natural law, both of which are ironic in reference. Tragedy belongs chiefly to the two indigenous developments of tragic drama in fifth-century Athens and seventeenth-century Europe from Shakespeare to Racine. Both belong to a period of social history in which an aristocracy is fast losing its effective power but still retains a good deal of ideological prestige.

The central position of high mimetic tragedy in the five tragic modes, balanced midway between godlike heroism and all-too-human irony, is expressed in the traditional conception of catharsis. The words pity and fear may be taken as referring to the two general directions in which emotion moves, whether towards an object or away from it. Naive romance, being closer to the wish-fulfilment dream, tends to absorb emotion and communicate it internally to the reader. Romance, therefore, is characterized by the acceptance of pity and fear, which in ordinary life relate to pain, as forms of pleasure. It turns fear at a distance, or terror, into the adventurous; fear at contact, or horror, into the marvellous, and fear without an object, or dread (*Angst*) into a pensive melancholy. It turns pity at a distance, or concern, into the theme of chivalrous rescue; pity at contact, or tenderness, into a languid and relaxed charm, and pity without an object (which has no name but is a kind of animism, or treating everything in nature as though it had human feelings) into creative fantasy. In sophisticated romance the characteristics peculiar to the form are less obvious, especially in tragic romance, where the theme of inevitable death works against the marvellous, and often forces it into the background. In *Romeo and Juliet,* for instance, the marvellous survives only in Mercutio's speech on Queen Mab. But this play is marked as closer to romance than

the later tragedies by the softening influences that work in the opposite direction from catharsis, draining off the irony, so to speak, from the main characters.

In high mimetic tragedy pity and fear become, respectively, favorable and adverse moral judgement, which are relevant to tragedy but not central to it. We pity Desdemona and fear Iago, but the central tragic figure is Othello, and our feelings about him are mixed. The particular thing called tragedy that happens to the tragic hero does not depend on his moral status. If it is causally related to something he has done, as it generally is, the tragedy is in the inevitability of the consequences of the act, not in its moral significance as an act. Hence the paradox that in tragedy pity and fear are raised and cast out. Aristotle's hamartia or "flaw," therefore, is not necessarily wrongdoing, much less moral weakness: it may be simply a matter of being a strong character in an exposed position, like Cordelia. The exposed position is usually the place of leadership, in which a character is exceptional and isolated at the same time, giving us that curious blend of the inevitable and the incongruous which is peculiar to tragedy. The principle of the hamartia of leadership can be more clearly seen in naive high mimetic tragedy, as we get it in *The Mirror for Magistrates* and similar collections of tales based on the theme of the wheel of fortune.

In low mimetic tragedy, pity and fear are neither purged nor absorbed into pleasures, but are communicated externally, as sensations. In fact the word "sensational" could have a more useful meaning in criticism if it were not merely an adverse value-judgement. The best word for low mimetic or domestic tragedy is, perhaps, pathos, and pathos has a close relation to the sensational reflex of tears. Pathos presents its hero as isolated by a weakness which appeals to our sympathy because it is on our own level of experience. I speak of a hero, but the central figure of pathos is often a woman or a child (or both, as in the death-scenes of Little Eva and Little Nell), and we have a whole procession of pathetic female sacrifices in English low mimetic fiction from Clarissa Harlowe to Hardy's Tess and James's Daisy Miller. We notice that while tragedy may massacre a whole cast, pathos is usually concentrated on a single character, partly because low mimetic society is more strongly individualized.

Again, in contrast to high mimetic tragedy, pathos is increased

by the inarticulateness of the victim. The death of an animal is usually pathetic, and so is the catastrophe of defective intelligence that is frequent in modern American literature. Wordsworth, who as a low mimetic artist was one of our great masters of pathos, makes his sailor's mother speak in a flat, dumpy, absurdly inadequate style about her efforts to salvage her son's clothes and "other property"—or did before bad criticism made him spoil his poem. Pathos is a queer ghoulish emotion, and some failure of expression, real or simulated, seems to be peculiar to it. It will always leave a fluently plangent funeral elegy to go and batten on something like Swift's memoir of Stella. Highly articulate pathos is apt to become a factitious appeal to self-pity, or tear-jerking. The exploiting of fear in the low mimetic is also sensational, and is a kind of pathos in reverse. The terrible figure in this tradition, exemplified by Heathcliff, Simon Legree, and the villains of Dickens, is normally a ruthless figure strongly contrasted with some kind of delicate virtue, generally a helpless victim in his power.

The root idea of pathos is the exclusion of an individual on our own level from a social group to which he is trying to belong. Hence the central tradition of sophisticated pathos is the study of the isolated mind, the story of how someone recognizably like ourselves is broken by a conflict between the inner and outer world, between imaginative reality and the sort of reality which is established by a social consensus. Such tragedy may be concerned, as it often is in Balzac, with a mania or obsession about rising in the world, this being the central low mimetic counterpart of the fiction of the fall of the leader. Or it may deal with the conflict of inner and outer life, as in *Madame Bovary* and *Lord Jim*, or with the impact of inflexible morality on experience, as in Melville's *Pierre* and Ibsen's *Brand*. The type of character involved here we may call by the Greek word *alazon*, which means impostor, someone who pretends or tries to be something more than he is. The most popular types of *alazon* are the *miles gloriosus* and the learned crank or obsessed philosopher.

We are most familiar with such characters in comedy, where they are looked at from the outside, so that we see only the social mask. But the *alazon* may be one aspect of the tragic hero as well: the touch of *miles gloriosus* in Tamburlaine, even in Othello, is unmistakable, as is the touch of the obsessed philosopher in Faustus and Hamlet. It is very difficult to study a case of obsession, or even

hypocrisy, from the inside, in a dramatic medium: even Tartuffe, as far as his dramatic function is concerned, is a study of parasitism rather than hypocrisy. The analysis of obsession belongs more naturally to prose fiction or to a semi-dramatic medium like the Browning monologue. For all the differences in technique and attitude, Conrad's Lord Jim is a lineal descendant of the *miles gloriosus*, of the same family as Shaw's Sergius or Synge's playboy, who are parallel types in a dramatic and comic setting. It is, of course, quite possible to take the *alazon* at his own valuation: this is done for instance by the creators of the inscrutable gloomy heroes in Gothic thrillers, with their wild or piercing eyes and their dark hints of interesting sins. The result as a rule is not tragedy so much as the kind of melodrama which may be defined as comedy without humor. When it rises out of this, we have a study of obsession presented in terms of fear instead of pity: that is, the obsession takes the form of an unconditioned will that drives its victim beyond the normal limits of humanity. One of the clearest examples is Heathcliff, who plunges through death itself into vampirism; but there are many others, ranging from Conrad's Kurtz to the mad scientists of popular fiction.

The conception of irony meets us in Aristotle's *Ethics*, where the *eiron* is the man who deprecates himself, as opposed to the *alazon*. Such a man makes himself invulnerable, and, though Aristotle disapproves of him, there is no question that he is a predestined artist, just as the *alazon* is one of his predestined victims. The term irony, then, indicates a technique of appearing to be less than one is, which in literature becomes most commonly a technique of saying as little and meaning as much as possible, or, in a more general way, a pattern of words that turns away from direct statement or its own obvious meaning. (I am not using the word ironic itself in any unfamiliar sense, though I am exploring some of its implications.)

The ironic fiction-writer, then, deprecates himself and, like Socrates, pretends to know nothing, even that he is ironic. Complete objectivity and suppression of all explicit moral judgements are essential to his method. Thus pity and fear are not raised in ironic art: they are reflected to the reader from the art. When we try to isolate the ironic as such, we find that it seems to be simply the attitude of the poet as such, a dispassionate construction of a literary form, with all assertive elements, implied or expressed,

eliminated. Irony, as a mode, is born from the low mimetic; it takes life exactly as it finds it. But the ironist fables without moralizing, and has no object but his subject. Irony is naturally a sophisticated mode, and the chief difference between sophisticated and naive irony is that the naive ironist calls attention to the fact that he is being ironic, whereas sophisticated irony merely states, and lets the reader add the ironic tone himself. Coleridge, noting an ironic comment in Defoe, points out how Defoe's subtlety could be made crude and obvious simply by over-punctuating the same words with italics, dashes, exclamation points, and other signs of being oneself aware of irony.

Tragic irony, then, becomes simply the study of tragic isolation as such, and it thereby drops out the element of the special case, which in some degree is in all the other modes. Its hero does not necessarily have any tragic hamartia or pathetic obsession: he is only somebody who gets isolated from his society. Thus the central principle of tragic irony is that whatever exceptional happens to the hero should be causally out of line with his character. Tragedy is intelligible, not in the sense of having any pat moral to go with it, but in the sense that Aristotle had in mind when he spoke of discovery or recognition as essential to the tragic plot. Tragedy is intelligible because its catastrophe is plausibly related to its situation. Irony isolates from the tragic situation the sense of arbitrariness, of the victim's having been unlucky, selected at random or by lot, and no more deserving of what happens to him than anyone else would be. If there is a reason for choosing him for catastrophe, it is an inadequate reason, and raises more objections than it answers.

Thus the figure of a typical or random victim begins to crystallize in domestic tragedy as it deepens in ironic tone. We may call this typical victim the *pharmakos* or scapegoat. We meet a *pharmakos* figure in Hawthorne's Hester Prynne, in Melville's Billy Budd, in Hardy's Tess, in the Septimus of *Mrs. Dalloway,* in stories of persecuted Jews and Negroes, in stories of artists whose genius makes them Ishmaels of a bourgeois society. The *pharmakos* is neither innocent nor guilty. He is innocent in the sense that what happens to him is far greater than anything he has done provokes, like the mountaineer whose shout brings down an avalanche. He is guilty in the sense that he is a member of a guilty society, or living in a world where such injustices are an inescapable part of existence.

The two facts do not come together; they remain ironically apart. The *pharmakos*, in short, is in the situation of Job. Job can defend himself against the charge of having done something that makes his catastrophe morally intelligible; but the success of his defense makes it morally unintelligible.

Thus the incongruous and the inevitable, which are combined in tragedy, separate into opposite poles of irony. At one pole is the inevitable irony of human life. What happens to, say, the hero of Kafka's *Trial* is not the result of what he has done, but the end of what he is, which is an "all too human" being. The archetype of the inevitably ironic is Adam, human nature under sentence of death. At the other pole is the incongruous irony of human life, in which all attempts to transfer guilt to a victim give that victim something of the dignity of innocence. The archetype of the incongruously ironic is Christ, the perfectly innocent victim excluded from human society. Halfway between is the central figure of tragedy, who is human and yet of a heroic size which often has in it the suggestion of divinity. His archetype is Prometheus, the immortal titan rejected by the gods for befriending men. The Book of Job is not a tragedy of the Promethean type, but a tragic irony in which the dialectic of the divine and the human nature works itself out. By justifying himself as a victim of God, Job tries to make himself into a tragic Promethean figure, but he does not succeed.

These references may help to explain something that might otherwise be a puzzling fact about modern literature. Irony descends from the low mimetic: it begins in realism and dispassionate observation. But as it does so, it moves steadily towards myth, and dim outlines of sacrificial rituals and dying gods begin to reappear in it. Our five modes evidently go around in a circle. This reappearance of myth in the ironic is particularly clear in Kafka and in Joyce. In Kafka, whose work, from one point of view, may be said to form a series of commentaries on the Book of Job, the common contemporary types of tragic irony, the Jew, the artist, Everyman, and a kind of sombre Chaplin clown, are all found, and most of these elements are combined, in a comic form, in Joyce's Shem. However, ironic myth is frequent enough elsewhere, and many features of ironic literature are unintelligible without it. Henry James learned his trade mainly from the realists and naturalists of the nineteenth century, but if we were to judge, for example, the story called *The Altar of the Dead* purely by low mimetic standards,

we should have to call it a tissue of improbable coincidence, inadequate motivation, and inconclusive resolution. When we look at it as ironic myth, a story of how the god of one person is the *pharmakos* of another, its structure becomes simple and logical.

COMIC FICTIONAL MODES

The theme of the comic is the integration of society, which usually takes the form of incorporating a central character into it. The mythical comedy corresponding to the death of the Dionysiac god is Apollonian, the story of how a hero is accepted by a society of gods. In Classical literature the theme of acceptance forms part of the stories of Hercules, Mercury, and other deities who had a probation to go through, and in Christian literature it is the theme of salvation, or, in a more concentrated form, of assumption: the comedy that stands just at the end of Dante's *Commedia*. The mode of romantic comedy corresponding to the elegiac is best described as idyllic, and its chief vehicle is the pastoral. Because of the social interest of comedy, the idyllic cannot equal the introversion of the elegiac, but it preserves the theme of escape from society to the extent of idealizing a simplified life in the country or on the frontier (the pastoral of popular modern literature is the Western story). The close association with animal and vegetable nature that we noted in the elegiac recurs in the sheep and pleasant pastures (or the cattle and ranches) of the idyllic, and the same easy connection with myth recurs in the fact that such imagery is often used, as it is in the Bible, for the theme of salvation.

The clearest example of high mimetic comedy is the Old Comedy of Aristophanes. The New Comedy of Menander is closer to the low mimetic, and through Plautus and Terence its formulas were handed down to the Renaissance, so that there has always been a strongly low mimetic bias to social comedy. In Aristophanes there is usually a central figure who constructs his (or her) own society in the teeth of strong opposition, driving off one after another all the people who come to prevent or exploit him, and eventually achieving a heroic triumph, complete with mistresses, in which he is sometimes assigned the honors of a reborn god. We notice that just as there is a catharsis of pity and fear in tragedy, so there is a catharsis of the corresponding comic emotions, which are sympathy and ridicule, in Old Comedy. The comic hero will get his triumph whether what he has done is sensible or silly, honest or rascally.

Thus Old Comedy, like the tragedy contemporary with it, is a blend of the heroic and the ironic. In some plays this fact is partly concealed by Aristophanes' strong desire to get his own opinion of what the hero is doing into the record, but his greatest comedy, *The Birds*, preserves an exquisite balance between comic heroism and comic irony.

New Comedy normally presents an erotic intrigue between a young man and a young woman which is blocked by some kind of opposition, usually paternal, and resolved by a twist in the plot which is the comic form of Aristotle's "discovery," and is more manipulated than its tragic counterpart. At the beginning of the play the forces thwarting the hero are in control of the play's society, but after a discovery in which the hero becomes wealthy or the heroine respectable, a new society crystallizes on the stage around the hero and his bride. The action of the comedy thus moves towards the incorporation of the hero into the society that he naturally fits. The hero himself is seldom a very interesting person: in conformity with low mimetic decorum, he is ordinary in his virtues, but socially attractive. In Shakespeare and in the kind of romantic comedy that most closely resembles his there is a development of these formulas in a more distinctively high mimetic direction. In the figure of Prospero we have one of the few approaches to the Aristophanic technique of having the whole comic action projected by a central character. Usually Shakespeare achieves his high mimetic pattern by making the struggle of the repressive and the desirable societies a struggle between two levels of existence, the former like our own world or worse, the latter enchanted and idyllic. This point will be dealt with more fully later.

For the reasons given above the domestic comedy of later fiction carries on with much the same conventions as were used in the Renaissance. Domestic comedy is usually based on the Cinderella archetype, the kind of thing that happens when Pamela's virtue is rewarded, the incorporation of an individual very like the reader into the society aspired to by both, a society ushered in with a happy rustle of bridal gowns and banknotes. Here again, Shakespearean comedy may marry off eight or ten people of approximately equal dramatic interest, just as a high mimetic tragedy may kill the same number, but in domestic comedy such diffusion of sexual energy is more rare. The chief difference between high and low mimetic comedy, however, is that the resolution of the latter

more frequently involves a social promotion. More sophisticated writers of low mimetic comedy often present the same success-story formula with the moral ambiguities that we have found in Aristophanes. In Balzac or Stendhal a clever and ruthless scoundrel may achieve the same kind of success as the virtuous heroes of Samuel Smiles and Horatio Alger. Thus the comic counterpart of the *alazon* seems to be the clever, likeable, unprincipled *picaro* of the picaresque novel.

In studying ironic comedy we must start with the theme of driving out the *pharmakos* from the point of view of society. This appeals to the kind of relief we are expected to feel when we see Jonson's Volpone condemned to the galleys, Shylock stripped of his wealth, or Tartuffe taken off to prison. Such a theme, unless touched very lightly, is difficult to make convincing, for the reasons suggested in connection with ironic tragedy. Insisting on the theme of social revenge on an individual, however great a rascal he may be, tends to make him look less involved in guilt and the society more so. This is particularly true of characters who have been trying to amuse either the actual or the internal audience, and who are the comic counterparts of the tragic hero as artist. The rejection of the entertainer, whether fool, clown, buffoon, or simpleton, can be one of the most terrible ironies known to art, as the rejection of Falstaff shows, and certain scenes in Chaplin.

In some religious poetry, for example at the end of the *Paradiso*, we can see that literature has an upper limit, a point at which an imaginative vision of an eternal world becomes an experience of it. In ironic comedy we begin to see that art has also a lower limit in actual life. This is the condition of savagery, the world in which comedy consists of inflicting pain on a helpless victim, and tragedy in enduring it. Ironic comedy brings us to the figure of the scapegoat ritual and the nightmare dream, the human symbol that concentrates our fears and hates. We pass the boundary of art when this symbol becomes existential, as it does in the black man of a lynching, the Jew of a pogrom, the old woman of a witch hunt, or anyone picked up at random by a mob, like Cinna the poet in *Julius Caesar*. In Aristophanes the irony sometimes edges very close to mob violence because the attacks are personal: one thinks of all the easy laughs he gets, in play after play, at the pederasty of Cleisthenes or the cowardice of Cleonymus. In Aristophanes the word *pharmakos* means simply scoundrel, with no nonsense about

it. At the conclusion of *The Clouds,* where the poet seems almost to be summoning a lynching party to go and burn down Socrates' house, we reach the comic counterpart of one of the greatest masterpieces of tragic irony in literature, Plato's *Apology.*

But the element of *play* is the barrier that separates art from savagery, and playing at human sacrifice seems to be an important theme of ironic comedy. Even in laughter itself some kind of deliverance from the unpleasant, even the horrible, seems to be very important. We notice this particularly in all forms of art in which a large number of auditors are simultaneously present, as in drama, and, still more obviously, in games. We notice too that playing at sacrifice has nothing to do with any historical descent from sacrificial ritual, such as has been suggested for Old Comedy. All the features of such ritual, the king's son, the mimic death, the executioner, the substituted victim, are far more explicit in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* than they are in Aristophanes. There is certainly no evidence that baseball has descended from a ritual of human sacrifice, but the umpire is quite as much of a *pharmakos* as if it had: he is an abandoned scoundrel, a greater robber than Barabbas; he has the evil eye; the supporters of the losing team scream for his death. At play, mob emotions are boiled in an open pot, so to speak; in the lynching mob they are in a sealed furnace of what Blake would call moral virtue. The gladiatorial combat, in which the audience has the actual power of life and death over the people who are entertaining them, is perhaps the most concentrated of all the savage or demonic parodies of drama.

The fact that we are now in an ironic phase of literature largely accounts for the popularity of the detective story, the formula of how a man-hunter locates a *pharmakos* and gets rid of him. The detective story begins in the Sherlock Holmes period as an intensification of low mimetic, in the sharpening of attention to details that makes the dullest and most neglected trivia of daily living leap into mysterious and fateful significance. But as we move further away from this we move toward a ritual drama around a corpse in which a wavering finger of social condemnation passes over a group of "suspects" and finally settles on one. The sense of a victim chosen by lot is very strong, for the case against him is only plausibly manipulated. If it were really inevitable, we should have tragic irony, as in *Crime and Punishment,* where Raskolnikoff's crime is so interwoven with his character that there can be no ques-

tion of any "whodunit" mystery. In the growing brutality of the crime story (a brutality protected by the convention of the form, as it is conventionally impossible that the man-hunter can be mistaken in believing that one of his suspects is a murderer), detection begins to merge with the thriller as one of the forms of melodrama. In melodrama two themes are important: the triumph of moral virtue over villainy, and the consequent idealizing of the moral views assumed to be held by the audience. In the melodrama of the brutal thriller we come as close as it is normally possible for art to come to the pure self-righteousness of the lynching mob.

We should have to say, then, that all forms of melodrama, the detective story in particular, were advance propaganda for the police state, in so far as that represents the regularizing of mob violence, if it were possible to take them seriously. But it seems not to be possible. The protecting wall of play is still there. Serious melodrama soon gets entangled with its own pity and fear: the more serious it is, the more likely it is to be looked at ironically by the reader, its pity and fear seen as sentimental drivel and owlish solemnity, respectively. One pole of ironic comedy is the recognition of the absurdity of naive melodrama, or, at least, of the absurdity of its attempt to define the enemy of society as a person outside that society. From there it develops toward the opposite pole, which is true comic irony or satire, and which defines the enemy of society as a spirit within that society. Let us arrange the forms of ironic comedy from this point of view.

Cultivated people go to a melodrama to hiss the villain with an air of condescension: they are making a point of the fact that they cannot take his villainy seriously. We have here a type of irony which exactly corresponds to that of two other major arts of the ironic age, advertising and propaganda. These arts pretend to address themselves seriously to a subliminal audience of cretins, an audience that may not even exist, but which is assumed to be simple-minded enough to accept at their face value the statements made about the purity of a soap or a government's motives. The rest of us, realizing that irony never says precisely what it means, take these arts ironically, or, at least, regard them as a kind of ironic game. Similarly, we read murder stories with a strong sense of the unreality of the villainy involved. Murder is doubtless a serious crime, but if private murder really were a major threat to

our civilization it would not be relaxing to read about it. We may compare the abuse showered on the pimp in Roman comedy, which was similarly based on the indisputable ground that brothels are immoral.

The next step is an ironic comedy addressed to the people who can realize that murderous violence is less an attack on a virtuous society by a malignant individual than a symptom of that society's own viciousness. Such a comedy would be the kind of intellectualized parody of melodramatic formulas represented by, for instance, the novels of Graham Greene. Next comes the ironic comedy directed at the melodramatic spirit itself, an astonishingly persistent tradition in all comedy in which there is a large ironic admixture. One notes a recurring tendency on the part of ironic comedy to ridicule and scold an audience assumed to be hankering after sentiment, solemnity, and the triumph of fidelity and approved moral standards. The arrogance of Jonson and Congreve, the mocking of bourgeois sentiment in Goldsmith, the parody of melodramatic situations in Wilde and Shaw, belong to a consistent tradition. Molière had to please his king, but was not temperamentally an exception. To comic drama one may add the ridicule of melodramatic romance in the novelists, from Fielding to Joyce.

Finally comes the comedy of manners, the portrayal of a chattering-monkey society devoted to snobbery and slander. In this kind of irony the characters who are opposed to or excluded from the fictional society have the sympathy of the audience. Here we are close to a parody of tragic irony, as we can see in the appalling fate of the relatively harmless hero of Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust*. Or we may have a character who, with the sympathy of the author or audience, repudiates such a society to the point of deliberately walking out of it, becoming thereby a kind of *pharmakos* in reverse. This happens for instance at the conclusion of Aldous Huxley's *Those Barren Leaves*. It is more usual, however, for the artist to present an ironic deadlock in which the hero is regarded as a fool or worse by the fictional society, and yet impresses the real audience as having something more valuable than his society has. The obvious example, and certainly one of the greatest, is Dostoievsky's *The Idiot*, but there are many others. *The Good Soldier Schweik, Heaven's My Destination* and *The Horse's Mouth* are instances that will give some idea of the range of the theme.

What we have said about the return of irony to myth in tragic

modes thus holds equally well for comic ones. Even popular literature appears to be slowly shifting its center of gravity from murder stories to science fiction—or at any rate a rapid growth of science fiction is certainly a fact about contemporary popular literature. Science fiction frequently tries to imagine what life would be like on a plane as far above us as we are above savagery; its setting is often of a kind that appears to us as technologically miraculous. It is thus a mode of romance with a strong inherent tendency to myth.

The conception of a sequence of fictional modes should do something, let us hope, to give a more flexible meaning to some of our literary terms. The words "romantic" and "realistic," for instance, as ordinarily used, are relative or comparative terms: they illustrate tendencies in fiction, and cannot be used as simply descriptive adjectives with any sort of exactness. If we take the sequence *De Raptu Proserpinae, The Man of Law's Tale, Much Ado About Nothing, Pride and Prejudice, An American Tragedy,* it is clear that each work is "romantic" compared to its successors and "realistic" compared to its predecessors. On the other hand, the term "naturalism" shows up in its proper perspective as a phase of fiction which, rather like the detective story, though in a very different way, begins as an intensification of low mimetic, an attempt to describe life exactly as it is, and ends, by the very logic of that attempt, in pure irony. Thus Zola's obsession with ironic formulas gave him a reputation as a detached recorder of the human scene.

The difference between the ironic *tone* that we may find in low mimetic or earlier modes and the ironic *structure* of the ironic mode itself is not hard to sense in practice. When Dickens, for instance, uses irony the reader is invited to share in the irony, because certain standards of normality common to author and reader are assumed. Such assumptions are a mark of a relatively popular mode: as the example of Dickens indicates, the gap between serious and popular fiction is narrower in low mimetic than in ironic writing. The literary acceptance of relatively stable social norms is closely connected with the *reticence* of low mimetic as compared to ironic fiction. In low mimetic modes characters are usually presented as they appear to others, fully dressed and with a large section of both their physical lives and their inner mono-

logue carefully excised. Such an approach is entirely consistent with the other conventions involved.

If we were to make this distinction the basis of a comparative value-judgement, which would, of course, be a moral value-judgement disguised as a critical one, we should be compelled either to attack low mimetic conventions for being prudish and hypocritical and leaving too much of life out, or to attack ironic conventions for not being wholesome, healthy, popular, reassuring, and sound, like the conventions of Dickens. As long as we are concerned simply to distinguish between the conventions, we need only remark that the low mimetic is one step more heroic than the ironic, and that low mimetic reticence has the effect of making its characters, on the average, more heroic, or at least more dignified, than the characters in ironic fiction.

We may also apply our scheme to the principles of selection on which a writer of fiction operates. Let us take, as a random example, the use of ghosts in fiction. In a true myth there can obviously be no consistent distinction between ghosts and living beings. In romance we have real human beings, and consequently ghosts are in a separate category, but in a romance a ghost as a rule is merely one more character: he causes little surprise because his appearance is no more marvellous than many other events. In high mimetic, where we are within the order of nature, a ghost is relatively easy to introduce because the plane of experience is above our own, but when he appears he is an awful and mysterious being from what is perceptibly another world. In low mimetic, ghosts have been, ever since Defoe, almost entirely confined to a separate category of "ghost stories." In ordinary low mimetic fiction they are inadmissible, "in complaisance to the scepticism of a reader," as Fielding puts it, a skepticism which extends only to low mimetic conventions. The few exceptions, such as *Wuthering Heights*, go a long way to prove the rule—that is, we recognize a strong influence of romance in *Wuthering Heights*. In some forms of ironic fiction, such as the later works of Henry James, the ghost begins to come back as a fragment of a disintegrating personality.

Once we have learned to distinguish the modes, however, we must then learn to recombine them. For while one mode constitutes the underlying tonality of a work of fiction, any or all of the other four may be simultaneously present. Much of our sense of the subtlety of great literature comes from this modal counter-

point. Chaucer is a medieval poet specializing mainly in romance, whether sacred or secular. Of his pilgrims, the knight and the parson clearly present the norms of the society in which he functions as a poet, and, as we have them, the *Canterbury Tales* are contained by these two figures, who open and close the series. But to overlook Chaucer's mastery of low mimetic and ironic techniques would be as wrong as to think of him as a modern novelist who got into the Middle Ages by mistake. The tonality of *Antony and Cleopatra* is high mimetic, the story of the fall of a great leader. But it is easy to look at Mark Antony ironically, as a man enslaved by passion; it is easy to recognize his common humanity with ourselves; it is easy to see in him a romantic adventurer of prodigious courage and endurance betrayed by a witch; there are even hints of a superhuman being whose legs bestrid the ocean and whose downfall is a conspiracy of fate, explicable only to a soothsayer. To leave out any of these would oversimplify and belittle the play. Through such an analysis we may come to realize that the two essential facts about a work of art, that it is contemporary with its own time and that it is contemporary with ours, are not opposed but complementary facts.

Our survey of fictional modes has also shown us that the mimetic tendency itself, the tendency to verisimilitude and accuracy of description, is one of two poles of literature. At the other pole is something that seems to be connected both with Aristotle's word *mythos* and with the usual meaning of myth. That is, it is a tendency to tell a story which is in origin a story about characters who can do anything, and only gradually becomes attracted toward a tendency to tell a plausible or credible story. Myths of gods merge into legends of heroes; legends of heroes merge into plots of tragedies and comedies; plots of tragedies and comedies merge into plots of more or less realistic fiction. But these are change of social context rather than of literary form, and the constructive principles of story-telling remain constant through them, though of course they adapt to them. Tom Jones and Oliver Twist are typical enough as low mimetic characters, but the birth-mystery plots in which they are involved are plausible adaptations of fictional formulas that go back to Menander, and from Menander to Euripides' *Ion,* and from Euripides to legends like those of Perseus and Moses. We note in passing that imitation of nature in fiction produces, not truth or reality, but plausibility, and plausibility varies

in weight from a mere perfunctory concession in a myth or folk tale to a kind of censor principle in a naturalistic novel. Reading forward in history, therefore, we may think of our romantic, high mimetic and low mimetic modes as a series of *displaced* myths, *mythoi* or plot-formulas progressively moving over towards the opposite pole of verisimilitude, and then, with irony, beginning to move back.

THEMATIC MODES

Aristotle lists six aspects of poetry: three of them, melody, diction, and spectacle, form a group by themselves, and we shall consider them in due course. The other three are *mythos* or plot, *ethos*, which includes both characters and setting, and *dianoia* or "thought." The literary works we have so far been considering are works of fiction in which the plot is, as Aristotle called it, the "soul" or shaping principle, and the characters exist primarily as functions of the plot. But besides the internal fiction of the hero and his society, there is an external fiction which is a relation between the writer and the writer's society. Poetry may be as completely absorbed in its internal characters as it is in Shakespeare, or in Homer, where the poet himself simply points to his story and disappears, the second word of the *Odyssey*, *moi*, being all we get of him in that poem. But as soon as the poet's personality appears on the horizon, a relation with the reader is established which cuts across the story, and which may increase until there is no story at all apart from what the poet is conveying to his reader.

In such genres as novels and plays the internal fiction is usually of primary interest; in essays and in lyrics the primary interest is in *dianoia*, the idea or poetic thought (something quite different, of course, from other kinds of thought) that the reader gets from the writer. The best translation of *dianoia* is, perhaps, "theme," and literature with this ideal or conceptual interest may be called thematic. When a reader of a novel asks, "How is this story going to turn out?" he is asking a question about the plot, specifically about that crucial aspect of the plot which Aristotle calls discovery or *anagnorisis*. But he is equally likely to ask, "What's the *point* of this story?" This question relates to *dianoia*, and indicates that themes have their elements of discovery just as plots do.

It is easy to say that some literary works are fictional and others

thematic in their main emphasis. But clearly there is no such thing as *a* fictional or *a* thematic work of literature, for all four ethical elements (ethical in the sense of relating to character), the hero, the hero's society, the poet and the poet's readers, are always at least potentially present. There can hardly be a work of literature without some kind of relation, implied or expressed, between its creator and its auditors. When the audience the poet had in mind is superseded by posterity, the relation changes, but it still holds. On the other hand, even in lyrics and essays the writer is to some extent a fictional hero with a fictional audience, for if the element of fictional projection disappeared completely, the writing would become direct address, or straight discursive writing, and cease to be literature. A poet sending a love poem to his lady complaining of her cruelty has stereoscoped his four ethical elements into two, but the four are still there.

Hence every work of literature has both a fictional and a thematic aspect, and the question of which is more important is often simply a matter of opinion or emphasis in interpretation. We have cited Homer as the very type of impersonal fiction writer, but the main emphasis of Homeric criticism, down to about 1750 at least, has been overwhelmingly thematic, concerned with the *dianoia* or ideal of leadership implicit in the two epics. *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling,* is a novel named after its plot; *Sense and Sensibility* is named after its theme. But Fielding has as strong a thematic interest (revealed chiefly in the introductory chapters to the different books) as Jane Austen has in telling a good story. Both novels are strongly fictional in emphasis compared to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or *The Grapes of Wrath,* where the plot exists primarily to illustrate the themes of slavery and migratory labor respectively. They in their turn are fictional in emphasis compared to *The Pilgrim's Progress,* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* is fictional in emphasis compared to an essay of Montaigne. We note that as we move from fictional to thematic emphasis, the element represented by the term *mythos* tends to mean increasingly "narrative" rather than "plot."

When a work of fiction is written or interpreted thematically, it becomes a parable or illustrative fable. All formal allegories have, *ipso facto,* a strong thematic interest, though it does not follow, as is often said, that any thematic criticism of a work of fiction will turn it into an allegory (though it may and does allegorize, as we

shall see). Genuine allegory is a structural element in literature: it has to be there, and cannot be added by critical interpretation alone.

Again, nearly every civilization has, in its stock of traditional myths, a particular group which is thought of as more serious, more authoritative, more educational and closer to fact and truth than the rest. For most poets of the Christian era who have used both the Bible and Classical literature, the latter has not stood on the same plane of authority as the former, although they are equally mythological as far as literary criticism is concerned. This distinction of canonical and apocryphal myth, which can be found even in primitive societies, gives to the former group a particular thematic importance.

We have now to see how our sequence of modes works out in the thematic aspect of literature. We shall have to confine ourselves here more strictly to Western literature, as the foreshortening process that we noticed in Classical fiction is even more marked on the thematic side.

In fiction, we discovered two main tendencies, a "comic" tendency to integrate the hero with his society, and a "tragic" tendency to isolate him. In thematic literature the poet may write as an individual, emphasizing the separateness of his personality and the distinctness of his vision. This attitude produces most lyrics and essays, a good deal of satire, epigrams, and the writing of "eclogues" or occasional pieces generally. The frequency of the moods of protest, complaint, ridicule, and loneliness (whether bitter or serene) in such works may perhaps indicate a rough analogy to the tragic modes of fiction. Or the poet may devote himself to being a spokesman of his society, which means, as he is not addressing a second society, that a poetic knowledge and expressive power which is latent or needed in his society comes to articulation in him.

Such an attitude produces poetry which is educational in the broadest sense: epics of the more artificial or thematic kind, didactic poetry and prose, encyclopaedic compilations of myth, folklore, and legend like those of Ovid and Snorri, where, though the stories themselves are fictional, the arrangement of them and the motive for collecting them is thematic. In poetry which is educational in this sense, the social function of the poet figures prominently as a theme. If we call the poetry of the isolated individual a "lyric" and the poetry of the social spokesman an "epic" tendency (in

comparison to the more "dramatic" fictions of internal characters) we shall perhaps gain some preliminary conception of them. But it is obvious that we are not here using these terms in any generic sense, and as they certainly should be used in a generic sense, we shall drop them at once and substitute "episodic" and "encyclopaedic" instead. That is, when the poet communicates as an individual, his forms tend to be discontinuous; when he communicates as a professional man with a social function, he tends to seek more extended patterns.

On the mythical plane there is more legend than evidence, but it is clear that the poet who sings about gods is often considered to be singing as one, or as an instrument of one. His social function is that of an inspired oracle; he is frequently an ecstatic, and we hear strange stories of his powers. Orpheus could draw trees after him; the bards and ollaves of the Celtic world could kill their enemies with their satire; the prophets of Israel foretold the future. The poet's visionary function, his proper work as a poet, is on this plane to reveal the god for whom he speaks. This usually means that he reveals the god's will in connection with a specific occasion, when he is consulted as an oracle in a state of "enthusiasm" or divine possession. But in time the god in him reveals his nature and history as well as his will, and so a larger pattern of myth and ritual is built up out of a series of oracular pronouncements. We can see this very clearly in the emergence of the Messiah myth from the oracles of the Hebrew prophets. The Koran is one clear historical instance at the beginning of the Western period of the mythical mode in action. Authentic examples of oracular poetry are so largely pre- and extra-literary that they are difficult to isolate. For more recent examples, such as the ecstatic oracles which are said to be an important aspect of the culture of the Plains Indians, we have to depend on anthropologists.

Two principles of some importance are already implicit in our argument. One is a conception of a total body of vision that poets as a whole class are entrusted with, a total body tending to incorporate itself in a single encyclopaedic form, which can be attempted by one poet if he is sufficiently learned or inspired, or by a poetic school or tradition if the culture is sufficiently homogeneous. We note that traditional tales and myths and histories have a strong tendency to stick together and form en-

cyclopaedic aggregates, especially when they are in a conventional metre, as they usually are. Some such process as this has been postulated for the Homeric epics, and in the Prose Edda the themes of the fragmentary lays of the Elder Edda are organized into a connected prose sequence. The Biblical histories obviously developed in a similar way, and in India, where the process of transmission was more relaxed, the two traditional epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, apparently went on distending themselves for centuries, like pythons swallowing sheep. The expansion of *The Romaunt of the Rose* into an encyclopaedic satire by a second author is a medieval example. In the Finnish *Kalevala* everything that is unified or continuous about the poem is a nineteenth-century reconstruction. It does not follow that the *Kalevala*, considered as a single epic, is a fake: on the contrary, what follows is that the material of the *Kalevala* is the sort of material that lends itself readily to such reconstruction. In the mythical mode the encyclopaedic form is the sacred scripture, and in the other modes we should expect to find encyclopaedic forms which constitute a series of increasingly human *analogies* of mythical or scriptural revelation.

The other principle is that while there may be a great variety of episodic forms in any mode, in each mode we may attach a special significance to the particular episodic form that seems to be the germ out of which the encyclopaedic forms develop. In the mythical mode this central or typical episodic product is the oracle. The oracle develops a number of subsidiary forms, notably the commandment, the parable, the aphorism, and the prophecy. Out of these, whether strung loosely together as they are in the Koran or carefully edited and arranged as they are in the Bible, the scripture or sacred book takes shape. The Book of Isaiah, for example, can be analyzed into a mass of separate oracles, with three major foci, so to speak, one mainly pre-exilic, one exilic and one post-exilic. The "higher critics" of the Bible are not literary critics, and we have to make the suggestion ourselves that the Book of Isaiah is in fact the unity it has always been traditionally taken to be, a unity not of authorship but of theme, and that theme in epitome the theme of the Bible as a whole, as the parable of Israel lost, captive, and redeemed.

In the period of romance, the poet, like the corresponding hero, has become a human being, and the god has retreated to

the sky. His function now is primarily to remember. Memory, said Greek myth at the beginning of its historical period, is the mother of the Muses, who inspire the poets, but no longer in the same degree that the god inspires the oracle—though the poets clung to the connection as long as they could. In Homer, in the perhaps more primitive Hesiod, in the poets of the heroic age of the North, we can see the kind of thing the poet had to remember. Lists of kings and foreign tribes, myths and genealogies of gods, historical traditions, the proverbs of popular wisdom, taboos, lucky and unlucky days, charms, the deeds of the tribal heroes, were some of the things that came out when the poet unlocked his word-hoard. The medieval minstrel with his repertory of memorized stories and the clerical poet who, like Gower or the author of the *Cursor Mundi,* tries to get everything he knows into one vast poem or poetic testament, belong in the same category. The encyclopaedic knowledge in such poems is regarded sacramentally, as a human analogy of divine knowledge.

The age of romantic heroes is largely a nomadic age, and its poets are frequently wanderers. The blind wandering minstrel is traditional in both Greek and Celtic literature; Old English poetry expresses some of the bleakest loneliness in the language; troubadours and Goliardic satirists roam over Europe in the Middle Ages; Dante himself was an exile. Or, if the poet stays where he is, it is poetry that travels: folk tales follow the trade routes; ballads and romances return from the great fairs; or Malory, writing in England, tells his readers what the "French book" says that has come to his hand. Of all fictions, the marvellous journey is the one formula that is never exhausted, and it is this fiction that is employed as a parable in the definitive encyclopaedic poem of the mode, Dante's *Commedia.* Poetry in this mode is an agent of catholicity, whether Hellenic in one age or Roman Christian in another.

Its typical episodic theme is perhaps best described as the theme of the boundary of consciousness, the sense of the poetic mind as passing from one world to another, or as simultaneously aware of both. The poem of exile, the lay of the *Widsith* or wayfarer who may be a wandering minstrel, a rejected lover, or a nomadic satirist, normally contrasts the worlds of memory and of experience. The poem of vision, conventionally dated on a May morning, contrasts the worlds of experience and dream. The

poem of revelation through female or divine grace contrasts the old dispensation with the *vita nuova*. In the opening lines of the *Inferno* the affinity of the great encyclopaedic poem with both the poem of exile and the poem of vision is clearly marked.

The high mimetic period brings in a society more strongly established around the court and capital city, and a centripetal perspective replaces the centrifugal one of romance. The distant goals of the quest, the Holy Grail or the City of God, modulate into symbols of convergence, the emblems of prince, nation, and national faith. The encyclopaedic poems of this period, *The Faerie Queene, The Lusiad, Jerusalem Delivered, Paradise Lost*, are national epics unified by patriotic and religious ideas. The reasons for the exceptional role of the political elements in *Paradise Lost* are familiar, and constitute no real difficulty in seeing it as a national epic. Along with *The Pilgrim's Progress*, it also constitutes a kind of introduction to English low mimetic, being in one of its essential aspects the story of Everyman. Such thematic epics are as a rule recognizably different in emphasis from narratives where the primary interest is in telling the story, as in most epic poetry of the heroic age, most Icelandic sagas and Celtic romances, and, in the Renaissance period, in the greater part of *Orlando Furioso*, though Renaissance critics showed that it was quite possible to interpret Ariosto thematically.

The central episodic theme of the high mimetic is the theme of cynosure or centripetal gaze, which, whether addressed to mistress, friend, or deity, seems to have something about it of the court gazing upon its sovereign, the court-room gazing upon the orator, or the audience gazing upon the actor. For the high mimetic poet is pre-eminently a courtier, a counsellor, a preacher, a public orator or a master of decorum, and the high mimetic is the period in which the settled theatre comes into its own as the chief medium of fictional forms. In Shakespeare the control of decorum is so great that his personality disappears behind it altogether, but this is unlikely to happen with a dramatist who has a strong thematic interest, like Ben Jonson. As a rule the high mimetic poet tends to think of his function in relation to social or divine leadership, the theme of leadership being at the center of his normal fictional mode. The courtier-poet devotes his learning to the court and his life to courtesy: the function of his education is the service of his prince and the climax of

it is courtly love, conceived as the fulfilling of the gaze upon beauty in the union with it. The religious poet may transfer this imagery to the spiritual life, as the English metaphysicals often do, or he may find his centripetal images in the liturgy. Jesuit poetry of the seventeenth century, and its English counterpart in Crashaw, have a unique quality of iconic intensity: Herbert, too, draws his reader step by step into a visible "temple."

The literary Platonism of the high mimetic period is of a kind appropriate to the mode. Most of the Renaissance humanists show a strong sense of the importance of symposium and dialogue, the social and educational aspects respectively of an elite culture. There is also a widespread assumption that the *dianoia* of poetry represents a form, pattern, ideal, or model in nature. "Nature's world is brazen," says Sidney: "the poets only deliver a golden." He makes it clear that this golden world is not something separated from nature but is "in effect a second nature": a unification of fact, or example, with model, or precept. What is usually called the "neo-Classical" in art and criticism is chiefly, in our terms, a sense of poetic *dianoia* as a manifestation of the true form of nature, the true form being assumed to be ideal.

With the low mimetic, where fictional forms deal with an intensely individualized society, there is only one thing for an analogy of myth to become, and that is an act of individual creation. The typical result of this is "Romanticism," a thematic development which to a considerable extent turns away from contemporary forms of fiction and develops its own contrasting kind. The qualities necessary to create *Hyperion* and the qualities necessary to create *Pride and Prejudice*, though contemporary, seem curiously opposed to each other, as though there were a sharper division between fictional and thematic in the low mimetic than in other modes. To some extent this is true, for a sense of contrast between subjective and objective, mental state and outward condition, individual and social or physical data, is characteristic of the low mimetic. In this age the thematic poet becomes what the fictional hero was in the age of romance, an extraordinary person who lives in a higher and more imaginative order of experience than that of nature. He creates his own world, a world which reproduces many of the characteristics of fictional romance already touched on. The Romantic poet's mind is normally in a state of pantheistic rapport with nature, and seems curiously invulnerable to the assaults of real evil. A tendency,

also paralleled in the earlier fictional romance, to transmute pain and terror into a form of pleasure is reflected in the sadism and diabolic imagery of the "Romantic agony." The encyclopaedic tendency of this period is toward the construction of mythological epics in which the myths represent psychological or subjective states of mind. *Faust*, especially in the second part, is the most nearly definitive example; the prophecies of Blake and the mythological poems of Keats and Shelley are the best known English representatives.

The thematic poet of this period is interested in himself, not necessarily out of egotism, but because the basis of his poetic skill is individual, and hence genetic and psychological. He uses biological metaphors; he contrasts the organic with the dead or mechanical; he thinks socially in terms of a biological difference between the genius and the ordinary man, and genius to him is a fertile seed among abortive ones. He confronts nature directly, as an individual, and, in contrast to most of his predecessors, is apt to think of literary tradition as a second-hand substitute for personal experience. Like the hero of low mimetic comedy, the Romantic poet is often socially aggressive: the possession of creative genius confers authority, and its social impact is revolutionary. Romantic critics often develop theories of poetry as the rhetoric of personal greatness. The central episodic theme is the analysis or presentation of the subjective mental state, a theme usually taken to be typical of the literary movements accompanying Rousseau and Byron. The Romantic poet finds it much easier than his predecessors to be at once individual in content and attitude and continuous in form. The fact that so many of Wordsworth's shorter poems could be absorbed into the *Prelude*, in much the way in which primitive lays stick together to form epics, represents a technical innovation of some significance.

The poets who succeed the Romantics, the poets of French *symbolisme* for example, begin with the ironic gesture of turning away from the world of the market-place, with all its blurred sounds and imprecise meanings: they renounce rhetoric, moral judgement, and all other idols of the tribe, and devote their entire energy to the poet's literal function as a maker of poems. We said that the ironic fiction-writer is influenced by no considerations except craftsmanship, and the thematic poet in the ironic age thinks of himself more as a craftsman than as a creator or "unacknowl-

edged legislator." That is, he makes the minimum claim for his personality and the maximum for his art—a contrast which underlies Yeats's theory of the poetic mask. At his best he is a dedicated spirit, a saint or anchorite of poetry. Flaubert, Rilke, Mallarmé, Proust, were all in their very different ways "pure" artists. Hence the central episodic theme is the theme of the pure but transient vision, the aesthetic or timeless moment, Rimbaud's *illumination*, Joyce's epiphany, the *Augenblick* of modern German thought, and the kind of non-didactic revelation implied in such terms as *symbolisme* and imagism.

The comparison of such instants with the vast panorama unrolled by history ("temps perdu") is the main theme of the encyclopaedic tendency. In Proust the repetitions of certain experiences at widely scattered intervals create these timeless moments out of time; in *Finnegans Wake* the whole of history itself is presented as a single gigantic anti-epiphany. On a smaller but still encyclopaedic scale, Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Virginia Woolf's last and most profound book, *Between the Acts,* have in common (a fact more striking because they have nothing else in common) a sense of contrast between the course of a whole civilization and the tiny flashes of significant moments which reveal its meaning. And just as the Romantic poet found it possible to write as an individual in continuous forms, so the ironic mode is rationalized by critical theories of the essential discontinuity of poetry. The paradoxical technique of the poetry which is encyclopaedic and yet discontinuous, the technique of *The Waste Land* and of Ezra Pound's *Cantos,* is, like its direct opposite in Wordsworth, a technical innovation heralding a new mode.

Details of the same technique fit the general pattern of thematic irony. The ironic method of saying one thing and meaning something rather different is incorporated in Mallarmé's doctrine of the avoidance of direct statement. The practice of cutting out predication, of simply juxtaposing images without making any assertions about their relationship, is consistent with the effort to avoid oratorical rhetoric. The same is true of the elimination of apostrophes and similar devices for including some mimesis of direct address. One study has even demonstrated a substantial increase in the use of the definite article in the ironic mode, a use said to be linked with the implicit sense of an initiated group aware of a real meaning behind an ironically baffling exterior.

The return of irony to myth that we noted in fiction is paralleled by some tendencies of the ironic craftsman to return to the oracular. This tendency is often accompanied by cyclical theories of history which help to rationalize the idea of a return, the appearance of such theories being a typical phenomenon of the ironic mode. We have Rimbaud and his "dérèglement de tous les sens" designed to make himself a reincarnation of the Prometheus who brought the divine fire to man and to restore the old mythical connection between the manic and the mantic. We have Rilke and his lifetime of tense listening to an oracular voice within him. We have Nietzsche proclaiming the advent of a new divine power in man, a proclamation which is somewhat confused by including a theory of identical recurrence. We have Yeats telling us that the Western cycle is nearly over and that a new Classical one, with Leda and the swan taking the place of the dove and the virgin, is about to begin. We have Joyce and his Viconian theory of history which sees our own age as a frustrated apocalypse followed instantly by a return to a period before Tristram.

As for the inferences which may be made from the above survey, one is clearly that many current critical assumptions have a limited historical context. In our day an ironic provincialism, which looks everywhere in literature for complete objectivity, suspension of moral judgements, concentration on pure verbal craftsmanship, and similar virtues, is in the ascendant. A Romantic provincialism, which looks everywhere for genius and evidences of great personality, is more old-fashioned, but it is still around. The high mimetic mode also had its pedants, some of them still trying to apply canons of ideal form in the eighteenth and even the nineteenth centuries. The suggestion made here is that no set of critical standards derived from only one mode can ever assimilate the whole truth about poetry.

There may be noticed a general tendency to react most strongly against the mode immediately preceding, and, to a lesser extent, to return to some of the standards of the modal grandfather. Thus the humanists of the high mimetic age were in general contemptuous of the "fablers and loud lyars," as Spenser's E.K. calls them, who produced medieval romance. But, as we can see in Sidney, they were never tired of justifying poetry by referring to the social importance of the original mythical phase. They tended to think

of themselves as secular oracles of the order of nature, responding to the occasions of public affairs like the oracular poets, within a context of social and natural law. The Romantics, the thematic poets of the low mimetic period, set their faces against their predecessors' methods of following nature, and went back to the mode of romance.

The Romantic standards, in English literature, were in the main carried on by the Victorians, indicating a continuity of mode; the long anti-Romantic revolt that began around 1900 (several decades earlier in French literature) indicated a shift to the ironic. In the new mode the fondness for the small closely-knit group, the sense of the esoteric, and the nostalgia for the aristocratic that has produced such very different phenomena as the royalism of Eliot, the fascism of Pound, and the cult of chivalry in Yeats, are all in a way part of a reversion to high mimetic standards. The sense of the poet as courtier, of poetry as the service of a prince, of the supreme importance of the symposium or elite group, are among the high mimetic conceptions reflected in twentieth-century literature, especially in the poetry of the *symboliste* tradition from Mallarmé to George and Rilke. The exceptions to this tendency are sometimes less exceptional than they seem. The Fabian Society, when Bernard Shaw first joined it, was a group esoteric enough to satisfy Yeats himself: after Fabian socialism became a mass movement, Shaw turned into what became at length unmistakably a frustrated royalist.

Again, we may note that each period of Western culture has made a conspicuous use of the Classical literature nearest to it in mode: romanticized versions of Homer in the Middle Ages; Virgilian epic, Platonic symposium, and Ovidian courtly love in the high mimetic; Roman satire in the low mimetic; the products of the latest possible period of Latin in the ironic phase of Huysmans' *À Rebours*.

We saw in our survey of fictional modes that the poet never imitates "life" in the sense that life becomes anything more than the content of his work. In every mode he imposes the same kind of mythical form on his content, but makes different adaptations of it. In thematic modes, similarly, the poet never imitates thought except in the same sense of imposing a literary form on his thought. The failure to understand this produces a fallacy to which we may give the general term "existential projection." Suppose a writer

finds that he is most successful with tragedies. His works will inevitably be full of gloom and catastrophe, and in his final scenes there will be characters standing around making remarks about the sternness of necessity, the vicissitudes of fortune, and the ineluctability of fate. Such sentiments are part of the *dianoia* of tragedy; but a writer who specializes in tragedy may well come to feel that they speak for the profoundest of all philosophies, and begin to emit similar utterances himself when asked what his own philosophy of life is. On the other hand, a writer whose specialty is comedy and happy endings will have *his* characters standing around at the end talking about the beneficence of providence, the miracles that come when we least expect them, the spirit of thankfulness and joy which we all ought to feel for the mercies of life.

It is natural, then, for tragedy and comedy to throw their shadows, so to speak, into philosophy and shape there a philosophy of fate and a philosophy of providence respectively. Thomas Hardy and Bernard Shaw both flourished around 1900 and both were interested in evolution. Hardy did better with tragedy, and saw evolution in terms of a stoical meliorism, a Schopenhauerian immanent will, and an activity of "chance" or "hap" in which any individual life may be expendable. Shaw, who wrote comedies, saw evolution as creative, leading to revolutionary politics, the advent of a Superman, and to whatever metabiology is. But it is obvious that Hardy and Shaw are not substantial philosophers, and they must stand or fall by their achievements in poetry, fiction, and drama.

Similarly, each mode of literature develops its own existential projection. Mythology projects itself as theology: that is, a mythopoeic poet usually accepts some myths as "true" and shapes his poetic structure accordingly. Romance peoples the world with fantastic, normally invisible personalities or powers: angels, demons, fairies, ghosts, enchanted animals, elemental spirits like those in *The Tempest* and *Comus*. Dante wrote in this mode, but not speculatively: he accepted the spiritual beings recognized by Christian doctrine, and concerns himself with no others. But for a late poet interested in the techniques of romance—Yeats, for instance—the question of whether and which of these mysterious creatures "really exist" is likely to project itself. The high mimetic projects mainly a quasi-Platonic philosophy of ideal forms, like the love and beauty of Spenser's hymns or the virtues of *The Faerie Queene*,

and the low mimetic mainly a philosophy of genesis and organism, like that of Goethe, which finds unity and development in everything. The existential projection of irony is, perhaps, existentialism itself; and the return of irony to myth is accompanied, not only by the cyclical theories of history mentioned above, but, in a later stage, by a widespread interest in sacramental philosophy and dogmatic theology.

Mr. Eliot distinguishes between the poet who creates a philosophy for himself, and the poet who takes over one that he finds to hand, and advances the view that the latter course is better, or at least safer, for most poets. The distinction is fundamentally a distinction between the practice of the thematic poets of the low mimetic and of the ironic modes. Such poets as Blake, Shelley, Goethe, and Victor Hugo were compelled by the conventions of their mode to present the conceptual aspect of their imagery as self-generated; the poets of the last century have different conventions and different compulsions. But if the view taken here of the relation of form to content in poetry is sound, then no matter which he does the poet will still have much the same technical problems to face.

Ever since Aristotle criticism has tended to think of literature as *essentially* mimetic, and as divided between a "high" form of epic and tragedy dealing with ruling-class figures, and a "low" form confined to comedy and satire and more concerned with characters like ourselves. The larger scheme set forth in this chapter will, it is hoped, afford a useful background against which to relate the different and apparently contradictory remarks of Plato about poetry. *Phaedrus* deals largely with poetry as myth, and forms a commentary on Plato's treatment of myth; *Ion*, which is centered on the figure of a minstrel or rhapsode, sets forth both the encyclopaedic and the memorial conceptions of poetry which are typical of the romantic mode; the *Symposium*, which introduces Aristophanes, adopts the high mimetic canons which are probably nearest to Plato's own views. The famous discussion at the end of the *Republic* then falls into its place as a polemic against the *low* mimetic element in poetry, and in the *Cratylus* we are introduced to the ironic techniques of ambiguity, verbal association, paronomasia, and the apparatus now being revived by criticism to

deal with the poetry of the ironic mode—the criticism which, by a further refinement of irony, is called "new" criticism.

Again, the difference in emphasis that we have described as fictional and thematic corresponds to a distinction between two views of literature that has run all through the history of criticism. These two views are the aesthetic and the creative, the Aristotelian and the Longinian, the view of literature as product and the view of literature as process. For Aristotle, the poem is a *techne* or aesthetic artifact: he is, as a critic, mainly interested in the more objective fictional forms, and his central conception is catharsis. Catharsis implies the detachment of the spectator, both from the work of art itself and from the author. The phrase "aesthetic distance" is generally accepted now in criticism, but it is almost a tautology: wherever there is aesthetic apprehension there is emotional and intellectual detachment. The principles of catharsis in other fictional forms than tragedy, such as comedy or satire, were not worked out by Aristotle, and have therefore never been worked out since.

In the thematic aspect of literature, the external relation between author and reader becomes more prominent, and when it does, the emotions of pity and terror are involved or contained rather than purged. In catharsis the emotions are purged by being attached to objects; where they are involved with the response they are unattached and remain prior conditions in the mind. We have noticed that terror without an object, as a condition of mind prior to being afraid *of* anything, is now conceived as *Angst* or anxiety, a somewhat narrow term for a feeling that extends from the pleasure of *Il Penseroso* to the pain of the *Fleurs du Mal.* In the general area of pleasure comes the conception of the sublime, in which austerity, gloom, grandeur, melancholy, or even menace are a source of romantic or penseroso feelings.

Similarly, we defined pity without an object as an imaginative animism which finds human qualities everywhere in nature, and includes the "beautiful," traditionally the corresponding term to the sublime. The beautiful has the same relation to the diminutive that the sublime has to bigness, and is closely related to the sense of the intricate and exquisite. The fairies of English folklore become Shakespeare's Mustard-Seed and Drayton's Pigwiggen, and Yeats's animism is linked to his sense of "many ingenious lovely things," and to his image of the toy bird in *Sailing to Byzantium.*

Just as catharsis is the central conception of the Aristotelian approach to literature, so ecstasis or absorption is the central conception of the Longinian approach. This is a state of identification in which the reader, the poem, and sometimes, at least ideally, the poet also, are involved. We say reader, because the Longinian conception is primarily that of a thematic or individualized response: it is more useful for lyrics, just as the Aristotelian one is more useful for plays. Sometimes, however, the normal categories of approach are not the right ones. In *Hamlet*, as Mr. Eliot has shown, the amount of emotion generated by the hero is too great for its objects; but surely the correct conclusion to draw from this fine insight is that *Hamlet* is best approached as a tragedy of *Angst* or of melancholy as a state in itself, rather than purely as an Aristotelian imitation of an action. On the other hand, the lack of emotional involvement in *Lycidas* has been thought by some, including Johnson, to be a failure in that poem, but surely the correct conclusion is that *Lycidas*, like *Samson Agonistes*, should be read in terms of catharsis with all passion spent.

THIRD ESSAY

Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths

Third Essay

ARCHETYPAL CRITICISM: THEORY OF MYTHS

INTRODUCTION

IN THE ART of painting it is easy to see both structural and representational elements. A picture is normally a picture "of" something: it depicts or illustrates a "subject" made up of things analogous to "objects" in sense experience. At the same time there are present certain elements of pictorial design: what a picture represents is organized into structural patterns and conventions which are found only in pictures. The words "content" and "form" are often employed to describe these complementary aspects of painting. "Realism" connotes an emphasis on what the picture represents; stylization, whether primitive or sophisticated, connotes an emphasis on pictorial structure. Extreme realism of the illusive or *trompe l'œil* type is about as far as the painter can go in one kind of emphasis; abstract, or, more strictly, non-objective painting is about as far as he can go in the other direction. (The phrase "non-representational painting" seems to me illogical, a painting being itself a representation.) The illusive painter however cannot escape from pictorial conventions, and non-objective painting is still an imitative art in Aristotle's sense, and so we may say without much fear of effective contradiction that the whole art of painting lies within a combination of pictorial "form" or structure and pictorial "content" or subject.

For some reason the traditions of both practice and theory in Western painting have weighed down heavily on the imitative or representational end. Even from Classical painting we have inherited a number of depressing stories, of birds pecking painted grapes and the like, suggesting that Greek painters took their greatest pride in concocting *trompe l'œil* puzzles. The development of perspective painting in the Renaissance gave a great prestige to such skills, the suggesting of three dimensions in a two-dimensional medium being essentially a *trompe l'œil* device. An eavesdropper in a modern art gallery may easily discover the strength and persistence of the feeling that to achieve recognizable likeness in a subject, and to make this likeness the primary thing in his picture, is a moral obligation on the painter. A good deal of the

freakishness of experimental movements in painting during the last half-century or so has been due to the energy of its revolt against the tyranny of the representational fallacy.

An original painter knows, of course, that when the public demands likeness to an object, it generally wants the exact opposite, likeness to the pictorial conventions it is familiar with. Hence when he breaks with these conventions, he is often apt to assert that he is nothing but an eye, that he merely paints what he sees as he sees it, and the like. His motive in talking such nonsense is clear enough: he wishes to say that painting is not merely facile decoration, and involves a difficult conquest of some very real spatial problems. But this may be freely admitted without agreeing that the formal cause of a picture is outside the picture, an assertion which would destroy the whole art if it were taken seriously. What he has actually done is to obey an obscure but profound impulse to revolt against the conventions established in his own day, in order to rediscover convention on a deeper level. By breaking with the Barbizon school, Manet discovered a deeper affinity with Goya and Velasquez; by breaking with the impressionists, Cézanne discovered a deeper affinity with Chardin and Masaccio. The possession of originality cannot make an artist unconventional; it drives him further into convention, obeying the law of the art itself, which seeks constantly to reshape itself from its own depths, and which works through its geniuses for metamorphosis, as it works through minor talents for mutation.

Music affords a refreshing contrast to painting in its critical theory. When perspective was discovered in painting, music might well have gone in a similar direction, but in fact the development of representational or "program" music has been severely restricted. Listeners may still derive pleasure from hearing external sounds cleverly imitated in music, but no one asserts that a composer is being a decadent or a charlatan if he fails to produce such imitations. Nor is it believed that these imitations are prior in importance to the forms of music itself, still less that they constitute those forms. The result is that the structural principles of music are clearly understood, and can be taught even to children.

Suppose, for example, that the present book were an introduction to musical theory instead of poetics. Then we could begin by isolating, from the range of audible sounds, the interval of the octave, and explain that the octave is divided into twelve theoreti-

cally equal semitones, forming a scale of twelve notes which contains potentially all the melodies and harmonies that the reader of the book will ordinarily hear. Then we could abstract the two points of repose in this scale, the major and minor common chords, and explain the system of twenty-four interlocking keys and the conventions of tonality which require that a piece should normally open and close in the same key. We could describe the basis of rhythm as an accentuation of every second or every third beat, and so on through the whole list of rudiments.

Such an outline would give a rational account of the structure of Western music from 1600 to 1900, and, in a qualified and more flexible but not essentially different form, of everything that the user of the book would be accustomed to call music. If we chose, we could lock up all the music outside the Western tradition in the solitary confinement of a prefatory chapter, before we got down to serious business. Someone might object that the system of equal temperament, in which C♯ and D♭ are the same note, is an arbitrary fiction. Another might object that a composer ought not to be tied down to so rigidly conventionalized a set of musical elements, and that the resources of expression in music ought to be as free as the air. A third might object that we are not talking about music at all: that while the Jupiter Symphony is in C major and Beethoven's Fifth is in C minor, explaining the difference between the two keys will give nobody any real notion of the difference between the two symphonies. All these objectors could be quite safely ignored. Our handbook would not give the reader a complete musical education, nor would it give an account of music as it exists in the mind of God or the practice of angels—but it would do for its purposes.

In this book we are attempting to outline a few of the grammatical rudiments of literary expression, and the elements of it that correspond to such musical elements as tonality, simple and compound rhythm, canonical imitation, and the like. The aim is to give a rational account of some of the structural principles of Western literature in the context of its Classical and Christian heritage. We are suggesting that the resources of verbal expression are limited, if that is the word, by the literary equivalents of rhythm and key, though that does not mean, any more than it means in music, that its resources are artistically exhaustible. We doubtless have objectors similar to those just imagined for music, saying

that our categories are artificial, that they do not do justice to the variety of literature, or that they are not relevant to their own experiences in reading. However, the question of what the structural principles of literature actually are seems important enough to discuss; and, as literature is an art of words, it should be at least as easy to find words to describe them as to find such words as sonata or fugue in music.

In literature, as in painting, the traditional emphasis in both practice and theory has been on representation or "lifelikeness." When, for instance, we pick up a novel of Dickens, our immediate impulse, a habit fostered in us by all the criticism we know, is to compare it with "life," whether as lived by us or by Dickens's contemporaries. Then we meet such characters as Heep or Quilp, and, as neither we nor the Victorians have ever known anything much "like" these curious monsters, the method promptly breaks down. Some readers will complain that Dickens has relapsed into "mere" caricature (as though caricature were easy); others, more sensibly, simply give up the criterion of lifelikeness and enjoy the creation for its own sake.

The structural principles of painting are frequently described in terms of their analogues in plane geometry (or solid, by a further reach of analogy). A famous letter of Cézanne speaks of the approximation of pictorial form to the sphere and the cube, and the practice of abstract painters seems to confirm his point. Geometrical shapes are analogous only to pictorial forms, not by any means identical with them; the real structural principles of painting are to be derived, not from an external analogy with something else, but from the internal analogy of the art itself. The structural principles of literature, similarly, are to be derived from archetypal and anagogic criticism, the only kinds that assume a larger context of literature as a whole. But we saw in the first essay that, as the modes of fiction move from the mythical to the low mimetic and ironic, they approach a point of extreme "realism" or representative likeness to life. It follows that the mythical mode, the stories about gods, in which characters have the greatest possible power of action, is the most abstract and conventionalized of all literary modes, just as the corresponding modes in other arts—religious Byzantine painting, for example—show the highest degree of stylization in their structure. Hence the structural principles of literature are as closely related to mythology and comparative religion as

those of painting are to geometry. In this essay we shall be using the symbolism of the Bible, and to a lesser extent Classical mythology, as a grammar of literary archetypes.

In the Egyptian tale of The Two Brothers, thought to be the source of the Potiphar's wife story in the Joseph legend, an elder brother's wife attempts to seduce an unmarried younger brother who lives with them, and, when he resists her, accuses him of attempting to rape her. The younger brother is then forced to run away, with the enraged elder brother in pursuit. So far, the incidents reproduce more or less credible facts of life. Then the younger brother prays to Ra for assistance, pleading the justice of his cause; Ra places a large lake between him and his brother, and, in a burst of divine exuberance, fills it full of crocodiles. This incident is no more a fictional episode than anything that has preceded it, nor is it less logically related than any other episode to the plot as a whole. But it has given up the external analogy to "life": this, we say, is the kind of thing that happens only in stories. The Egyptian tale has acquired, then, in its mythical episode, an abstractly literary quality; and, as the story-teller could just as easily have solved his little problem in a more "realistic" way, it appears that literature in Egypt, like the other arts, preferred a certain degree of stylization.

Similarly, a medieval saint with a huge decorated halo around his head may look like an old man, but the mythical feature, the halo, both imparts a more abstract structure to the painting and gives the saint the kind of appearance that one sees only in pictures. In primitive societies, a flourishing development in myth and folk tale usually accompanies a taste for geometrical ornament in the plastic arts. In our tradition we have a place for verisimilitude, for human experience skilfully and consistently imitated. The occasional hoaxes in which fiction is presented, or even accepted, as fact, such as Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* or Samuel Butler's *The Fair Haven*, correspond to *trompe l'œil* illusions in painting. At the other extreme we have myths, or abstract fictional designs in which gods and other such beings do whatever they like, which in practice means whatever the story-teller likes. The return of irony to myth that we noted in the first essay is contemporary with, and parallel to, abstraction, expressionism, cubism, and similar efforts in painting to emphasize the self-contained pictorial structure. Sixty years ago, Bernard Shaw stressed the social significance of the themes in Ibsen's plays and his own. Today,

Mr. Eliot calls our attention to the Alcestis archetype in *The Cocktail Party*, to the Ion archetype in *The Confidential Clerk*. The former is of the age of Manet and Degas; the latter of the age of Braque and Graham Sutherland.

We begin our study of archetypes, then, with a world of myth, an abstract or purely literary world of fictional and thematic design, unaffected by canons of plausible adaptation to familiar experience. In terms of narrative, myth is the imitation of actions near or at the conceivable limits of desire. The gods enjoy beautiful women, fight one another with prodigious strength, comfort and assist man, or else watch his miseries from the height of their immortal freedom. The fact that myth operates at the top level of human desire does not mean that it necessarily presents its world as attained or attainable by human beings. In terms of meaning or *dianoia*, myth is the same world looked at as an area or field of activity, bearing in mind our principle that the meaning or pattern of poetry is a structure of imagery with conceptual implications. The world of mythical imagery is usually represented by the conception of heaven or Paradise in religion, and it is apocalyptic, in the sense of that word already explained, a world of total metaphor, in which everything is potentially identical with everything else, as though it were all inside a single infinite body.

Realism, or the art of verisimilitude, evokes the response "How like that is to what we know!" When what is written is *like* what is known, we have an art of extended or implied simile. And as realism is an art of implicit simile, myth is an art of implicit metaphorical identity. The word "sun-god," with a hyphen used instead of a predicate, is a pure ideogram, in Pound's terminology, or literal metaphor, in ours. In myth we see the structural principles of literature isolated; in realism we see the *same* structural principles (not similar ones) fitting into a context of plausibility. (Similarly in music, a piece by Purcell and a piece by Benjamin Britten may not be in the least *like* each other, but if they are both in D major their tonality will be the same.) The presence of a mythical structure in realistic fiction, however, poses certain technical problems for making it plausible, and the devices used in solving these problems may be given the general name of *displacement*.

Myth, then, is one extreme of literary design; naturalism is the other, and in between lies the whole area of romance, using that term to mean, not the historical mode of the first essay, but the

tendency, noted later in the same essay, to displace myth in a human direction and yet, in contrast to "realism," to conventionalize content in an idealized direction. The central principle of displacement is that what can be metaphorically identified in a myth can only be linked in romance by some form of simile: analogy, significant association, incidental accompanying imagery, and the like. In a myth we can have a sun-god or a tree-god; in a romance we may have a person who is significantly associated with the sun or trees. In more realistic modes the association becomes less significant and more a matter of incidental, even coincidental or accidental, imagery. In the dragon-killing legend of the St. George and Perseus family, of which more hereafter, a country under an old feeble king is terrorized by a dragon who eventually demands the king's daughter, but is slain by the hero. This seems to be a romantic analogy (perhaps also, in this case, a descendant) of a myth of a waste land restored to life by a fertility god. In the myth, then, the dragon and the old king would be identified. We can in fact concentrate the myth still further into an Oedipus fantasy in which the hero is not the old king's son-in-law but his son, and the rescued damsel the hero's mother. If the story were a private dream such identifications would be made as a matter of course. But to make it a plausible, symmetrical, and morally acceptable story a good deal of displacement is necessary, and it is only after a comparative study of the story type has been made that the metaphorical structure within it begins to emerge.

In Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* the statue which gives the story that name is so insistently associated with a character named Donatello that a reader would have to be unusually dull or inattentive to miss the point that Donatello "is" the statue. Later on we meet a girl named Hilda, of singular purity and gentleness, who lives in a tower surrounded by doves. The doves are very fond of her; another character calls her his "dove," and remarks indicating some special affinity with doves are made about her by both author and characters. If we were to say that Hilda is a dove-goddess like Venus, identified with her doves, we should not be reading the story quite accurately in its own mode; we should be translating it into straight myth. But to recognize how close Hawthorne is to myth here is not unfair. That is, we recognize that *The Marble Faun* is not a typical low mimetic fiction: it is dominated by an interest that looks back to fictional romance and forward to the

ironic mythical writers of the next century—to Kafka, for instance, or Cocteau. This interest is often called allegory, but probably Hawthorne himself was right in calling it romance. We can see how this interest tends toward abstraction in character-drawing, and if we know no other canons than low mimetic ones, we complain of this.

Or, again, we have, in myth, the story of Proserpine, who disappears into the underworld for six months of every year. The pure myth is clearly one of death and revival; the story as we have it is slightly displaced, but the mythical pattern is easy to see. The same structural element often recurs in Shakespearean comedy, where it has to be adapted to a roughly high mimetic level of credibility. Hero in *Much Ado* is dead enough to have a funeral song, and plausible explanations are postponed until after the end of the play. Imogen in *Cymbeline* has an assumed name and an empty grave, but she too gets some funeral obsequies. But the story of Hermione and Perdita is so close to the Demeter and Proserpine myth that hardly any serious pretence of plausible explanations is made. Hermione, after her disappearance, returns once as a ghost in a dream, and her coming to life from a statue, a displacement of the Pygmalion myth, is said to require an awakening of faith, even though, on one level of plausibility, she has not been a statue at all, and nothing has taken place except a harmless deception. We notice how much more abstractly mythical a thematic writer can be than a fictional one: Spenser's Florimell, for instance, disappears under the sea for the winter with no questions asked, leaving a "snowy lady" in her place and returning with a great outburst of spring floods at the end of the fourth book.

In the low mimetic, we recognize the same structural pattern of the death and revival of the heroine when Esther Summerson gets smallpox, or Lorna Doone is shot at her marriage altar. But we are getting closer to the conventions of realism, and although Lorna's eyes are "dim with death," we know that the author does not really mean death if he is planning to revive her. Here again it is interesting to compare *The Marble Faun*, where there is so much about sculptors and the relation of statues to living people that we almost expect some kind of denouement like that of *The Winter's Tale*. Hilda mysteriously disappears, and during her absence her lover, the sculptor Kenyon, digs out of the earth a

statue that he associates with Hilda. After that Hilda returns, with a plausible reason eventually assigned for her absence, but not without some rather pointed and petulant remarks from Hawthorne himself to the effect that he has no interest in concocting plausible explanations, and that he wishes his reading public would give him a bit more freedom. Yet Hawthorne's inhibitions seem to be at least in part self-imposed, as we can see if we turn to Poe's *Ligeia*, where the straight mythical death and revival pattern is given without apology. Poe is clearly a more radical abstractionist than Hawthorne, which is one reason why his influence on our century is more immediate.

This affinity between the mythical and the abstractly literary illuminates many aspects of fiction, especially the more popular fiction which is realistic enough to be plausible in its incidents and yet romantic enough to be a "good story," which means a clearly designed one. The introduction of an omen or portent, or the device of making a whole story the fulfilment of a prophecy given at the beginning, is an example. Such a device suggests, in its existential projection, a conception of ineluctable fate or hidden omnipotent will. Actually, it is a piece of pure literary design, giving the beginning some symmetrical relationship with the end, and the only ineluctable will involved is that of the author. Hence we often find it even in writers not temperamentally much in sympathy with the portentous. In *Anna Karenina*, for instance, the death of the railway porter in the opening book is accepted by Anna as an omen for herself. Similarly, if we find portents and omens in Sophocles, they are there primarily because they fit the structure of his type of dramatic tragedy, and prove nothing about any clear-cut beliefs in fate held by either dramatist or audience.

We have, then, three organizations of myths and archetypal symbols in literature. First, there is undisplaced myth, generally concerned with gods or demons, and which takes the form of two contrasting worlds of total metaphorical identification, one desirable and the other undesirable. These worlds are often identified with the existential heavens and hells of the religions contemporary with such literature. These two forms of metaphorical organization we call the apocalyptic and the demonic respectively. Second, we have the general tendency we have called romantic, the tendency to suggest implicit mythical patterns in a world more closely asso-

ciated with human experience. Third, we have the tendency of "realism" (my distaste for this inept term is reflected in the quotation marks) to throw the emphasis on content and representation rather than on the shape of the story. Ironic literature begins with realism and tends toward myth, its mythical patterns being as a rule more suggestive of the demonic than of the apocalyptic, though sometimes it simply continues the romantic tradition of stylization. Hawthorne, Poe, Conrad, Hardy and Virginia Woolf all provide examples.

In looking at a picture, we may stand close to it and analyze the details of brush work and palette knife. This corresponds roughly to the rhetorical analysis of the new critics in literature. At a little distance back, the design comes into clearer view, and we study rather the content represented: this is the best distance for realistic Dutch pictures, for example, where we are in a sense reading the picture. The further back we go, the more conscious we are of the organizing design. At a great distance from, say, a Madonna, we can see nothing but the archetype of the Madonna, a large centripetal blue mass with a contrasting point of interest at its center. In the criticism of literature, too, we often have to "stand back" from the poem to see its archetypal organization. If we "stand back" from Spenser's *Mutabilitie Cantoes*, we see a background of ordered circular light and a sinister black mass thrusting up into the lower foreground—much the same archetypal shape that we see in the opening of the Book of Job. If we "stand back" from the beginning of the fifth act of *Hamlet*, we see a grave opening on the stage, the hero, his enemy, and the heroine descending into it, followed by a fatal struggle in the upper world. If we "stand back" from a realistic novel such as Tolstoy's *Resurrection* or Zola's *Germinal*, we can see the mythopoeic designs indicated by those titles. Other examples will be given in what follows.

We proceed to give an account first of the structure of imagery, or *dianoia*, of the two undisplaced worlds, the apocalyptic and the demonic, drawing heavily on the Bible, the main source for undisplaced myth in our tradition. Then we go on to the two intermediate structures of imagery, and finally to the generic narratives or *mythoi* which are these structures of imagery in movement.

THEORY OF ARCHETYPAL MEANING (1): APOCALYPTIC IMAGERY

Let us proceed according to the general scheme of the game of Twenty Questions, or, if we prefer, of the Great Chain of Being, the traditional scheme for classifying sense data.

The apocalyptic world, the heaven of religion, presents, in the first place, the categories of reality in the forms of human desire, as indicated by the forms they assume under the work of human civilization. The form imposed by human work and desire on the *vegetable* world, for instance, is that of the garden, the farm, the grove, or the park. The human form of the *animal* world is a world of domesticated animals, of which the sheep has a traditional priority in both Classical and Christian metaphor. The human form of the *mineral* world, the form into which human work transforms stone, is the city. The city, the garden, and the sheepfold are the organizing metaphors of the Bible and of most Christian symbolism, and they are brought into complete metaphorical identification in the book explicitly called the Apocalypse or Revelation, which has been carefully designed to form an undisplaced mythical conclusion for the Bible as a whole. From our point of view this means that the Biblical Apocalypse is our grammar of apocalyptic imagery.

Each of these three categories, the city, the garden, and the sheepfold, is, by the principle of archetypal metaphor dealt with in the previous essay, and which we remember is the concrete universal, identical with the others and with each individual within it. Hence the *divine* and *human* worlds are, similarly, identical with the sheepfold, city and garden, and the social and individual aspects of each are identical. Thus the apocalyptic world of the Bible presents the following pattern:

divine world	=	society of gods	=	One God
human world	=	society of men	=	One Man
animal world	=	sheepfold	=	One Lamb
vegetable world	=	garden or park	=	One Tree (of Life)
mineral world	=	city	=	One Building, Temple, Stone

The conception "Christ" unites all these categories in identity: Christ *is* both the one God and the one Man, the Lamb of God, the tree of life, or vine of which we are the branches, the stone

which the builders rejected, and the rebuilt temple which is identical with his risen body. The religious and poetic identifications differ in intention only, the former being existential and the latter metaphorical. In medieval criticism the difference was of little importance, and the word "figura," as applied to the identification of a symbol with Christ, usually implies both kinds.

Now let us expand this pattern a little. In Christianity the concrete universal is applied to the divine world in the form of the Trinity. Christianity insists that, whatever dislocations of customary mental processes may be involved, God *is* three persons and yet one God. The conceptions of person and substance represent a few of the difficulties in extending metaphor to logic. In pure metaphor, of course, the unity of God could apply to five or seventeen or a million divine persons as easily as three, and we may find the divine concrete universal in poetry outside the Trinitarian orbit. When Zeus remarks, at the beginning of the eighth book of the Iliad, that he can pull the whole chain of being up into himself whenever he likes, we can see that for Homer there was some conception of a double perspective in Olympus, where a group of squabbling deities may at any time suddenly compose into the form of a single divine will. In Virgil we first meet a malicious and spoiled Juno, but the comment of Aeneas to his men a few lines later on, "deus dabit his quoque finem," indicates that a similar double perspective existed for him. We may compare perhaps the Book of Job, where Job and his friends are much too devout for it ever to occur to them that Job could have suffered so as a result of a half-jocular bet between God and Satan. There is a sense in which they are right, and the information given to the reader about Satan in heaven wrong. Satan is dropped out of the end of the poem, and whatever rewritings may be responsible for this, it is still difficult to see how the final enlightenment of Job could ever have returned completely from the conception of a single divine will to the mood of the opening scene.

As for human society, the metaphor that we are all members of one body has organized most political theory from Plato to our own day. Milton's "A Commonwealth ought to be but as one huge Christian personage, one mighty growth, and stature of an honest man" belongs to a Christianized version of this metaphor, in which, as in the doctrine of the Trinity, the full metaphorical statement "Christ *is* God and Man" is orthodox, and the Arian and Docetic

statements in terms of simile or likeness condemned as heretical. Hobbes's *Leviathan*, with its original frontispiece depicting a number of mannikins inside the body of a single giant, has also some connection with the same type of identification. Plato's Republic, in which the reason, will, and desire of the individual appear as the philosopher-king, guards, and artisans of the state, is also founded on this metaphor, which in fact we still use whenever we speak of a group or aggregate of human beings as a "body."

In sexual symbolism, of course, it is still easier to employ the "one flesh" metaphor of two bodies made into the same body by love. Donne's *The Extasie* is one of the many poems organized on this image, and Shakespeare's *Phoenix and the Turtle* makes great play with the outrage done to the "reason" by such identity. Themes of loyalty, hero-worship, faithful followers, and the like also employ the same metaphor.

The animal and vegetable worlds are identified with each other, and with the divine and human worlds as well, in the Christian doctrine of transubstantiation, in which the essential human forms of the vegetable world, food and drink, the harvest and the vintage, the bread and the wine, *are* the body and blood of the Lamb who is also Man and God, and in whose body we exist as in a city or temple. Here again the orthodox doctrine insists on metaphor as against simile, and here again the conception of substance illustrates the struggles of logic to digest the metaphor. It is clear from the opening of the *Laws* that the symposium had something of the same communion symbolism for Plato. It would be hard to find a simpler or more vivid image of human civilization, where man attempts to surround nature and put it inside his (social) body, than the sacramental meal.

The conventional honors accorded the sheep in the animal world provide us with the central archetype of pastoral imagery, as well as with such metaphors as "pastor" and "flock" in religion. The metaphor of the king as the shepherd of his people goes back to ancient Egypt. Perhaps the use of this particular convention is due to the fact that, being stupid, affectionate, gregarious, and easily stampeded, the societies formed by sheep are most like human ones. But of course in poetry any other animal would do as well if the poet's audience were prepared for it: at the opening of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, for instance, the sacrificial horse, whose body contains the whole universe, is treated in the same way that a Christian poet

would treat the Lamb of God. Of birds, too, the dove has traditionally represented the universal concord or love both of Venus and of the Christian Holy Spirit. Identifications of gods with animals or plants and of those again with human society form the basis of totemic symbolism. Certain types of etiological folk tale, the stories of how supernatural beings were turned into the animals and plants that we know, represent an attentuated form of the same type of metaphor, and survive as the "metamorphosis" archetype familiar from Ovid.

Similar flexibility is possible with vegetable images. Elsewhere in the Bible the leaves or fruit of the tree of life are used as communion symbols in place of the bread and wine. Or the concrete universal may be applied not simply to a tree but to a single fruit or flower. In the West the rose has a traditional priority among apocalyptic flowers: the use of the rose as a communion symbol in the *Paradiso* comes readily to mind, and in the first book of *The Faerie Queene* the emblem of St. George, a red cross on a white ground, is connected not only with the risen body of Christ and the sacramental symbolism which accompanies it, but with the union of the red and white roses in the Tudor dynasty. In the East the lotus or the Chinese "golden flower" often occupied the place of the rose, and in German Romanticism the blue cornflower enjoyed a brief vogue.

The identity of the human body and the vegetable world gives us the archetype of Arcadian imagery, of Marvell's green world, of Shakespeare's forest comedies, of the world of Robin Hood and other green men who lurk in the forests of romance, these last the counterparts in romance of the metaphorical myth of the tree-god. In Marvell's *The Garden* we meet a further but still conventional extension in the identification of the human soul with a bird sitting in the branches of the tree of life. The olive tree and its oil has supplied another identification in the "anointed" ruler.

The city, whether called Jerusalem or not, is apocalyptically identical with a single building or temple, a "house of many mansions," of which individuals are "lively stones," to use another New Testament phrase. The human use of the inorganic world involves the highway or road as well as the city with its streets, and the metaphor of the "way" is inseparable from all quest-literature, whether explicitly Christian as in *The Pilgrim's Progress* or not. To this cate-

gory also belong geometrical and architectural images: the tower and the winding stairway of Dante and Yeats, Jacob's ladder, the ladder of the Neo-platonic love poets, the ascending spiral or cornucopia, the "stately pleasure dome" that Kubla Khan decreed, the cross and quincunx patterns which Browne sought in every corner of art and nature, the circle as the emblem of eternity, Vaughan's "ring of pure and endless light," and so on.

On the archetypal level proper, where poetry is an artifact of human civilization, nature is the container of man. On the anagogic level, man is the container of nature, and his cities and gardens are no longer little hollowings on the surface of the earth, but the forms of a human universe. Hence in apocalyptic symbolism we cannot confine man only to his two natural elements of earth and air, and, in going from one level to the other, symbolism must, like Tamino in *The Magic Flute,* pass the ordeals of water and fire. Poetic symbolism usually puts fire just above man's life in this world, and water just below it. Dante had to pass through a ring of fire and the river of Eden to go from the mountain of purgatory, which is still on the surface of our own world, to Paradise or the apocalyptic world proper. The imagery of light and fire surrounding the angels in the Bible, the tongues of flame descending at Pentecost, and the coal of fire applied to the mouth of Isaiah by the seraph, associates fire with a spiritual or angelic world midway between the human and the divine. In Classical mythology the story of Prometheus indicates a similar provenance for fire, as does the association of Zeus with the thunderbolt or fire of lightning. In short, heaven in the sense of the sky, containing the fiery bodies of sun, moon, and stars, is usually identified with, or thought of as the passage to, the heaven of the apocalyptic world.

Hence all our other categories can be identified with fire or thought of as burning. The appearance of the Judaeo-Christian deity in fire, surrounded by angels of fire (seraphim) and light (cherubim), needs only to be mentioned. The burning animal of the ritual of sacrifice, the incorporating of an animal body in a communion between divine and human worlds, modulates into all the imagery connected with the fire and smoke of the altar, ascending incense, and the like. The burning man is represented in the saint's halo and the king's crown, both of which are analogues of the sun-god: one may compare also the "burning babe" of Southwell's Christmas

poem. The image of the burning bird appears in the legendary phoenix. The tree of life may also be a burning tree, the unconsumed burning bush of Moses, the candlestick of Jewish ritual, or the "rosy cross" of later occultism. In alchemy the vegetable, mineral, and water worlds are identified in its rose, stone, and elixir; flower and jewel archetypes are identified in the "jewel in the lotus" of the Buddhist prayer. The links between fire, intoxicating wine, and the hot red blood of animals are also common.

The identification of the *city* with fire explains why the city of God in the Apocalypse is presented as a glowing mass of gold and precious stones, each stone presumably burning with a hard gemlike flame. For in apocalyptic symbolism the fiery bodies of heaven, sun, moon, and stars, are all inside the universal divine and human body. The symbolism of alchemy is apocalyptic symbolism of the same type: the center of nature, the gold and jewels hidden in the earth, is eventually to be united to its circumference in the sun, moon, and stars of the heavens; the center of the spiritual world, the soul of man, is united to its circumference in God. Hence there is a close association between the purifying of the human soul and the transmuting of earth to gold, not only literal gold but the fiery quintessential gold of which the heavenly bodies are made. The golden tree with its mechanical bird in *Sailing to Byzantium* identifies vegetable and mineral worlds in a form reminiscent of alchemy.

Water, on the other hand, traditionally belongs to a realm of existence below human life, the state of chaos or dissolution which follows ordinary death, or the reduction to the inorganic. Hence the soul frequently crosses water or sinks into it at death. In apocalyptic symbolism we have the "water of life," the fourfold river of Eden which reappears in the City of God, and is represented in ritual by baptism. According to Ezekiel the return of this river turns the sea fresh, which is apparently why the author of Revelation says that in the apocalypse there is no more sea. Apocalyptically, therefore, water circulates in the universal body like the blood in the individual body. Perhaps we should say "is held within" instead of "circulates," to avoid the anachronism of connecting a knowledge of the circulation of the blood with Biblical themes. For centuries, of course, the blood was one of four "humors," or bodily liquids, just as the river of life was traditionally fourfold.

THEORY OF ARCHETYPAL MEANING (2): DEMONIC IMAGERY

Opposed to apocalyptic symbolism is the presentation of the world that desire totally rejects: the world of the nightmare and the scapegoat, of bondage and pain and confusion; the world as it is before the human imagination begins to work on it and before any image of human desire, such as the city or the garden, has been solidly established; the world also of perverted or wasted work, ruins and catacombs, instruments of torture and monuments of folly. And just as apocalyptic imagery in poetry is closely associated with a religious heaven, so its dialectic opposite is closely linked with an existential hell, like Dante's *Inferno,* or with the hell that man creates on earth, as in *1984, No Exit,* and *Darkness at Noon,* where the titles of the last two speak for themselves. Hence one of the central themes of demonic imagery is parody, the mocking of the exuberant play of art by suggesting its imitation in terms of "real life."

The demonic divine world largely personifies the vast, menacing, stupid powers of nature as they appear to a technologically undeveloped society. Symbols of heaven in such a world tend to become associated with the inaccessible sky, and the central idea that crystallizes from it is the idea of inscrutable fate or external necessity. The machinery of fate is administered by a set of remote invisible gods, whose freedom and pleasure are ironic because they exclude man, and who intervene in human affairs chiefly to safeguard their own prerogatives. They demand sacrifices, punish presumption, and enforce obedience to natural and moral law as an end in itself. Here we are not trying to describe, for instance, the gods in Greek tragedy: we are trying to isolate the sense of human remoteness and futility in relation to the divine order which is only one element among others in most tragic visions of life, though an essential one in all. In later ages poets become much more outspoken about this view of divinity: Blake's Nobodaddy, Shelley's Jupiter, Swinburne's "supreme evil, God," Hardy's befuddled Will, and Housman's "brute and blackguard" are examples.

The demonic human world is a society held together by a kind of molecular tension of egos, a loyalty to the group or the leader which diminishes the individual, or, at best, contrasts his pleasure with his duty or honor. Such a society is an endless source of tragic di-

lemmas like those of Hamlet and Antigone. In the apocalyptic conception of human life we found three kinds of fulfilment: individual, sexual, and social. In the sinister human world one individual pole is the tyrant-leader, inscrutable, ruthless, melancholy, and with an insatiable will, who commands loyalty only if he is egocentric enough to represent the collective ego of his followers. The other pole is represented by the *pharmakos* or sacrificed victim, who has to be killed to strengthen the others. In the most concentrated form of the demonic parody, the two become the same. The ritual of the killing of the divine king in Frazer, whatever it may be in anthropology, is in literary criticism the demonic or undisplaced radical form of tragic and ironic structures.

In religion the spiritual world is a reality distinct from the physical world. In poetry the physical or actual is opposed, not to the spiritually existential, but to the hypothetical. We met in the first essay the principle that the transmutation of act into mime, the advance from acting out a rite to playing at the rite, is one of the central features of the development from savagery into culture. It is easy to see a mimesis of conflict in tennis and football, but, precisely for that very reason, tennis and football players represent a culture superior to the culture of student duellists and gladiators. The turning of literal act into play is a fundamental form of the liberalizing of life which appears in more intellectual levels as liberal education, the release of fact into imagination. It is consistent with this that the Eucharist symbolism of the apocalyptic world, the metaphorical identification of vegetable, animal, human, and divine bodies, should have the imagery of cannibalism for its demonic parody. Dante's last vision of human hell is of Ugolino gnawing his tormentor's skull; Spenser's last major allegorical vision is of Serena stripped and prepared for a cannibal feast. The imagery of cannibalism usually includes, not only images of torture and mutilation, but of what is technically known as *sparagmos* or the tearing apart of the sacrificial body, an image found in the myths of Osiris, Orpheus, and Pentheus. The cannibal giant or ogre of folk tales, who enters literature as Polyphemus, belongs here, as does a long series of sinister dealings with flesh and blood from the story of Thyestes to Shylock's bond. Here again the form described by Frazer as the historically original form is in literary criticism the radical demonic form. Flaubert's *Salammbo* is a study

of demonic imagery which was thought in its day to be archaeological but turned out to be prophetic.

The demonic erotic relation becomes a fierce destructive passion that works against loyalty or frustrates the one who possesses it. It is generally symbolized by a harlot, witch, siren, or other tantalizing female, a physical object of desire which is sought as a possession and therefore can never be possessed. The demonic parody of marriage, or the union of two souls in one flesh, may take the form of hermaphroditism, incest (the most common form), or homosexuality. The social relation is that of the mob, which is essentially human society looking for a *pharmakos,* and the mob is often identified with some sinister animal image such as the hydra, Virgil's Fama, or its development in Spenser's Blatant Beast.

The other worlds can be briefly summarized. The animal world is portrayed in terms of monsters or beasts of prey. The wolf, the traditional enemy of the sheep, the tiger, the vulture, the cold and earth-bound serpent, and the dragon are all common. In the Bible, where the demonic society is represented by Egypt and Babylon, the rulers of each are identified with monstrous beasts: Nebuchadnezzar turns into a beast in Daniel, and Pharaoh is called a river-dragon by Ezekiel. The dragon is especially appropriate because it is not only monstrous and sinister but fabulous, and so represents the paradoxical nature of evil as a moral fact and an eternal negation. In the Apocalypse the dragon is called "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is."

The vegetable world is a sinister forest like the ones we meet in *Comus* or the opening of the *Inferno,* or a heath, which from Shakespeare to Hardy has been associated with tragic destiny, or a wilderness like that of Browning's *Childe Roland* or Eliot's *Waste Land.* Or it may be a sinister enchanted garden like that of Circe and its Renaissance descendants in Tasso and Spenser. In the Bible the waste land appears in its concrete universal form in the tree of death, the tree of forbidden knowledge in Genesis, the barren fig-tree of the Gospels, and the cross. The stake, with the hooded heretic, the black man or the witch attached to it, is the burning tree and body of the infernal world. Scaffolds, gallows, stocks, pillories, whips, and birch rods are or could be modulations. The contrast of the tree of life and the tree of death is beautifully expressed in Yeats's poem *The Two Trees.*

The inorganic world may remain in its unworked form of deserts, rocks, and waste land. Cities of destruction and dreadful night belong here, and the great ruins of pride, from the tower of Babel to the mighty works of Ozymandias. Images of perverted work belong here too: engines of torture, weapons of war, armor, and images of a dead mechanism which, because it does not humanize nature, is unnatural as well as inhuman. Corresponding to the temple or One Building of the apocalypse, we have the prison or dungeon, the sealed furnace of heat without light, like the City of Dis in Dante. Here too are the sinister counterparts of geometrical images: the sinister spiral (the maelstrom, whirlpool, or Charybdis), the sinister cross, and the sinister circle, the wheel of fate or fortune. The identification of the circle with the serpent, conventionally a demonic animal, gives us the ouroboros, or serpent with its tail in its mouth. Corresponding to the apocalyptic way or straight road, the highway in the desert for God prophesied by Isaiah, we have in this world the labyrinth or maze, the image of lost direction, often with a monster at its heart like the Minotaur. The labyrinthine wanderings of Israel in the desert, repeated by Jesus when in the company of the devil (or "wild beasts," according to Mark), fit the same pattern. The labyrinth can also be a sinister forest, as in *Comus*. The catacombs are effectively used in the same context in *The Marble Faun*, and of course in a further concentration of metaphor, the maze would become the winding entrails inside the sinister monster himself.

The world of fire is a world of malignant demons like the will-o'-the-wisps, or spirits broken from hell, and it appears in this world in the form of the *auto da fe*, as mentioned, or such burning cities as Sodom. It is in contrast to the purgatorial or cleansing fire, like the fiery furnace in Daniel. The world of water is the water of death, often identified with spilled blood, as in the Passion and in Dante's symbolic figure of history, and above all the "unplumbed, salt, estranging sea," which absorbs all rivers in this world, but disappears in the apocalypse in favor of a circulation of fresh water. In the Bible the sea and the animal monster are identified in the figure of the leviathan, a sea-monster also identified with the social tyrannies of Babylon and Egypt.

THEORY OF ARCHETYPAL MEANING (3): ANALOGICAL IMAGERY

Most imagery in poetry has of course to deal with much less extreme worlds than the two which are usually projected as the eternal unchanging worlds of heaven and hell. Apocalyptic imagery is appropriate to the mythical mode, and demonic imagery to the ironic mode in the late phase in which it returns to myth. In the other three modes these two structures operate dialectically, pulling the reader toward the metaphorical and mythical undisplaced core of the work. We should therefore expect three intermediate structures of imagery, corresponding roughly to the romantic, high mimetic, and low mimetic modes. We shall give little attention to high mimetic imagery, however, in order to preserve the simpler pattern of the romantic and "realistic" tendencies within the two undisplaced structures given at the beginning of this essay.

These three structures are less rigorously metaphorical, and are rather significant constellations of images, which, when found together, make up what is often called, somewhat helplessly, "atmosphere." The mode of romance presents an idealized world: in romance heroes are brave, heroines beautiful, villains villainous, and the frustrations, ambiguities, and embarrassments of ordinary life are made little of. Hence its imagery presents a human counterpart of the apocalyptic world which we may call the *analogy of innocence.* It is best known to us, not from the age of romance itself, but from later romanticizings: *Comus*, *The Tempest*, and the third book of *The Faerie Queene* in the Renaissance; Blake's songs of innocence and "Beulah" imagery, Keats's *Endymion* and Shelley's *Epipsychidion* in the Romantic period proper.

In the analogy of innocence the divine or spiritual figures are usually parental, wise old men with magical powers like Prospero, or friendly guardian spirits like Raphael before Adam's fall. Among the human figures children are prominent, and so is the virtue most closely associated with childhood and the state of innocence—chastity, a virtue which in this structure of imagery usually includes virginity. In *Comus* the Lady's chastity is, like Prospero's wisdom, associated with magic, as is the invincible chastity of Spenser's Britomart. It is easiest to associate with young women—Dante's Matelda and Shakespeare's Miranda are examples—but male chastity is important too, as the Grail romances show. Sir Galahad's

remark in Tennyson about his purity of heart giving him tenfold strength is consistent with the imagery of the world he belongs in. Fire in the innocent world is usually a purifying symbol, a world of flame that none but the perfectly chaste can pass, as in Spenser's castle of Busirane, the refining fire at the top of Dante's purgatory, and the flaming sword that keeps the fallen Adam and Eve away from Paradise. In the story of the sleeping beauty, which belongs here, the wall of flame is replaced by one of thorns and brambles: Wagner's *Die Walküre,* however, retains the fire, to the discomposure of stage managers. The moon, the coolest and hence most chaste of all the fiery heavenly bodies, has a special importance for this world.

Of animals, the most obvious are the pastoral sheep and lambs, along with the horses and hounds of romance, in their gentler aspects of fidelity and devotion. The unicorn, the traditional emblem of chastity and the lover of virgins, has an honored place here; so does the dolphin, whose association with Arion makes him the innocent contrast to the devouring leviathan; and also, for its humility and submissiveness, a very different animal—the ass. The dramatic festival of the ass, no less than that of the Boy Bishop, belongs to this structure of imagery, and when Shakespeare put an ass's head in Fairyland he was not doing something unique, as Robinson's poem implies, but following a tradition that goes back to the transformed Lucius listening to the story of Cupid and Psyche in Apuleius. Birds, butterflies (for this is Psyche's world, and Psyche means butterfly), and spirits with their qualities, like Ariel and Hudson's Rima, are other naturalized denizens.

The paradisal garden and the tree of life belong in the apocalyptic structure, as we saw, but the garden of Eden itself, as presented in the Bible and Milton, belongs rather to this one, and Dante puts it just below his Paradiso. Spenser's Gardens of Adonis, from which the attendant spirit in *Comus* comes, are parallel, along with all the medieval developments of the theme of the *locus amoenus.* Of special significance is the symbol of the body of the Virgin as a *hortus conclusus,* derived from the Song of Songs. A romantic counterpart to the tree of life appears in the magician's life-giving wand, and such parallel symbols as the blossoming rod in *Tannhaüser.*

Cities are more alien to the pastoral and rural spirit of this world, and the tower and the castle, with an occasional cottage or hermitage, are the chief images of habitation. Water symbolism features

chiefly fountains and pools, fertilizing rains, and an occasional stream separating a man from a woman and so preserving the chastity of each, like the river of Lethe in Dante. The opening rose-garden episode of *Burnt Norton* gives a brief but extraordinarily complete summary of the symbols of the analogy of innocence; one may also compare the second section of Auden's *Kairos and Logos.*

The innocent world is neither totally alive, like the apocalyptic one, nor mostly dead, like ours: it is an animistic world, full of elemental spirits. All the characters of *Comus* are elemental spirits except the Lady and her brothers, and the connections of Ariel with air-spirits, of Puck with fire-spirits (Burton says of fire-spirits that "we commonly call them Pucks"), and of Caliban with earth-spirits are clear enough. In Spenser we find Florimell and Marinell, whose names indicate that they are spirits of flowers and water, a Proserpine and an Adonis. Often, too, as in *Comus* and the *Nativity Ode,* innocent or unfallen nature, nature as a divinely sanctioned order, is represented by the inaudible harmony of the music of the spheres.

Just as the organizing ideas of romance are chastity and magic, so the organizing ideas of the high mimetic area seem to be love and form. And as the field of romantic images may be called an analogy of innocence, so the field of high mimetic imagery may be called an *analogy of nature and reason.* We find here the emphasis on cynosure or centripetal gaze, and the tendency to idealize the human representatives of the divine and the spiritual world, which are characteristic of the high mimetic. Divinity hedges the king and the Courtly Love mistress is a goddess; love of both is an educating and informing power which brings one into unity with the spiritual and divine worlds. The fire of the angelic world blazes in the king's crown and the lady's eyes. The animals are those of proud beauty: the eagle and the lion stand for the vision of the royal by the loyal, the horse and falcon for "chivalry" or the aristocracy on horseback; the peacock and the swan are the birds of cynosure, and the phoenix or unique fire-bird is a favorite poetic emblem, especially, in England, for Queen Elizabeth. Garden symbolism recedes into the background, as city symbolism does in romance; there are formal gardens in close association with buildings, but the idea of a garden *world* is still a romantic one. The magician's wand is metamorphosed into the royal sceptre, and the magic tree to the fluttering banner. The city is preeminently the capital city, with the court

at its center and a series of initiatory degrees of approach within the court, climaxed by the royal "presence." We note that as we go down the modes an increasing number of poetic images are taken from actual social conditions of life. Water-symbolism centers on the disciplined river, in England the Thames which runs softly in Spenser and in neo-Classical rhythms in Denham, a river whose most appropriate ornament is the royal barge.

In the low mimetic area we enter a world that we may call the *analogy of experience*, and which bears a relation to the demonic world corresponding to the relation of the romantic innocent world to the apocalyptic one. Except for this potentially ironic connection, and except for a certain number of hieratic or specially indicated symbols like Hawthorne's scarlet letter and Henry James's golden bowl and ivory tower, the images are the ordinary images of experience, and need no further explanation here beyond a few comments about some particular features that may be of use. The organizing low mimetic ideas seem to be genesis and work. Divine and spiritual beings have little functional place in low mimetic fiction, and in thematic writing they are often deliberately rediscovered or treated as aesthetic surrogates. The advice is given to the unborn in *Erewhon* (apparently close to Butler's own view, as he repeats the idea in *Life and Habit*) that if there is a spiritual world, one should turn one's back on it and find it again in immediate work. The same doctrine of the rediscovery of faith through works may be found in Carlyle, Ruskin, Morris, and Shaw. In poets, even in explicitly sacramental ones, there are parallel tendencies. From many points of view there could hardly be a greater contrast than the contrast between the "motion and a spirit" discovered by Wordsworth in Tintern Abbey and the "chevalier" discovered by Hopkins in the windhover, yet the tendency to anchor a spiritual vision in an empirical psychological experience is common to both.

The low mimetic treatment of human society reflects, of course, Wordsworth's doctrine that the essential human situations, for the poet, are the common and typical ones. Along with this goes a good deal of parody of the idealization of life in romance, a parody that extends to religious and aesthetic experience. As for the animal world, Thomas Huxley's reference to the qualities that humanity shares with the ape and the tiger is a significantly low mimetic choice. The ape has always been *par excellence* the mimetic ani-

mal, and long before evolution he was specifically the imitator of man. The rise of evolution however suggested an analogy of proportion in which present man becomes the ape of his counterpart in the future, as in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra.* Huxley's coupling of the ape and the tiger recalls the popular belief in the implacable and invariable ferocity of both apes and "cavemen," a belief for which there seems to be little more evidence than for unicorns and phoenixes, but which, like them, shows a tendency to look at natural history from within the appropriate framework of poetic metaphors. The low mimetic is not a rich field for animal symbolism, but Huxley's ape and tiger recur in Kipling's *Jungle Book,* where the monkeys chatter in the tree-tops to no purpose, like intellectuals, while the human animal learns instead the dark predatory wisdom of the panther in the jungle below.

Gardens in the low mimetic give place to farms and the painful labor of the man with the hoe, the peasant or furze cutter who stands in Hardy as an image of man himself, "slighted and enduring." Cities take of course the shape of the labyrinthine modern metropolis, where the main emotional stress is on loneliness and lack of communication. And just as water symbolism in the world of innocence consists largely of fountains and running streams, so low mimetic imagery seeks Conrad's "destructive element" the sea, generally with some humanized leviathan or *bateau ivre* on it of any size from the Titanic in Hardy to the capsizable open boat which is, with an irony rare even in literature, a favorite image of Shelley. *Moby Dick* returns us to a more traditional form of the leviathan. The destroyer which appears at the end of H. G. Wells's *Tono-Bungay* is notable as coming from a low mimetic writer not much given to introducing hieratic symbols. Fire symbolism is often ironic and destructive, as in the fire which ends the action of *The Spoils of Poynton.* In the industrial age, however, Prometheus, who stole fire for man's use, is one of the favorite, if not the actual favorite, mythological figure among poets.

The relation of innocence and experience to apocalyptic and demonic imagery illustrates an aspect of displacement which we have so far said little about: displacement in the direction of the moral. The two dialectical structures are, radically, the desirable and the undesirable. Racks and dungeons belong in the sinister vision not because they are morally forbidden but because it is impossible

to make them objects of desire. Sexual fulfilment, on the other hand, may be desired even if it is morally condemned. Civilization tends to try to make the desirable and the moral coincide. The student of comparative mythology occasionally turns up, in a primitive or ancient cult, a bit of uninhibited mythopoeia that makes him realize how completely all the higher religions have limited their apocalyptic visions to morally acceptable ones. A good deal of expurgation clearly lies behind the development of Jewish, Greek, and other mythologies; or, as Victorian students of myth used to say, a repulsive and grotesque barbarism has been purified by a growing ethical refinement. Egyptian mythology begins with a god who creates the world by masturbation—a logical enough way of symbolizing the process of creation *de Deo*, but not one that we should expect to find in Homer, to say nothing of the Old Testament. As long as poetry follows religion towards the moral, religious and poetic archetypes will be very close together, as they are in Dante. Under such influence apocalyptic sexual imagery, for instance, tends to become matrimonial or virginal; the incestuous, the homosexual, and the adulterous go on the demonic side. The quality in art that Aristotle called *spoudaios* and that Matthew Arnold translated as "high seriousness" results from this rapprochement of religion and poetry within a common moral framework.

But poetry continually tends to right its own balance, to return to the pattern of desire and away from the conventional and moral. It usually does this in satire, the genre which is furthest removed from "high seriousness," but not always. The moral and the desirable have many important and significant connections, but still morality, which comes to terms with experience and necessity, is one thing, and desire, which tries to escape from necessity, is quite another. Thus literature is as a rule less inflexible than morality, and it owes much of its status as a liberal art to that fact. The qualities that morality and religion usually call ribald, obscene, subversive, lewd, and blasphemous have an essential place in literature, but often they can achieve expression only through ingenious techniques of displacement.

The simplest of such techniques is the phenomenon that we may call "demonic modulation," or the deliberate reversal of the customary moral associations of archetypes. Any symbol at all takes its meaning primarily from its context: a dragon may be sinister in a medieval romance or friendly in a Chinese one; an island may be

Prospero's island or Circe's. But because of the large amount of learned and traditional symbolism in literature, certain secondary associations become habitual. The serpent, because of its role in the garden of Eden story, usually belongs on the sinister side of our catalogue in Western literature; the revolutionary sympathies of Shelley impel him to use an innocent serpent in *The Revolt of Islam*. Or a free and equal society may be symbolized by a band of robbers, pirates, or gypsies; or true love may be symbolized by the triumph of an adulterous liaison over marriage, as in most triangle comedy; by a homosexual passion (if it *is* true love that is celebrated in Virgil's second eclogue) or an incestuous one, as in many Romantics. In the nineteenth century, with demonic myth approaching, this kind of reversed symbolism is organized into all the patterns of the "Romantic agony," chiefly sadism, Prometheanism, and diabolism, which in some of the "decadents" seem to provide all the disadvantages of superstition with none of the advantages of religion. Diabolism is not however invariably a sophisticated development: Huckleberry Finn, for example, wins our sympathy and admiration by preferring hell with his hunted friend to the heaven of the white slave-owners' god. On the other hand, imagery traditionally demonic may be used for the starting-point of a movement of redemption, like the City of Destruction in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Alchemical symbolism takes the ouroboros and the hermaphrodite (*res bina*), as well as the traditional romantic dragon, in this redemptive context.

Apocalyptic symbolism presents the infinitely desirable, in which the lusts and ambitions of man are identified with, adapted to, or projected on the gods. The art of the analogy of innocence, which includes most of the comic (in its happy-ending aspect), the idyllic, the romantic, the reverent, the panegyrical, the idealized, and the magical, is largely concerned with an attempt to present the desirable in human, familiar, attainable, and morally allowable terms. Much the same is true of the relation of the demonic world to the analogy of experience. Tragedy, for instance, is a vision of what does happen and must be accepted. To this extent it is a moral and plausible displacement of the bitter resentments that humanity feels against all obstacles to its desires. However malignant we may feel Athene to be in Sophocles' *Ajax*, the tragedy clearly implies that we must come to terms with her possession of power, even in our thoughts. A Christian who believed the Greek

gods to be nothing but devils would, if he were criticizing a tragedy of Sophocles, make an undisplaced or demonic interpretation of it. Such an interpretation would bring out everything that Sophocles was trying *not* to say; but it could be a shrewd criticism of its latent or underlying demonic structure for all that. The same kind of interpretation would be equally possible for many passages of Christian poetry dealing with the just wrath of God, the demonic content of which is often a hated father-figure. In pointing out the latent apocalyptic or demonic patterns in a literary work, we should not make the error of assuming that this latent content is the *real* content hypocritically disguised by a lying censor. It is simply one factor which is relevant to a full critical analysis. It is often, however, the factor which lifts a work of literature out of the category of the merely historical.

THEORY OF MYTHOS: INTRODUCTION

The meaning of a poem, its structure of imagery, is a static pattern. The five structures of meaning we have given are, to use another musical analogy, the *keys* in which they are written and finally resolve; but narrative involves movement from one structure to another. The main area of such movement obviously has to be the three intermediate fields. The apocalyptic and demonic worlds, being structures of pure metaphorical identity, suggest the eternally unchanging, and lend themselves very readily to being projected existentially as heaven and hell, where there is continuous life but no *process* of life. The analogies of innocence and experience represent the adaptation of myth to nature: they give us, not *the* city and *the* garden at the final goal of human vision, but the process of building and planting. The fundamental form of process is cyclical movement, the alternation of success and decline, effort and repose, life and death which is the rhythm of process. Hence our seven categories of images may also be seen as different forms of rotary or cyclical movement. Thus:

1. In the divine world the central process or movement is that of the death and rebirth, or the disappearance and return, or the incarnation and withdrawal, of a god. This divine activity is usually identified or associated with one or more of the cyclical processes of nature. The god may be a sun-god, dying at night and reborn at dawn, or else with an annual rebirth at the winter solstice; or he

may be a god of vegetation, dying in autumn and reviving in spring, or (as in the birth stories of the Buddha) he may be an incarnate god going through a series of human or animal life-cycles. As a god is almost by definition immortal, it is a regular feature of all such myths that the dying god is reborn as the same person. Hence the mythical or abstract structural principle of the cycle is that the continuum of identity in the individual life from birth to death is extended from death to rebirth. To this pattern of identical recurrence, the death and revival of the same individual, all other cyclical patterns are as a rule assimilated. The assimilation can be of course much closer in Eastern culture, where the doctrine of reincarnation is generally accepted, than in the West.

2. The fire-world of heavenly bodies presents us with three important cyclical rhythms. Most obvious is the daily journey of the sun-god across the sky, often thought of as guiding a boat or chariot, followed by a mysterious passage through a dark underworld, sometimes conceived as the belly of a devouring monster, back to the starting point. The solstitial cycle of the solar year supplies an extension of the same symbolism, incorporated in our Christmas literature. Here there is more emphasis on the theme of a newborn light threatened by the powers of darkness. The lunar cycle has been on the whole of less importance to Western poetry in historic times, whatever its prehistoric role. But its crucial sequence of old moon, "interlunar cave," and new moon may be the source, as it is clearly a close analogy, of the three-day rhythm of death, disappearance, and resurrection which we have in our Easter symbolism.

3. The human world is midway between the spiritual and the animal, and reflects that duality in its cyclical rhythms. Closely parallel to the solar cycle of light and darkness is the imaginative cycle of waking and of dreaming life. This cycle underlies the antithesis of the imagination of experience and of innocence already dealt with. For the human rhythm is the opposite of the solar one: a titanic libido wakes when the sun sleeps, and the light of day is often the darkness of desire. Then again, in common with animals, man exhibits the ordinary cycle of life and death, in which there is generic but not individual rebirth.

4. It is rare, in literature as in life, to find even a domesticated animal peacefully living through its full span of life to reach a final *nunc dimittis*. The exceptions, such as Odysseus' dog, are appropriate to the theme of *nostos* or full close of a cyclical movement. Ani-

mal lives, and human lives similarly subject to the order of nature, suggest more frequently the *tragic* process of life cut off violently by accident, sacrifice, ferocity, or some overriding need, the continuity which flows on after the tragic act being something other than the life itself.

5. The vegetable world supplies us of course with the annual cycle of seasons, often identified with or represented by a divine figure which dies in the autumn or is killed with the gathering of the harvest and the vintage, disappears in winter, and revives in spring. The divine figure may be male (Adonis) or female (Proserpine), but the symbolic structures resulting differ somewhat.

6. Poets, like critics, have generally been Spenglerians, in the sense that in poetry, as in Spengler, civilized life is frequently assimilated to the organic cycle of growth, maturity, decline, death, and rebirth in another individual form. Themes of a golden or heroic age in the past, of a millennium in the future, of the wheel of fortune in social affairs, of the *ubi sunt* elegy, of meditations over ruins, of nostalgia for a lost pastoral simplicity, of regret or exultation over the collapse of an empire, belong here.

7. Water-symbolism has also its own cycle, from rains to springs, from springs and fountains to brooks and rivers, from rivers to the sea or the winter snow, and back again.

These cyclical symbols are usually divided into four main phases, the four seasons of the year being the type for four periods of the day (morning, noon, evening, night), four aspects of the water-cycle (rain, fountains, rivers, sea or snow), four periods of life (youth, maturity, age, death), and the like. We find a great number of symbols from phases one and two in Keats's *Endymion*, and of symbols from phases three and four in *The Waste Land* (where we have to add four stages of Western culture, medieval, Renaissance, eighteenth-century, and contemporary). We may note that there is no cycle of air: the wind bloweth where it listeth, and images dealing with the movement of "spirit" are likely to be associated with the theme of unpredictability or sudden crisis.

In studying poems of immense scope, such as the *Commedia* or *Paradise Lost*, we find that we have to learn a good deal of cosmology. This cosmology is presented, quite correctly of course, as the science of its day, a schematism of correspondences which, after supplying us with a not too efficient calendar and a few words like

"phlegmatic" and "jovial," became defunct as science. There are also other poems incorporating equally obsolete science, such as *The Purple Island, The Loves of the Plants, The Art of Preserving Health,* which survive chiefly as curiosities. A literary critic should not overlook the compliment to poetry implied by the existence of such poems, but still versified science, as such, keeps the descriptive structure of science, and so imposes a non-poetic form on poetry. To make it successful as poetry a great deal of tact is required, yet those most attracted to such themes are very apt to be tactless poets. Dante and Milton were certainly better poets than Darwin or Fletcher: perhaps, however, it would be more fruitful to say that it was their finer instincts and judgements that led them to cosmological, as distinct from scientific or descriptive, themes.

For the form of cosmology is clearly much closer to that of poetry, and the thought suggests itself that symmetrical cosmology may be a branch of myth. If so, then it would be, like myth, a structural principle of poetry, whereas in science itself, symmetrical cosmology is exactly what Bacon said it was, an idol of the theatre. Perhaps, then, this whole pseudo-scientific world of three spirits, four humors, five elements, seven planets, nine spheres, twelve zodiacal signs, and so on, belongs in fact, as it does in practice, to the grammar of literary imagery. It has long been noticed that the Ptolemaic universe provides a better framework of symbolism, with all the identities, associations, and correspondences that symbolism demands, than the Copernican one does. Perhaps it not only provides a framework of poetic symbols but *is* one, or at any rate becomes one after it loses its validity as science, just as Classical mythology became purely poetic after its oracles had ceased. The same principle would account for the attraction of poets in the last century or two to occult systems of correspondences, and to such constructs as Yeats's *Vision* and Poe's *Eureka.*

The conception of a heaven above, a hell beneath, and a cyclical cosmos or order of nature in between forms the ground plan, *mutatis mutandis,* of both Dante and Milton. The same plan is in paintings of the Last Judgement, where there is a rotary movement of the saved rising on the right and the damned falling on the left. We may apply this construct to our principle that there are two fundamental movements of narrative: a cyclical movement within the order of nature, and a dialectical movement from that order

into the apocalyptic world above. (The movement to the demonic world below is very rare, because a constant rotation within the order of nature is demonic in itself.)

The top half of the natural cycle is the world of romance and the analogy of innocence; the lower half is the world of "realism" and the analogy of experience. There are thus four main types of mythical movement: within romance, within experience, down, and up. The downward movement is the tragic movement, the wheel of fortune falling from innocence toward hamartia, and from hamartia to catastrophe. The upward movement is the comic movement, from threatening complications to a happy ending and a general assumption of post-dated innocence in which everyone lives happily ever after. In Dante the upward movement is through purgatory.

We have thus answered the question: are there narrative categories of literature broader than, or logically prior to, the ordinary literary genres? There are four such categories: the romantic, the tragic, the comic, and the ironic or satiric. We get the same answer by inspection if we look at the ordinary meanings of these terms. Tragedy and comedy may have been originally names for two species of drama, but we also employ the terms to describe general characteristics of literary fictions, without regard to genre. It would be silly to insist that comedy can refer only to a certain type of stage play, and must never be employed in connection with Chaucer or Jane Austen. Chaucer himself would certainly have defined comedy, as his monk defines tragedy, much more broadly than that. If we are told that what we are about to read is tragic or comic, we expect a certain kind of structure and mood, but not necessarily a certain genre. The same is true of the word romance, and also of the words irony and satire, which are, as generally employed, elements of the literature of experience, and which we shall here adopt in place of "realism." We thus have four narrative pregeneric elements of literature which I shall call *mythoi* or generic plots.

If we think of our experience of these *mythoi*, we shall realize that they form two opposed pairs. Tragedy and comedy contrast rather than blend, and so do romance and irony, the champions respectively of the ideal and the actual. On the other hand, comedy blends insensibly into satire at one extreme and into romance at the other; romance may be comic or tragic; tragic extends from high romance to bitter and ironic realism.

THE MYTHOS OF SPRING: COMEDY

Dramatic comedy, from which fictional comedy is mainly descended, has been remarkably tenacious of its structural principles and character types. Bernard Shaw remarked that a comic dramatist could get a reputation for daring originality by stealing his method from Molière and his characters from Dickens: if we were to read Menander and Aristophanes for Molière and Dickens the statement would be hardly less true, at least as a general principle. The earliest extant European comedy, Aristophanes' *The Acharnians*, contains the *miles gloriosus* or military braggart who is still going strong in Chaplin's *Great Dictator*; the Joxer Daly of O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* has the same character and dramatic function as the parasites of twenty-five hundred years ago, and the audiences of vaudeville, comic strips, and television programs still laugh at the jokes that were declared to be outworn at the opening of *The Frogs*.

The plot structure of Greek New Comedy, as transmitted by Plautus and Terence, in itself less a form than a formula, has become the basis for most comedy, especially in its more highly conventionalized dramatic form, down to our own day. It will be most convenient to work out the theory of comic construction from drama, using illustrations from fiction only incidentally. What normally happens is that a young man wants a young woman, that his desire is resisted by some opposition, usually paternal, and that near the end of the play some twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will. In this simple pattern there are several complex elements. In the first place, the movement of comedy is usually a movement from one kind of society to another. At the beginning of the play the obstructing characters are in charge of the play's society, and the audience recognizes that they are usurpers. At the end of the play the device in the plot that brings hero and heroine together causes a new society to crystallize around the hero, and the moment when this crystallization occurs is the point of resolution in the action, the comic discovery, *anagnorisis* or *cognitio*.

The appearance of this new society is frequently signalized by some kind of party or festive ritual, which either appears at the end of the play or is assumed to take place immediately afterward. Weddings are most common, and sometimes so many of them occur, as in the quadruple wedding at the end of *As You Like It*, that they

suggest also the wholesale pairing off that takes place in a dance, which is another common conclusion, and the normal one for the masque. The banquet at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew* has an ancestry that goes back to Greek Middle Comedy; in Plautus the audience is sometimes jocosely invited to an imaginary banquet afterwards; Old Comedy, like the modern Christmas pantomime, was more generous, and occasionally threw bits of food to the audience. As the final society reached by comedy is the one that the audience has recognized all along to be the proper and desirable state of affairs, an act of communion with the audience is in order. Tragic actors expect to be applauded as well as comic ones, but nevertheless the word "plaudite" at the end of a Roman comedy, the invitation to the audience to form part of the comic society, would seem rather out of place at the end of a tragedy. The resolution of comedy comes, so to speak, from the audience's side of the stage; in a tragedy it comes from some mysterious world on the opposite side. In the movie, where darkness permits a more erotically oriented audience, the plot usually moves toward an act which, like death in Greek tragedy, takes place offstage, and is symbolized by a closing embrace.

The obstacles to the hero's desire, then, form the action of the comedy, and the overcoming of them the comic resolution. The obstacles are usually parental, hence comedy often turns on a clash between a son's and a father's will. Thus the comic dramatist as a rule writes for the younger men in his audience, and the older members of almost any society are apt to feel that comedy has something subversive about it. This is certainly one element in the social persecution of drama, which is not peculiar to Puritans or even Christians, as Terence in pagan Rome met much the same kind of social opposition that Ben Jonson did. There is one scene in Plautus where a son and father are making love to the same courtesan, and the son asks his father pointedly if he really does love mother. One has to see this scene against the background of Roman family life to understand its importance as psychological release. Even in Shakespeare there are startling outbreaks of baiting older men, and in contemporary movies the triumph of youth is so relentless that the moviemakers find some difficulty in getting anyone over the age of seventeen into their audiences.

The opponent to the hero's wishes, when not the father, is generally someone who partakes of the father's closer relation to es-

tablished society: that is, a rival with less youth and more money. In Plautus and Terence he is usually either the pimp who owns the girl, or a wandering soldier with a supply of ready cash. The fury with which these characters are baited and exploded from the stage shows that they are father-surrogates, and even if they were not, they would still be usurpers, and their claim to possess the girl must be shown up as somehow fraudulent. They are, in short, impostors, and the extent to which they have real power implies some criticism of the society that allows them their power. In Plautus and Terence this criticism seldom goes beyond the immorality of brothels and professional harlots, but in Renaissance dramatists, including Jonson, there is some sharp observation of the rising power of money and the sort of ruling class it is building up.

The tendency of comedy is to include as many people as possible in its final society: the blocking characters are more often reconciled or converted than simply repudiated. Comedy often includes a scapegoat ritual of expulsion which gets rid of some irreconcilable character, but exposure and disgrace make for pathos, or even tragedy. *The Merchant of Venice* seems almost an experiment in coming as close as possible to upsetting the comic balance. If the dramatic rôle of Shylock is ever so slightly exaggerated, as it generally is when the leading actor of the company takes the part, it is upset, and the play becomes the tragedy of the Jew of Venice with a comic epilogue. *Volpone* ends with a great bustle of sentences to penal servitude and the galleys, and one feels that the deliverance of society hardly needs so much hard labor; but then *Volpone* is exceptional in being a kind of comic imitation of a tragedy, with the point of Volpone's hybris carefully marked.

The principle of conversion becomes clearer with characters whose chief function is the amusing of the audience. The original *miles gloriosus* in Plautus is a son of Jove and Venus who has killed an elephant with his fist and seven thousand men in one day's fighting. In other words, he is trying to put on a good show: the exuberance of his boasting helps to put the play over. The convention says that the braggart must be exposed, ridiculed, swindled, and beaten. But why should a professional dramatist, of all people, want so to harry a character who is putting on a good show—*his* show at that? When we find Falstaff invited to the final feast in *The Merry Wives*, Caliban reprieved, attempts made to mollify Malvolio, and Angelo and Parolles allowed to live down their dis-

grace, we are seeing a fundamental principle of comedy at work. The tendency of the comic society to include rather than exclude is the reason for the traditional importance of the parasite, who has no business to be at the final festival but is nevertheless there. The word "grace," with all its Renaissance overtones from the graceful courtier of Castiglione to the gracious God of Christianity, is a most important thematic word in Shakespearean comedy.

The action of comedy in moving from one social center to another is not unlike the action of a lawsuit, in which plaintiff and defendant construct different versions of the same situation, one finally being judged as real and the other as illusory. This resemblance of the rhetoric of comedy to the rhetoric of jurisprudence has been recognized from earliest times. A little pamphlet called the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, closely related to Aristotle's *Poetics*, which sets down all the essential facts about comedy in about a page and a half, divides the *dianoia* of comedy into two parts, opinion (*pistis*) and proof (*gnosis*). These correspond roughly to the usurping and the desirable societies respectively. Proofs (i.e., the means of bringing about the happier society) are subdivided into oaths, compacts, witnesses, ordeals (or tortures), and laws—in other words the five forms of material proof in law cases listed in the *Rhetoric*. We notice how often the action of a Shakespearean comedy begins with some absurd, cruel, or irrational law: the law of killing Syracusans in the *Comedy of Errors*, the law of compulsory marriage in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the law that confirms Shylock's bond, the attempts of Angelo to legislate people into righteousness, and the like, which the action of the comedy then evades or breaks. Compacts are as a rule the conspiracies formed by the hero's society; witnesses, such as overhearers of conversations or people with special knowledge (like the hero's old nurse with her retentive memory for birthmarks), are the commonest devices for bringing about the comic discovery. Ordeals (*basanoi*) are usually tests or touchstones of the hero's character: the Greek word also means touchstones, and seems to be echoed in Shakespeare's Bassanio whose ordeal it is to make a judgement on the worth of metals.

There are two ways of developing the form of comedy: one is to throw the main emphasis on the blocking characters; the other is to throw it forward on the scenes of discovery and reconciliation. One is the general tendency of comic irony, satire, realism, and

studies of manners; the other is the tendency of Shakespearean and other types of romantic comedy. In the comedy of manners the main ethical interest falls as a rule on the blocking characters. The technical hero and heroine are not often very interesting people: the *adulescentes* of Plautus and Terence are all alike, as hard to tell apart in the dark as Demetrius and Lysander, who may be parodies of them. Generally the hero's character has the neutrality that enables him to represent a wish-fulfilment. It is very different with the miserly or ferocious parent, the boastful or foppish rival, or the other characters who stand in the way of the action. In Molière we have a simple but fully tested formula in which the ethical interest is focussed on a single blocking character, a heavy father, a miser, a misanthrope, a hypocrite, or a hypochondriac. These are the figures that we remember, and the plays are usually named after them, but we can seldom remember all the Valentins and Angeliques who wriggle out of their clutches. In *The Merry Wives* the technical hero, a man named Fenton, has only a bit part, and this play has picked up a hint or two from Plautus's *Casina*, where the hero and heroine are not even brought on the stage at all. Fictional comedy, especially Dickens, often follows the same practice of grouping its interesting characters around a somewhat dullish pair of technical leads. Even Tom Jones, though far more fully realized, is still deliberately associated, as his commonplace name indicates, with the conventional and typical.

Comedy usually moves toward a happy ending, and the normal response of the audience to a happy ending is "this should be," which sounds like a moral judgement. So it is, except that it is not moral in the restricted sense, but social. Its opposite is not the villainous but the absurd, and comedy finds the virtues of Malvolio as absurd as the vices of Angelo. Molière's misanthrope, being committed to sincerity, which is a virtue, is morally in a strong position, but the audience soon realizes that his friend Philinte, who is ready to lie quite cheerfully in order to enable other people to preserve their self-respect, is the more genuinely sincere of the two. It is of course quite possible to have a moral comedy, but the result is often the kind of melodrama that we have described as comedy without humor, and which achieves its happy ending with a self-righteous tone that most comedy avoids. It is hardly possible to imagine a drama without conflict, and it is hardly possible to imagine a conflict without some kind of enmity. But just as love,

including sexual love, is a very different thing from lust, so enmity is a very different thing from hatred. In tragedy, of course, enmity almost always includes hatred; comedy is different, and one feels that the social judgement against the absurd is closer to the comic norm than the moral judgement against the wicked.

The question then arises of what makes the blocking character absurd. Ben Jonson explained this by his theory of the "humor," the character dominated by what Pope calls a ruling passion. The humor's dramatic function is to express a state of what might be called ritual bondage. He is obsessed by his humor, and his function in the play is primarily to repeat his obsession. A sick man is not a humor, but a hypochondriac is, because, *qua* hypochondriac, he can never admit to good health, and can never do anything inconsistent with the role that he has prescribed for himself. A miser can do and say nothing that is not connected with the hiding of gold or saving of money. In *The Silent Woman*, Jonson's nearest approach to Molière's type of construction, the whole action recedes from the humor of Morose, whose determination to eliminate noise from his life produces so loquacious a comic action.

The principle of the humor is the principle that unincremental repetition, the literary imitation of ritual bondage, is funny. In a tragedy—*Oedipus Tyrannus* is the stock example—repetition leads logically to catastrophe. Repetition overdone or not going anywhere belongs to comedy, for laughter is partly a reflex, and like other reflexes it can be conditioned by a simple repeated pattern. In Synge's *Riders to the Sea* a mother, after losing her husband and five sons at sea, finally loses her last son, and the result is a very beautiful and moving play. But if it had been a full-length tragedy plodding glumly through the seven drownings one after another, the audience would have been helpless with unsympathetic laughter long before it was over. The principle of repetition as the basis of humor both in Jonson's sense and in ours is well known to the creators of comic strips, in which a character is established as a parasite, a glutton (often confined to one dish), or a shrew, and who begins to be funny after the point has been made every day for several months. Continuous comic radio programs, too, are much more amusing to habitués than to neophytes. The girth of Falstaff and the hallucinations of Quixote are based on much the same comic laws. Mr. E. M. Forster speaks with disdain of Dickens's Mrs. Micawber, who never says anything except that she will never de-

sert Mr. Micawber: a strong contrast is marked here between the refined writer too finicky for popular formulas, and the major one who exploits them ruthlessly.

The humor in comedy is usually someone with a good deal of social prestige and power, who is able to force much of the play's society into line with his obsession. Thus the humor is intimately connected with the theme of the absurd or irrational law that the action of comedy moves toward breaking. It is significant that the central character of our earliest humor comedy, *The Wasps*, is obsessed by law cases: Shylock, too, unites a craving for the law with the humor of revenge. Often the absurd law appears as a whim of a bemused tyrant whose will is law, like Leontes or the humorous Duke Frederick in Shakespeare, who makes some arbitrary decision or rash promise: here law is replaced by "oath," also mentioned in the *Tractatus*. Or it may take the form of a sham Utopia, a society of ritual bondage constructed by an act of humorous or pedantic will, like the academic retreat in *Love's Labor's Lost*. This theme is also as old as Aristophanes, whose parodies of Platonic social schemes in *The Birds* and *Ecclesiazusae* deal with it.

The society emerging at the conclusion of comedy represents, by contrast, a kind of moral norm, or pragmatically free society. Its ideals are seldom defined or formulated: definition and formulation belong to the humors, who want predictable activity. We are simply given to understand that the newly-married couple will live happily ever after, or that at any rate they will get along in a relatively unhumorous and clear-sighted manner. That is one reason why the character of the successful hero is so often left undeveloped: his real life begins at the end of the play, and we have to believe him to be potentially a more interesting character than he appears to be. In Terence's *Adelphoi*, Demea, a harsh father, is contrasted with his brother Micio, who is indulgent. Micio being more liberal, he leads the way to the comic resolution, and converts Demea, but then Demea points out the indolence inspiring a good deal of Micio's liberality, and releases him from a complementary humorous bondage.

Thus the movement from *pistis* to *gnosis*, from a society controlled by habit, ritual bondage, arbitrary law and the older characters to a society controlled by youth and pragmatic freedom is fundamentally, as the Greek words suggest, a movement from illusion to reality. Illusion is whatever is fixed or definable, and reality

is best understood as its negation: whatever reality is, it's not *that*. Hence the importance of the theme of creating and dispelling illusion in comedy: the illusions caused by disguise, obsession, hypocrisy, or unknown parentage.

The comic ending is generally manipulated by a twist in the plot. In Roman comedy the heroine, who is usually a slave or courtesan, turns out to be the daughter of somebody respectable, so that the hero can marry her without loss of face. The *cognitio* in comedy, in which the characters find out who their relatives are, and who is left of the opposite sex not a relative, and hence available for marriage, is one of the features of comedy that have never changed much: *The Confidential Clerk* indicates that it still holds the attention of dramatists. There is a brilliant parody of a *cognitio* at the end of *Major Barbara* (the fact that the hero of this play is a professor of Greek perhaps indicates an unusual affinity to the conventions of Euripides and Menander), where Undershaft is enabled to break the rule that he cannot appoint his son-in-law as successor by the fact that the son-in-law's own father married his deceased wife's sister in Australia, so that the son-in-law is his own first cousin as well as himself. It sounds complicated, but the plots of comedy often are complicated because there is something inherently absurd about complications. As the main character interest in comedy is so often focussed on the defeated characters, comedy regularly illustrates a victory of arbitrary plot over consistency of character. Thus, in striking contrast to tragedy, there can hardly be such a thing as inevitable comedy, as far as the action of the individual play is concerned. That is, we may know that the convention of comedy will make some kind of happy ending inevitable, but still for each play the dramatist must produce a distinctive "gimmick" or "weenie," to use two disrespectful Hollywood synonyms for *anagnorisis*. Happy endings do not impress us as true, but as desirable, and they are brought about by manipulation. The watcher of death and tragedy has nothing to do but sit and wait for the inevitable end; but something gets born at the end of comedy, and the watcher of birth is a member of a busy society.

The manipulation of plot does not always involve metamorphosis of character, but there is no violation of comic decorum when it does. Unlikely conversions, miraculous transformations, and providential assistance are inseparable from comedy. Further, whatever emerges is supposed to be there for good: if the cur-

mudgeon becomes lovable, we understand that he will not immediately relapse again into his ritual habit. Civilizations which stress the desirable rather than the real, and the religious as opposed to the scientific perspective, think of drama almost entirely in terms of comedy. In the classical drama of India, we are told, the tragic ending was regarded as bad taste, much as the manipulated endings of comedy are regarded as bad taste by novelists interested in ironic realism.

The total *mythos* of comedy, only a small part of which is ordinarily presented, has regularly what in music is called a ternary form: the hero's society rebels against the society of the *senex* and triumphs, but the hero's society is a Saturnalia, a reversal of social standards which recalls a golden age in the past before the main action of the play begins. Thus we have a stable and harmonious order disrupted by folly, obsession, forgetfulness, "pride and prejudice," or events not understood by the characters themselves, and then restored. Often there is a benevolent grandfather, so to speak, who overrules the action set up by the blocking humor and so links the first and third parts. An example is Mr. Burchell, the disguised uncle of the wicked squire, in *The Vicar of Wakefield*. A very long play, such as the Indian *Sakuntala*, may present all three phases; a very intricate one, such as many of Menander's evidently were, may indicate their outlines. But of course very often the first phase is not given at all: the audience simply understands an ideal state of affairs which it knows to be better than what is revealed in the play, and which it recognizes as like that to which the action leads. This ternary action is, ritually, like a contest of summer and winter in which winter occupies the middle action; psychologically, it is like the removal of a neurosis or blocking point and the restoring of an unbroken current of energy and memory. The Jonsonian masque, with the antimasque in the middle, gives a highly conventionalized or "abstract" version of it.

We pass now to the typical characters of comedy. In drama, characterization depends on function; what a character is follows from what he has to do in the play. Dramatic function in its turn depends on the structure of the play; the character has certain things to do because the play has such and such a shape. The structure of the play in its turn depends on the category of the play; if it is a comedy, its structure will require a comic resolution and a

prevailing comic mood. Hence when we speak of typical characters, we are not trying to reduce lifelike characters to stock types, though we certainly are suggesting that the sentimental notion of an antithesis between the lifelike character and the stock type is a vulgar error. All lifelike characters, whether in drama or fiction, owe their consistency to the appropriateness of the stock type which belongs to their dramatic function. That stock type is not the character but it is as necessary to the character as a skeleton is to the actor who plays it.

With regard to the characterization of comedy, the *Tractatus* lists three types of comic characters: the *alazons* or impostors, the *eirons* or self-deprecators, and the buffoons (*bomolochoi*). This list is closely related to a passage in the *Ethics* which contrasts the first two, and then goes on to contrast the buffoon with a character whom Aristotle calls *agroikos* or churlish, literally rustic. We may reasonably accept the churl as a fourth character type, and so we have two opposed pairs. The contest of *eiron* and *alazon* forms the basis of the comic action, and the buffoon and the churl polarize the comic mood.

We have previously dealt with the terms *eiron* and *alazon*. The humorous blocking characters of comedy are nearly always impostors, though it is more frequently a lack of self-knowledge than simple hypocrisy that characterizes them. The multitudes of comic scenes in which one character complacently soliloquizes while another makes sarcastic asides to the audience show the contest of *eiron* and *alazon* in its purest form, and show too that the audience is sympathetic to the *eiron* side. Central to the *alazon* group is the *senex iratus* or heavy father, who with his rages and threats, his obsessions and his gullibility, seems closely related to some of the demonic characters of romance, such as Polyphemus. Occasionally a character may have the dramatic function of such a figure without his characteristics: an example is Squire Allworthy in *Tom Jones*, who as far as the plot is concerned behaves almost as stupidly as Squire Western. Of heavy-father surrogates, the *miles gloriosus* has been mentioned: his popularity is largely due to the fact that he is a man of words rather than deeds, and is consequently far more useful to a practising dramatist than any tight-lipped hero could ever be. The pedant, in Renaissance comedy often a student of the occult sciences, the fop or coxcomb, and similar humors, require no comment. The female *alazon* is rare: Katharina the

shrew represents to some extent a female *miles gloriosus*, and the *précieuse ridicule* a female pedant, but the "menace" or siren who gets in the way of the true heroine is more often found as a sinister figure of melodrama or romance than as a ridiculous figure in comedy.

The *eiron* figures need a little more attention. Central to this group is the hero, who is an *eiron* figure because, as explained, the dramatist tends to play him down and make him rather neutral and unformed in character. Next in importance is the heroine, also often played down: in Old Comedy, when a girl accompanies a male hero in his triumph, she is generally a stage prop, a *muta persona* not previously introduced. A more difficult form of *cognitio* is achieved when the heroine disguises herself or through some other device brings about the comic resolution, so that the person whom the hero is seeking turns out to be the person who has sought him. The fondness of Shakespeare for this "she stoops to conquer" theme needs only to be mentioned here, as it belongs more naturally to the *mythos* of romance.

Another central *eiron* figure is the type entrusted with hatching the schemes which bring about the hero's victory. This character in Roman comedy is almost always a tricky slave (*dolosus servus*), and in Renaissance comedy he becomes the scheming valet who is so frequent in Continental plays, and in Spanish drama is called the *gracioso*. Modern audiences are most familiar with him in Figaro and in the Leporello of *Don Giovanni*. Through such intermediate nineteenth-century figures as Micawber and the Touchwood of Scott's *St. Ronan's Well*, who, like the gracioso, have buffoon affiliations, he evolves into the amateur detective of modern fiction. The Jeeves of P. G. Wodehouse is a more direct descendant. Female confidantes of the same general family are often brought in to oil the machinery of the well-made play. Elizabethan comedy had another type of trickster, represented by the Matthew Merrygreek of *Ralph Roister Doister*, who is generally said to be developed from the vice or iniquity of the morality plays: as usual, the analogy is sound enough, whatever historians decide about origins. The vice, to give him that name, is very useful to a comic dramatist because he acts from pure love of mischief, and can set a comic action going with the minimum of motivation. The vice may be as light-hearted as Puck or as malignant as Don John in *Much Ado*, but as a rule the vice's activity is, in spite of his name, benevolent.

One of the tricky slaves in Plautus, in a soliloquy, boasts that he is the *architectus* of the comic action: such a character carries out the will of the author to reach a happy ending. He is in fact the spirit of comedy, and the two clearest examples of the type in Shakespeare, Puck and Ariel, are both spiritual beings. The tricky slave often has his own freedom in mind as the reward of his exertions: Ariel's longing for release is in the same tradition.

The role of the vice includes a great deal of disguising, and the type may often be recognized by disguise. A good example is the Brainworm of Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour,* who calls the action of the play the day of his metamorphoses. Similarly Ariel has to surmount the difficult stage direction of "Enter invisible." The vice is combined with the hero whenever the latter is a cheeky, improvident young man who hatches his own schemes and cheats his rich father or uncle into giving him his patrimony along with the girl.

Another *eiron* type has not been much noticed. This is a character, generally an older man, who begins the action of the play by withdrawing from it, and ends the play by returning. He is often a father with the motive of seeing what his son will do. The action of *Every Man in His Humour* is set going in this way by Knowell Senior. The disappearance and return of Lovewit, the owner of the house which is the scene of *The Alchemist,* has the same dramatic function, though the characterization is different. The clearest Shakespearean example is the Duke in *Measure for Measure,* but Shakespeare is more addicted to the type than might appear at first glance. In Shakespeare the vice is rarely the real *architectus*: Puck and Ariel both act under orders from an older man, if one may call Oberon a man for the moment. In *The Tempest* Shakespeare returns to a comic action established by Aristophanes, in which an older man, instead of retiring from the action, builds it up on the stage. When the heroine takes the vice role in Shakespeare, she is often significantly related to her father, even when the father is not in the play at all, like the father of Helena, who gives her his medical knowledge, or the father of Portia, who arranges the scheme of the caskets. A more conventionally treated example of the same benevolent Prospero figure turned up recently in the psychiatrist of *The Cocktail Party,* and one may compare the mysterious alchemist who is the father of the heroine of *The Lady's Not for Burning.* The formula is not confined to comedy: Polonius, who shows

so many of the disadvantages of a literary education, attempts the role of a retreating paternal *eiron* three times, once too often. *Hamlet* and *King Lear* contain subplots which are ironic versions of stock comic themes, Gloucester's story being the regular comedy theme of the gullible *senex* swindled by a clever and unprincipled son.

We pass now to the buffoon types, those whose function it is to increase the mood of festivity rather than to contribute to the plot. Renaissance comedy, unlike Roman comedy, had a great variety of such characters, professional fools, clowns, pages, singers, and incidental characters with established comic habits like malapropism or foreign accents. The oldest buffoon of this incidental nature is the parasite, who may be given something to do, as Jonson gives Mosca the role of a vice in *Volpone*, but who, *qua* parasite, does nothing but entertain the audience by talking about his appetite. He derives chiefly from Greek Middle Comedy, which appears to have been very full of food, and where he was, not unnaturally, closely associated with another established buffoon type, the cook, a conventional figure who breaks into comedies to bustle and order about and make long speeches about the mysteries of cooking. In the role of cook the buffoon or entertainer appears, not simply as a gratuitous addition like the parasite, but as something more like a master of ceremonies, a center for the comic mood. There is no cook in Shakespeare, though there is a superb description of one in the *Comedy of Errors*, but a similar role is often attached to a jovial and loquacious host, like the "mad host" of *The Merry Wives* or the Simon Eyre of *The Shoemakers Holiday*. In Middleton's *A Trick to Catch the Old One* the mad host type is combined with the vice. In Falstaff and Sir Toby Belch we can see the affinities of the buffoon or entertainer type both with the parasite and with the master of revels. If we study this entertainer or host role carefully we shall soon realize that it is a development of what in Aristophanic comedy is represented by the chorus, and which in its turn goes back to the *komos* or revel from which comedy is said to be descended.

Finally, there is a fourth group to which we have assigned the word *agroikos*, and which usually means either churlish or rustic, depending on the context. This type may also be extended to cover the Elizabethan gull and what in vaudeville used to be called the straight man, the solemn or inarticulate character who allows the

humor to bounce off him, so to speak. We find churls in the miserly, snobbish, or priggish characters whose role is that of the refuser of festivity, the killjoy who tries to stop the fun, or, like Malvolio, locks up the food and drink instead of dispensing it. The melancholy Jaques of *As You Like It*, who walks out on the final festivities, is closely related. In the sulky and self-centered Bertram of *All's Well* there is a most unusual and ingenious combination of this type with the hero. More often, however, the churl belongs to the *alazon* group, all miserly old men in comedies, including Shylock, being churls. In *The Tempest* Caliban has much the same relation to the churlish type that Ariel has to the vice or tricky slave. But often, where the mood is more light-hearted, we may translate *agroikos* simply by rustic, as with the innumerable country squires and similar characters who provide amusement in the urban setting of drama. Such types do not refuse the mood of festivity, but they mark the extent of its range. In a pastoral comedy the idealized virtues of rural life may be represented by a simple man who speaks for the pastoral ideal, like Corin in *As You Like It*. Corin has the same *agroikos* role as the "rube" or "hayseed" of more citified comedies, but the moral attitude to the role is reversed. Again we notice the principle that dramatic structure is a permanent and moral attitude a variable factor in literature.

In a very ironic comedy a different type of character may play the role of the refuser of festivity. The more ironic the comedy, the more absurd the society, and an absurd society may be condemned by, or at least contrasted with, a character that we may call the plain dealer, an outspoken advocate of a kind of moral norm who has the sympathy of the audience. Wycherley's Manly, though he provides the name for the type, is not a particularly good example of it: a much better one is the Cléante of *Tartuffe*. Such a character is appropriate when the tone is ironic enough to get the audience confused about its sense of the social norm: he corresponds roughly to the chorus in a tragedy, which is there for a similar reason. When the tone deepens from the ironic to the bitter, the plain dealer may become a malcontent or railer, who may be morally superior to his society, as he is to some extent in Marston's play of that name, but who may also be too motivated by envy to be much more than another aspect of his society's evil, like Thersites, or to some extent Apemantus.

In tragedy, pity and fear, the emotions of moral attraction and repulsion, are raised and cast out. Comedy seems to make a more functional use of the social, even the moral judgement, than tragedy, yet comedy seems to raise the corresponding emotions, which are sympathy and ridicule, and cast them out in the same way. Comedy ranges from the most savage irony to the most dreamy wish-fulfilment romance, but its structural patterns and characterization are much the same throughout its range. This principle of the uniformity of comic structure through a variety of attitudes is clear in Aristophanes. Aristophanes is the most personal of writers, and his opinions on every subject are written all over his plays. We know that he wanted peace with Sparta and that he hated Cleon, so when his comedy depicts the attaining of peace and the defeat of Cleon we know that he approved and wanted his audience to approve. But in *Ecclesiazusae* a band of women in disguise railroad a communistic scheme through the Assembly which is a horrid parody of a Platonic republic, and proceed to inaugurate its sexual communism with some astonishing improvements. Presumably Aristophanes did not altogether endorse this, yet the comedy follows the same pattern and the same resolution. In *The Birds* the Peisthetairos who defies Zeus and blocks out Olympus with his Cloud-Cuckoo-Land is accorded the same triumph that is given to the Trygaios of the *Peace* who flies to heaven and brings a golden age back to Athens.

Let us look now at a variety of comic structures between the extremes of irony and romance. As comedy blends into irony and satire at one end and into romance at the other, if there are different phases or types of comic structure, some of them will be closely parallel to some of the types of irony and of romance. A somewhat forbidding piece of symmetry turns up in our argument at this point, which seems to have some literary analogy to the circle of fifths in music. I recognize six phases of each *mythos*, three being parallel to the phases of a neighboring *mythos*. The first three phases of comedy are parallel to the first three phases of irony and satire, and the second three to the second three of romance. The distinction between an ironic comedy and a comic satire, or between a romantic comedy and a comic romance, is tenuous, but not quite a distinction without a difference.

The first or most ironic phase of comedy is, naturally, the one in which a humorous society triumphs or remains undefeated. A good

example of a comedy of this type is *The Alchemist*, in which the returning *eiron* Lovewit joins the rascals, and the plain dealer Surly is made a fool of. In *The Beggar's Opera* there is a similar twist to the ending: the (projected) author feels that the hanging of the hero is a comic ending, but is informed by the manager that the audience's sense of comic decorum demands a reprieve, whatever Macheath's moral status. This phase of comedy presents what Renaissance critics called *speculum consuetudinis*, the way of the world, *cosi fan tutte*. A more intense irony is achieved when the humorous society simply disintegrates without anything taking its place, as in *Heartbreak House* and frequently in Chekhov.

We notice in ironic comedy that the demonic world is never far away. The rages of the *senex iratus* in Roman comedy are directed mainly at the tricky slave, who is threatened with the mill, with being flogged to death, with crucifixion, with having his head dipped in tar and set on fire, and the like, all penalties that could be and were exacted from slaves in life. An epilogue in Plautus informs us that the slave-actor who has blown up in his lines will now be flogged; in one of the Menander fragments a slave is tied up and burned with a torch on the stage. One sometimes gets the impression that the audience of Plautus and Terence would have guffawed uproariously all through the Passion. We may ascribe this to the brutality of a slave society, but then we remember that boiling oil and burying alive ("such a *stuffy* death") turn up in *The Mikado*. Two lively comedies of the modern stage are *The Cocktail Party* and *The Lady's Not for Burning*, but the cross appears in the background of the one and the stake in the background of the other. Shylock's knife and Angelo's gallows appear in Shakespeare: in *Measure for Measure* every male character is at one time or another threatened with death. The action of comedy moves toward a deliverance from something which, if absurd, is by no means invariably harmless. We notice too how frequently a comic dramatist tries to bring his action as close to a catastrophic overthrow of the hero as he can get it, and then reverses the action as quickly as possible. The evading or breaking of a cruel law is often a very narrow squeeze. The intervention of the king at the end of *Tartuffe* is deliberately arbitrary: there is nothing in the action of the play itself to prevent Tartuffe's triumph. Tom Jones in the final book, accused of murder, incest, debt, and double-dealing, cast off by friends, guardian, and sweetheart, is a woeful figure indeed before all these turn into illu-

sions. Any reader can think of many comedies in which the fear of death, sometimes a hideous death, hangs over the central character to the end, and is dispelled so quickly that one has almost the sense of awakening from nightmare.

Sometimes the redeeming agent actually is divine, like Diana in *Pericles*; in *Tartuffe* it is the king, who is conceived as a part of the audience and the incarnation of its will. An extraordinary number of comic stories, both in drama and fiction, seem to approach a potentially tragic crisis near the end, a feature that I may call the "point of ritual death"—a clumsy expression that I would gladly surrender for a better one. It is a feature not often noticed by critics, but when it is present it is as unmistakably present as a stretto in a fugue, which it somewhat resembles. In Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* (I select this because no one will suspect Smollett of deliberate mythopoeia but only of following convention, at least as far as his plot is concerned), the main characters are nearly drowned in an accident with an upset carriage; they are then taken to a nearby house to dry off, and a *cognitio* takes place, in the course of which their family relationships are regrouped, secrets of birth brought to light, and names changed. Similar points of ritual death may be marked in almost any story that imprisons the hero or gives the heroine a nearly mortal illness before an eventually happy ending.

Sometimes the point of ritual death is vestigial, not an element in the plot but a mere change of tone. Everyone will have noted in comic actions, even in very trivial movies and magazine stories, a point near the end at which the tone suddenly becomes serious, sentimental, or ominous of potential catastrophe. In Aldous Huxley's *Chrome Yellow*, the hero Denis comes to a point of self-evaluation in which suicide nearly suggests itself: in most of Huxley's later books some violent action, generally suicidal, occurs at the corresponding point. In *Mrs. Dalloway* the actual suicide of Septimus becomes a point of ritual death for the heroine in the middle of her party. There are also some interesting Shakespearean variations of the device: a clown, for instance, will make a speech near the end in which the buffoon's mask suddenly falls off and we look straight into the face of a beaten and ridiculed slave. Examples are the speech of Dromio of Ephesus beginning "I am an ass indeed" in the *Comedy of Errors*, and the speech of the Clown in *All's Well* beginning "I am a woodland fellow."

The second phase of comedy, in its simplest form, is a comedy in which the hero does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving its structure as it was before. A more complex irony in this phase is achieved when a society is constructed by or around a hero, but proves not sufficiently real or strong to impose itself. In this situation the hero is usually himself at least partly a comic humor or mental runaway, and we have either a hero's illusion thwarted by a superior reality or a clash of two illusions. This is the quixotic phase of comedy, a difficult phase for drama, though *The Wild Duck* is a fairly pure example of it, and in drama it usually appears as a subordinate theme of another phase. Thus in *The Alchemist* Sir Epicure Mammon's dream of what he will do with the philosopher's stone is, like Quixote's, a gigantic dream, and makes him an ironic parody of Faustus (who is mentioned in the play), in the same way that Quixote is an ironic parody of Amadis and Lancelot. When the tone is more light-hearted, the comic resolution may be strong enough to sweep over all quixotic illusions. In *Huckleberry Finn* the main theme is one of the oldest in comedy, the freeing of a slave, and the *cognitio* tells us that Jim had already been set free before his escape was bungled by Tom Sawyer's pedantries. Because of its unrivalled opportunities for double-edged irony, this phase is a favorite of Henry James: perhaps his most searching study of it is *The Sacred Fount*, where the hero is an ironic parody of a Prospero figure creating another society out of the one in front of him.

The third phase of comedy is the normal one that we have been discussing, in which a *senex iratus* or other humor gives way to a young man's desires. The sense of the comic norm is so strong that when Shakespeare, by way of experiment, tried to reverse the pattern in *All's Well*, in having two older people force Bertram to marry Helena, the result has been an unpopular "problem" play, with a suggestion of something sinister about it. We have noted that the *cognitio* of comedy is much concerned with straightening out the details of the new society, with distinguishing brides from sisters and parents from foster-parents. The fact that the son and father are so often in conflict means that they are frequently rivals for the same girl, and the psychological alliance of the hero's bride and the mother is often expressed or implied. The occasional "naughtiness" of comedy, as in the Restoration period, has much to do, not only with marital infidelity, but with a kind of comic

Oedipus situation in which the hero replaces his father as a lover. In Congreve's *Love for Love* there are two Oedipus themes in counterpoint: the hero cheats his father out of the heroine, and his best friend violates the wife of an impotent old man who is the heroine's guardian. A theme which would be recognized in real life as a form of infantile regression, the hero pretending to be impotent in order to gain admission to the women's quarters, is employed in Wycherley's *Country Wife,* where it is taken from Terence's *Eunuchus.*

The possibilities of incestuous combinations form one of the minor themes of comedy. The repellent older woman offered to Figaro in marriage turns out to be his mother, and the fear of violating a mother also occurs in *Tom Jones.* When in *Ghosts* and *Little Eyolf* Ibsen employed the old chestnut about the object of the hero's affections being his sister (a theme as old as Menander), his startled hearers took it for a portent of social revolution. In Shakespeare the recurring and somewhat mysterious father-daughter relationship already alluded to appears in its incestuous form at the beginning of *Pericles,* where it forms the demonic antithesis of the hero's union with his wife and daughter at the end. The presiding genius of comedy is Eros, and Eros has to adapt himself to the moral facts of society: Oedipus and incest themes indicate that erotic attachments have in their undisplaced or mythical origin a much greater versatility.

Ambivalent attitudes naturally result, and ambivalence is apparently the main reason for the curious feature of doubled characters which runs all through the history of comedy. In Roman comedy there is often a pair of young men, and consequently a pair of young women, of which one is often related to one of the men and exogamous to the other. The doubling of the *senex* figure sometimes gives us a heavy father for both the hero and the heroine, as in *The Winter's Tale,* sometimes a heavy father and benevolent uncle, as in Terence's *Adelphoi* and in *Tartuffe,* and so on. The action of comedy, like the action of the Christian Bible, moves from law to liberty. In the law there is an element of ritual bondage which is abolished, and an element of habit or convention which is fulfilled. The intolerable qualities of the *senex* represent the former and compromise with him the latter in the evolution of the comic *nomos.*

With the fourth phase of comedy we begin to move out of the

world of experience into the ideal world of innocence and romance. We said that normally the happier society established at the end of the comedy is left undefined, in contrast to the ritual bondage of the humors. But it is also possible for a comedy to present its action on two social planes, of which one is preferred and consequently in some measure idealized. At the beginning of Plato's *Republic* we have a sharp contest between the *alazon* Thrasymachus and the ironic Socrates. The dialogue could have stopped there, as several of Plato's dialogues do, with a negative victory over a humor and the kind of society he suggests. But in the *Republic* the rest of the company, including Thrasymachus, follow Socrates inside Socrates's head, so to speak, and contemplate there the pattern of the just state. In Aristophanes the comic action is often ironic, but in *The Acharnians* we have a comedy in which a hero with the significant name of Dicaeopolis (righteous city or citizen) makes a private peace with Sparta, celebrates the peaceful festival of Dionysos with his family, and sets up the pattern of a temperate social order on the stage, where it remains throughout the play, cranks, bigots, sharpers, and scoundrels all being beaten away from it. One of the typical comic actions is at least as clearly portrayed in our earliest comedy as it has ever been since.

Shakespeare's type of romantic comedy follows a tradition established by Peele and developed by Greene and Lyly, which has affinities with the medieval tradition of the seasonal ritual-play. We may call it the drama of the green world, its plot being assimilated to the ritual theme of the triumph of life and love over the waste land. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* the hero Valentine becomes captain of a band of outlaws in a forest, and all the other characters are gathered into this forest and become converted. Thus the action of the comedy begins in a world represented as a normal world, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphosis there in which the comic resolution is achieved, and returns to the normal world. The forest in this play is the embryonic form of the fairy world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, Windsor Forest in *The Merry Wives*, and the pastoral world of the mythical sea-coasted Bohemia in *The Winter's Tale*. In all these comedies there is the same rhythmic movement from normal world to green world and back again. In *The Merchant of Venice* the second world takes the form of Portia's mysterious house in Belmont, with its magic caskets and the wonderful cos-

mological harmonies that proceed from it in the fifth act. We notice too that this second world is absent from the more ironic comedies *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure.*

The green world charges the comedies with the symbolism of the victory of summer over winter, as is explicit in *Love's Labor's Lost,* where the comic contest takes the form of the medieval debate of winter and spring at the end. In *The Merry Wives* there is an elaborate ritual of the defeat of winter known to folklorists as "carrying out Death," of which Falstaff is the victim; and Falstaff must have felt that, after being thrown into the water, dressed up as a witch and beaten out of a house with curses, and finally supplied with a beast's head and singed with candles, he had done about all that could reasonably be asked of any fertility spirit.

In the rituals and myths the earth that produces the rebirth is generally a female figure, and the death and revival, or disappearance and withdrawal, of human figures in romantic comedy generally involves the heroine. The fact that the heroine often brings about the comic resolution by disguising herself as a boy is familiar enough. The treatment of Hero in *Much Ado,* of Helena in *All's Well,* of Thaisa in *Pericles,* of Fidele in *Cymbeline,* of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale,* show the repetition of a device in which progressively less care is taken of plausibility and in which in consequence the mythical outline of a Proserpine figure becomes progressively clearer. These are Shakespearean examples of the comic theme of ritual assault on a central female figure, a theme which stretches from Menander to contemporary soap operas. Many of Menander's plays have titles which are feminine participles indicating the particular indignity the heroine suffers in them, and the working formula of the soap opera is said to be to "put the heroine behind the eight-ball and keep her there." Treatments of the theme may be as light-hearted as *The Rape of the Lock* or as doggedly persistent as *Pamela.* However, the theme of rebirth is not invariably feminine in context: the rejuvenation of the *senex* in Aristophanes' *The Knights,* and a similar theme in *All's Well* based on the folklore motif of the healing of the impotent king, come readily to mind.

The green world has analogies, not only to the fertile world of ritual, but to the dream world that we create out of our own desires. This dream world collides with the stumbling and blinded follies of the world of experience, of Theseus' Athens with its idi-

otic marriage law, of Duke Frederick and his melancholy tyranny, of Leontes and his mad jealousy, of the Court Party with their plots and intrigues, and yet proves strong enough to impose the form of desire on it. Thus Shakespearean comedy illustrates, as clearly as any *mythos* we have, the archetypal function of literature in visualizing the world of desire, not as an escape from "reality," but as the genuine form of the world that human life tries to imitate.

In the fifth phase of comedy, some of the themes of which we have already anticipated, we move into a world that is still more romantic, less Utopian and more Arcadian, less festive and more pensive, where the comic ending is less a matter of the way the plot turns out than of the perspective of the audience. When we compare the Shakespearean fourth-phase comedies with the late fifth-phase "romances," we notice how much more serious an action is appropriate to the latter: they do not avoid tragedies but contain them. The action seems to be not only a movement from a "winter's tale" to spring, but from a lower world of confusion to an upper world of order. The closing scene of *The Winter's Tale* makes us think, not simply of a cyclical movement from tragedy and absence to happiness and return, but of bodily metamorphosis and a transformation from one kind of life to another. The materials of the *cognitio* of *Pericles* or *The Winter's Tale* are so stock that they would be "hooted at like an old tale," yet they seem both far-fetched and inevitably right, outraging reality and at the same time introducing us to a world of childlike innocence which has always made more sense than reality.

In this phase the reader or audience feels raised above the action, in the situation of which Christopher Sly is an ironic parody. The plotting of Cleon and Dionyza in *Pericles,* or of the Court Party in *The Tempest,* we look down on as generic or typical human behavior: the action, or at least the tragic implication of the action, is presented as though it were a play within a play that we can see in all dimensions at once. We see the action, in short, from the point of view of a higher and better ordered world. And as the forest in Shakespeare is the usual symbol for the dream world in conflict with and imposing its form on experience, so the usual symbol for the lower or chaotic world is the sea, from which the cast, or an important part of it, is saved. The group of "sea" comedies includes *A Comedy of Errors, Twelfth Night, Pericles,* and

The Tempest. A *Comedy of Errors,* though based on a Plautine original, is much closer to the world of Apuleius than to that of Plautus in its imagery, and the main action, moving from shipwreck and separation to reunion in a temple in Ephesus, is repeated in the much later play of *Pericles.* And just as the second world is absent from the two "problem" comedies, so in two of the "sea" group, *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest,* the entire action takes place in the second world. In *Measure for Measure* the Duke disappears from the action and returns at the end; *The Tempest* seems to present the same type of action inside out, as the entire cast follows Prospero into his retreat, and is shaped into a new social order there.

These five phases of comedy may be seen as a sequence of stages in the life of a redeemed society. Purely ironic comedy exhibits this society in its infancy, swaddled and smothered by the society it should replace. Quixotic comedy exhibits it in adolescence, still too ignorant of the ways of the world to impose itself. In the third phase it comes to maturity and triumphs; in the fourth it is already mature and established. In the fifth it is part of a settled order which has been there from the beginning, an order which takes on an increasingly religious cast and seems to be drawing away from human experience altogether. At this point the undisplaced *commedia,* the vision of Dante's *Paradiso,* moves out of our circle of *mythoi* into the apocalyptic or abstract mythical world above it. At this point we realize that the crudest of Plautine comedy-formulas has much the same *structure* as the central Christian myth itself, with its divine son appeasing the wrath of a father and redeeming what is at once a society and a bride.

At this point too comedy proper enters its final or sixth phase, the phase of the collapse and disintegration of the comic society. In this phase the social units of comedy become small and esoteric, or even confined to a single individual. Secret and sheltered places, forests in moonlight, secluded valleys, and happy islands become more prominent, as does the *penseroso* mood of romance, the love of the occult and the marvellous, the sense of individual detachment from routine existence. In this kind of comedy we have finally left the world of wit and the awakened critical intelligence for the opposite pole, an oracular solemnity which, if we surrender uncritically to it, will provide a delightful *frisson.* This is the world of ghost stories, thrillers, and Gothic romances, and, on a more

sophisticated level, the kind of imaginative withdrawal portrayed in Huysmans' *À Rebours*. The somberness of Des Esseintes' surroundings has nothing to do with tragedy: Des Esseintes is a dilettante trying to amuse himself. The comic society has run the full course from infancy to death, and in its last phase myths closely connected psychologically with a return to the womb are appropriate.

THE MYTHOS OF SUMMER: ROMANCE

The romance is nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream, and for that reason it has socially a curiously paradoxical role. In every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy. This is the general character of chivalric romance in the Middle Ages, aristocratic romance in the Renaissance, bourgeois romance since the eighteenth century, and revolutionary romance in contemporary Russia. Yet there is a genuinely "proletarian" element in romance too which is never satisfied with its various incarnations, and in fact the incarnations themselves indicate that no matter how great a change may take place in society, romance will turn up again, as hungry as ever, looking for new hopes and desires to feed on. The perennially childlike quality of romance is marked by its extraordinarily persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time or space. There has never to my knowledge been any period of Gothic English literature, but the list of Gothic revivalists stretches completely across its entire history, from the *Beowulf* poet to writers of our own day.

The essential element of plot in romance is adventure, which means that romance is naturally a sequential and processional form, hence we know it better from fiction than from drama. At its most naive it is an endless form in which a central character who never develops or ages goes through one adventure after another until the author himself collapses. We see this form in comic strips, where the central characters persist for years in a state of refrigerated deathlessness. However, no book can rival the continuity of the newspaper, and as soon as romance achieves a literary form, it tends to limit itself to a sequence of minor ad-

ventures leading up to a major or climacteric adventure, usually announced from the beginning, the completion of which rounds off the story. We may call this major adventure, the element that gives literary form to the romance, the quest.

The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero. We may call these three stages respectively, using Greek terms, the *agon* or conflict, the *pathos* or death-struggle, and the *anagnorisis* or discovery, the recognition of the hero, who has clearly proved himself to be a hero even if he does not survive the conflict. Thus the romance expresses more clearly the passage from struggle through a point of ritual death to a recognition scene that we discovered in comedy. A threefold structure is repeated in many features of romance—in the frequency, for instance, with which the successful hero is a third son, or the third to undertake the quest, or successful on his third attempt. It is shown more directly in the three-day rhythm of death, disappearance and revival which is found in the myth of Attis and other dying gods, and has been incorporated in our Easter.

A quest involving conflict assumes two main characters, a protagonist or hero, and an antagonist or enemy. (No doubt I should add, for the benefit of some readers, that I have read the article "Protagonist" in Fowler's *Modern English Usage.*) The enemy may be an ordinary human being, but the nearer the romance is to myth, the more attributes of divinity will cling to the hero and the more the enemy will take on demonic mythical qualities. The central form of romance is dialectical: everything is focussed on a conflict between the hero and his enemy, and all the reader's values are bound up with the hero. Hence the hero of romance is analogous to the mythical Messiah or deliverer who comes from an upper world, and his enemy is analogous to the demonic powers of a lower world. The conflict however takes place in, or at any rate primarily concerns, *our* world, which is in the middle, and which is characterized by the cyclical movement of nature. Hence the opposite poles of the cycles of nature are assimilated to the opposition of the hero and his enemy. The enemy is associated with winter, darkness, confusion, sterility, moribund life,

and old age, and the hero with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigor, and youth. As all the cyclical phenomena can be readily associated or identified, it follows that any attempt to prove that a romantic story does or does not resemble, say, a solar myth, or that its hero does or does not resemble a sun-god, is likely to be a waste of time. If it is a story within this general area, cyclical imagery is likely to be present, and solar imagery is normally prominent among cyclical images. If the hero of a romance returns from a quest disguised, flings off his beggar's rags, and stands forth in the resplendent scarlet cloak of the prince, we do not have a theme which has necessarily descended from a solar myth; we have the literary device of displacement. The hero does something which we may or may not, as we like, associate with the myth of the sun returning at dawn. If we are reading the story as critics, with an eye to structural principles, we shall make the association, because the solar analogy explains why the hero's act is an effective and conventional incident. If we are reading the story for fun, we need not bother: that is, some murky "subconscious" factor in our response will take care of the association.

We have distinguished myth from romance by the hero's power of action: in the myth proper he is divine, in the romance proper he is human. This distinction is much sharper theologically than it is poetically, and myth and romance both belong in the general category of mythopoeic literature. The attributing of divinity to the chief characters of myth, however, tends to give myth a further distinction, already referred to, of occupying a central *canonical* position. Most cultures regard certain stories with more reverence than others, either because they are thought of as historically true or because they have come to bear a heavier weight of conceptual meaning. The story of Adam and Eve in Eden has thus a canonical position for poets in our tradition whether they believe in its historicity or not. The reason for the greater profundity of canonical myth is not solely tradition, but the result of the greater degree of metaphorical identification that is possible is myth. In literary criticism the myth is normally the metaphorical key to the displacements of romance, hence the importance of the quest-myth of the Bible in what follows. But because of the tendency to expurgate and moralize in canonical myth, the less inhibited area of legend and folk tale often contains an equally great concentration of mythical meaning.

The central form of quest-romance is the dragon-killing theme exemplified in the stories of St. George and Perseus, already referred to. A land ruled by a helpless old king is laid waste by a sea-monster, to whom one young person after another is offered to be devoured, until the lot falls on the king's daughter: at that point the hero arrives, kills the dragon, marries the daughter, and succeeds to the kingdom. Again, as with comedy, we have a simple pattern with many complex elements. The ritual analogies of the myth suggest that the monster *is* the sterility of the land itself, and that the sterility of the land is present in the age and impotence of the king, who is sometimes suffering from an incurable malady or wound, like Amfortas in Wagner. His position is that of Adonis overcome by the boar of winter, Adonis's traditional thigh-wound being as close to castration symbolically as it is anatomically.

In the Bible we have a sea-monster usually named leviathan, who is described as the enemy of the Messiah, and whom the Messiah is destined to kill in the "day of the Lord." The leviathan is the source of social sterility, for it is identified with Egypt and Babylon, the oppressors of Israel, and is described in the Book of Job as "king over all the children of pride." It also seems closely associated with the natural sterility of the fallen world, with the blasted world of struggle and poverty and disease into which Job is hurled by Satan and Adam by the serpent in Eden. In the Book of Job God's revelation to Job consists largely of descriptions of the leviathan and a slightly less sinister land cousin named behemoth. These monsters thus apparently represent the fallen order of nature over which Satan has some control. (I am trying to make sense of the meaning of the Book of Job as we now have it, on the assumption that whoever was responsible for its present version had some reason for producing that version. Guesswork about what the poem may originally have been or meant is useless, as it is only the version we know that has had any influence on our literature.) In the Book of Revelation the leviathan, Satan, and the Edenic serpent are all identified. This identification is the basis for an elaborate dragon-killing metaphor in Christian symbolism in which the hero is Christ (often represented in art standing on a prostrate monster), the dragon Satan, the impotent old king Adam, whose son Christ becomes, and the rescued bride the Church.

Now if the leviathan is the whole fallen world of sin and death and tyranny into which Adam fell, it follows that Adam's children are born, live, and die inside his belly. Hence if the Messiah is to deliver us by killing the leviathan, he releases us. In the folk tale versions of dragon-killing stories we notice how frequently the previous victims of the dragon come out of him alive after he is killed. Again, if we are inside the dragon, and the hero comes to help us, the image is suggested of the hero going down the monster's open throat, like Jonah (whom Jesus accepted as a prototype of himself), and returning with his redeemed behind him. Hence the symbolism of the Harrowing of Hell, hell being regularly represented in iconography by the "toothed gullet of an aged shark," to quote a modern reference to it. Secular versions of journeys inside monsters occur from Lucian to our day, and perhaps even the Trojan horse had originally some links with the same theme. The image of the dark winding labyrinth for the monster's belly is a natural one, and one that frequently appears in heroic quests, notably that of Theseus. A less displaced version of the story of Theseus would have shown him emerging from the labyrinth at the head of a procession of the Athenian youths and maidens previously sacrificed to the Minotaur. In many solar myths, too, the hero travels perilously through a dark labyrinthine underworld full of monsters between sunset and sunrise. This theme may become a structural principle of fiction on any level of sophistication. One would expect to find it in fairy tales or children's stories, and in fact if we "stand back" from *Tom Sawyer* we can see a youth with no father or mother emerging with a maiden from a labyrinthine cave, leaving a bat-eating demon imprisoned behind him. But in the most complex and elusive of the later stories of Henry James, *The Sense of the Past,* the same theme is used, the labyrinthine underworld being in this case a period of past time from which the hero is released by the sacrifice of a heroine, an Ariadne figure. In this story, as in many folktales, the motif of the two brothers connected by sympathetic magic of some sort is also employed.

In the Old Testament the Messiah-figure of Moses leads his people out of Egypt. The Pharaoh of Egypt is identified with the leviathan by Ezekiel, and the fact that the infant Moses was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter gives to the Pharaoh something of the role of the cruel father-figure who seeks the hero's death, a role

also taken by the raging Herod of the miracle plays. Moses and the Israelites wander through a labyrinthine desert, after which the reign of the law ends and the conquest of the Promised Land is achieved by Joshua, whose name is the same as that of Jesus. Thus when the angel Gabriel tells the Virgin to call her son Jesus, the typological meaning is that the era of the law is over, and the assault on the Promised Land is about to begin. There are thus two concentric quest-myths in the Bible, a Genesis-apocalypse myth and an Exodus-millennium myth. In the former Adam is cast out of Eden, loses the river of life and the tree of life, and wanders in the labyrinth of human history until he is restored to his original state by the Messiah. In the latter Israel is cast out of his inheritance and wanders in the labyrinths of Egyptian and Babylonian captivity until he is restored to his original state in the Promised Land. Eden and the Promised Land, therefore, are typologically identical, as are the tyrannies of Egypt and Babylon and the wilderness of the law. *Paradise Regained* deals with the temptation of Christ by Satan, which is, Michael tells us in *Paradise Lost,* the true form of the dragon-killing myth assigned to the Messiah. Christ is in the situation of Israel under the law, wandering in the wilderness: his victory is at once the conquest of the Promised Land typified by his namesake Joshua and the raising of Eden in the wilderness.

The leviathan is usually a sea-monster, which means metaphorically that he *is* the sea, and the prophecy that the Lord will hook and land the leviathan in Ezekiel is identical with the prophecy in Revelation that there shall be no more sea. As denizens of his belly, therefore, we are also metaphorically under water. Hence the importance of fishing in the Gospels, the apostles being "fishers of men" who cast their nets into the sea of this world. Hence, too, the later development, referred to in *The Waste Land,* of Adam or the impotent king as an ineffectual "fisher king." In the same poem the appropriate link is also made with Prospero's rescuing of a society out of the sea in *The Tempest.* In other comedies, too, ranging from *Sakuntala* to *Rudens,* something indispensable to the action or the *cognitio* is fished out of the sea, and many quest heroes, including Beowulf, achieve their greatest feats under water. The insistence on Christ's ability to command the sea belongs to the same aspect of symbolism. And as the leviathan, in his aspect as the fallen world, contains all forms of

life imprisoned within himself, so as the sea he contains the imprisoned life-giving rain waters whose coming marks the spring. The monstrous animal who swallows all the water in the world and is then teased or tricked or forced into disgorging it is a favorite of folk tales, and a Mesopotamian version lies close behind the story of Creation in Genesis. In many solar myths the sun god is represented as sailing in a boat on the surface of our world.

Lastly, if the leviathan is death, and the hero has to enter the body of death, the hero has to die, and if his quest is completed the final stage of it is, cyclically, rebirth, and, dialectically, resurrection. In the St. George plays the hero dies in his dragon-fight and is brought to life by a doctor, and the same symbolism runs through all the dying-god myths. There are thus not three but four distinguishable aspects to the quest-myth. First, the *agon* or conflict itself. Second, the *pathos* or death, often the mutual death of hero and monster. Third, the disappearance of the hero, a theme which often takes the form of *sparagmos* or tearing to pieces. Sometimes the hero's body is divided among his followers, as in Eucharist symbolism: sometimes it is distributed around the natural world, as in the stories of Orpheus and more especially Osiris. Fourth, the reappearance and recognition of the hero, where sacramental Christianity follows the metaphorical logic: those who in the fallen world have partaken of their redeemer's divided body are united with his risen body.

The four *mythoi* that we are dealing with, comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony, may now be seen as four aspects of a central unifying myth. *Agon* or conflict is the basis or archetypal theme of romance, the radical of romance being a sequence of marvellous adventures. *Pathos* or catastrophe, whether in triumph or in defeat, is the archetypal theme of tragedy. *Sparagmos*, or the sense that heroism and effective action are absent, disorganized or foredoomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world, is the archetypal theme of irony and satire. *Anagnorisis*, or recognition of a newborn society rising in triumph around a still somewhat mysterious hero and his bride, is the archetypal theme of comedy.

We have spoken of the Messianic hero as a redeemer of society, but in the secular quest-romances more obvious motives and rewards for the quest are more common. Often the dragon guards

a hoard: the quest for buried treasure has been a central theme of romance from the Siegfried cycle to *Nostromo,* and is unlikely to be exhausted yet. Treasure means wealth, which in mythopoeic romance often means wealth in its ideal forms, power and wisdom. The lower world, the world inside or behind the guarding dragon, is often inhabited by a prophetic sibyl, and is a place of oracles and secrets, such as Woden was willing to mutilate himself to obtain. Mutilation or physical handicap, which combines the themes of *sparagmos* and ritual death, is often the price of unusual wisdom or power, as it is in the figure of the crippled smith Weyland or Hephaistos, and in the story of the blessing of Jacob. The Arabian Nights are full of stories of what may be called the etiology of mutilation. Again, the reward of the quest usually is or includes a bride. This bride-figure is ambiguous: her psychological connection with the mother in an Oedipus fantasy is more insistent than in comedy. She is often to be found in a perilous, forbidden, or tabooed place, like Brunnhilde's wall of fire or the sleeping beauty's wall of thorns, and she is, of course, often rescued from the unwelcome embraces of another and generally older male, or from giants or bandits or other usurpers. The removal of some stigma from the heroine figures prominently in romance as in comedy, and ranges from the "loathly lady" theme of Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale* to the forgiven harlot of the Book of Hosea. The "black but comely" bride of the Song of Songs belongs in the same complex.

The quest-romance has analogies to both rituals and dreams, and the rituals examined by Frazer and the dreams examined by Jung show the remarkable similarity in form that we should expect of two symbolic structures analogous to the same thing. Translated into dream terms, the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality. The antagonists of the quest are often sinister figures, giants, ogres, witches and magicians, that clearly have a parental origin; and yet redeemed and emancipated paternal figures are involved too, as they are in the psychological quests of both Freud and Jung. Translated into ritual terms, the quest-romance is the victory of fertility over the waste land. Fertility means food and drink, bread and wine, body and blood, the union of male and female. The precious objects brought back from the quest, or seen or obtained as a result of it,

sometimes combine the ritual and the psychological associations. The Holy Grail, for instance, is connected with Christian Eucharist symbolism; it is related to or descended from a miraculous food-provider like the cornucopia, and, like other cups and hollow vessels, it has female sexual affinities, its masculine counterpart being, we are told, the bleeding lance. The pairing of solid food and liquid refreshment recurs in the edible tree and the water of life in the Biblical apocalypse.

We may take the first book of *The Faerie Queene* as representing perhaps the closest following of the Biblical quest-romance theme in English literature: it is closer even than *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which resembles it because they both resemble the Bible. Attempts to compare Bunyan and Spenser without reference to the Bible, or to trace their similarities to a common origin in *secular* romance, are more or less perverse. In Spenser's account of the quest of St. George, the patron saint of England, the protagonist represents the Christian Church in England, and hence his quest is an imitation of that of Christ. Spenser's Redcross Knight is led by the lady Una (who is veiled in black) to the kingdom of her parents, which is being laid waste by a dragon. The dragon is of somewhat unusual size, at least allegorically. We are told that Una's parents held "all the world" in their control until the dragon "Forwasted all their land, and them expelled." Una's parents are Adam and Eve; their kingdom is Eden or the unfallen world, and the dragon, who is the entire fallen world, is identified with the leviathan, the serpent of Eden, Satan, and the beast of Revelation. Thus St. George's mission, a repetition of that of Christ, is by killing the dragon to raise Eden in the wilderness and restore England to the status of Eden. The association of an ideal England with Eden, assisted by legends of a happy island in the western ocean and by the similarity of the Hesperides story to that of Eden, runs through English literature at least from the end of Greene's *Friar Bacon* to Blake's "Jerusalem" hymn. St. George's wanderings with Una, or without her, are parallel to the wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness, between Egypt and the Promised Land, bearing the veiled ark of the covenant and yet ready to worship a golden calf.

The battle with the dragon lasts, of course, three days: at the end of each of the first two days St. George is beaten back and is strengthened, first by the water of life, then by the tree of life. These represent the two sacraments which the reformed church

accepted; they are the two features of the garden of Eden to be restored to man in the apocalypse, and they have also a more general Eucharist connection. St. George's emblem is a red cross on a white ground, which is the flag borne by Christ in traditional iconography when he returns in triumph from the prostrate dragon of hell. The red and white symbolize the two aspects of the risen body, flesh and blood, bread and wine, and in Spenser they have a historical connection with the union of red and white roses in the reigning head of the church. The link between the sacramental and the sexual aspects of the red and white symbolism is indicated in alchemy, with which Spenser was clearly acquainted, in which a crucial phase of the production of the elixir of immortality is known as the union of the red king and the white queen.

The characterization of romance follows its general dialectic structure, which means that subtlety and complexity are not much favored. Characters tend to be either for or against the quest. If they assist it they are idealized as simply gallant or pure; if they obstruct it they are caricatured as simply villainous or cowardly. Hence every typical character in romance tends to have his moral opposite confronting him, like black and white pieces in a chess game. In romance the "white" pieces who strive for the quest correspond to the *eiron* group in comedy, though the word is no longer appropriate, as irony has little place in romance. Romance has a counterpart to the benevolent retreating *eiron* of comedy in its figure of the "old wise man," as Jung calls him, like Prospero, Merlin, or the palmer of Spenser's second quest, often a magician who affects the action he watches over. The Arthur of *The Faerie Queene*, though not an old man, has this function. He has a feminine counterpart in the sibylline wise mother-figure, often a potential bride like Solveig in *Peer Gynt*, who sits quietly at home waiting for the hero to finish his wanderings and come back to her. This latter figure is often the lady for whose sake or at whose bidding the quest is performed: she is represented by the Faerie Queene in Spenser and by Athene in the Perseus story. These are the king and queen of the white pieces, though their power of movement is of course reversed in actual chess. The disadvantage of making the queen-figure the hero's mistress, in anything more than a political sense, is that she spoils his fun with the distressed damsels he meets on his journey, who are often enticingly tied

naked to rocks or trees, like Andromeda or Angelica in Ariosto. A polarization may thus be set up between the lady of duty and the lady of pleasure—we have already glanced at a late development of this in the light and dark heroines of Victorian romance. One simple way out is to make the former the latter's mother-in-law: a theme of reconciliation after enmity and jealousy most commonly results, as in the relations of Psyche and Venus in Apuleius. Where there is no reconciliation, the older female remains sinister, the cruel stepmother of folk tale.

The evil magician and the witch, Spenser's Archimago and Duessa, are the black king and queen. The latter is appropriately called by Jung the "terrible mother," and he associates her with the fear of incest and with such hags as Medusa who seem to have a suggestion of erotic perversion about them. The redeemed figures, apart from the bride, are generally too weak to be strongly characterized. The faithful companion or shadow figure of the hero has his opposite in the traitor, the heroine her opposite in the siren or beautiful witch, the dragon his opposite in the friendly or helping animals that are so conspicuous in romance, among which the horse who gets the hero to his quest has naturally a central place. The conflict of son and father that we noted in comedy recurs in romance: in the Bible the second Adam comes to the rescue of the first one, and in the Grail cycle the pure son Galahad accomplishes what his impure father Lancelot failed in.

The characters who elude the moral antithesis of heroism and villainy generally are or suggest spirits of nature. They represent partly the moral neutrality of the intermediate world of nature and partly a world of mystery which is glimpsed but never seen, and which retreats when approached. Among female characters of this type are the shy nymphs of Classical legends and the elusive half-wild creatures who might be called daughter-figures, and include Spenser's Florimell, Hawthorne's Pearl, Wagner's Kundry, and Hudson's Rima. Their male counterparts have a little more variety. Kipling's Mowgli is the best known of the wild boys; a green man lurked in the forests of medieval England, appearing as Robin Hood and as the knight of Gawain's adventure; the "salvage man," represented in Spenser by Satyrane, is a Renaissance favorite, and the awkward but faithful giant with unkempt hair has shambled amiably through romance for centuries.

Such characters are, more or less, children of nature, who can

be brought to serve the hero, like Crusoe's Friday, but retain the inscrutability of their origin. As servants or friends of the hero, they impart the mysterious rapport with nature that so often marks the central figure of romance. The paradox that many of these children of nature are "supernatural" beings is not as distressing in romance as in logic. The helpful fairy, the grateful dead man, the wonderful servant who has just the abilities the hero needs in a crisis, are all folk tale commonplaces. They are romantic intensifications of the comic tricky slave, the author's *architectus*. In James Thurber's *The Thirteen Clocks* this character type is called the "Golux," and there is no reason why the word should not be adopted as a critical term.

In romance, as in comedy, there seem to be four poles of characterization. The struggle of the hero with his enemy corresponds to the comic contest of *eiron* and *alazon*. In the nature-spirits just referred to we find the parallel in romance to the buffoon or master of ceremonies in comedy: that is, their function is to intensify and provide a focus for the romantic mood. It remains to be seen if there is a character in romance corresponding to the *agroikos* type in comedy, the refuser of festivity or rustic clown.

Such a character would call attention to realistic aspects of life, like fear in the presence of danger, which threaten the unity of the romantic mood. St. George and Una in Spenser are accompanied by a dwarf who carries a bag of "needments." He is not a traitor, like the other bag-carrier Judas Iscariot, but he is "fearful," and urges retreat when the going is difficult. This dwarf with his needments represents, in the dream world of romance, the shrunken and wizened form of practical waking reality: the more realistic the story, the more important such a figure would become, until, when we reach the opposite pole in *Don Quixote*, he achieves his apotheosis as Sancho Panza. In other romances we find fools and jesters who are licensed to show fear or make realistic comments, and who provide a localized safety valve for realism without allowing it to disrupt the conventions of romance. In Malory a similar role is assumed by Sir Dinadan, who, it is carefully explained, is really a gallant knight as well as a jester: hence when he makes jokes "the king and Launcelot laughed that they might not sit"—the suggestion of excessive and hysterical laughter being psychologically very much to the point.

Romance, like comedy, has six isolatable phases, and as it moves from the tragic to the comic area, the first three are parallel to the first three phases of tragedy and the second three to the second three phases of comedy, already examined from the comic point of view. The phases form a cyclical sequence in a romantic hero's life.

The first phase is the myth of the birth of the hero, the morphology of which has been studied in some detail in folklore. This myth is often associated with a flood, the regular symbol of the beginning and the end of a cycle. The infant hero is often placed in an ark or chest floating on the sea, as in the story of Perseus; from there he drifts to land, as in the exordium to *Beowulf*, or is rescued from among reeds and bulrushes on a river bank, as in the story of Moses. A landscape of water, boat, and reeds appears at the beginning of Dante's journey up the mount of Purgatory, where there are many suggestions that the soul is in that stage a newborn infant. On dry land the infant may be rescued either from or by an animal, and many heroes are nurtured by animals in a forest during their nonage. When Goethe's Faust begins to look for his Helena, he searches in the reeds of the Peneus, and then finds a centaur who carried her to safety on his back when she was a child.

Psychologically, this image is related to the embryo in the womb, the world of the unborn often being thought of as liquid; anthropologically, it is related to the image of seeds of new life buried in a dead world of snow or swamp. The dragon's treasure hoard is closely linked with this mysterious infant life enclosed in a chest. The fact that the real source of wealth is potential fertility or new life, vegetable or human, has run through romance from ancient myths to Ruskin's *King of the Golden River*, Ruskin's treatment of wealth in his economic works being essentially a commentary on this fairy tale. A similar association of treasure hoard and infant life appears in more plausible guise in *Silas Marner*. The long literary history of the theme of mysterious parentage from Euripides to Dickens has already been mentioned.

In the Bible the end of a historical cycle and the birth of a new one is marked by parallel symbols. First we have a universal deluge and an ark, with the potency of all future life contained in it, floating on the waters; then we have the story of the Egyptian host drowned in the Red Sea and the Israelites set free to carry their

ark through the wilderness, an image adopted by Dante as the basis of his purgatorial symbolism. The New Testament begins with an infant in a manger, and the tradition of depicting the world outside as sunk in snow relates the Nativity to the same archetypal phase. Images of returning spring soon follow: the rainbow in the Noah story, the bringing of water out of a rock by Moses, the baptism of Christ, all show the turning of the cycle from the wintry water of death to the reviving waters of life. The providential birds, the raven and dove in the Noah story, the ravens feeding Elijah in the wilderness, the dove hovering over Jesus, belong to the same complex.

Often, too, there is a search for the child, who has to be hidden away in a secret place. The hero being of mysterious origin, his true paternity is often concealed, and a false father appears who seeks the child's death. This is the role of Acrisius in the Perseus story, of the Cronos of Hesiodic myth who tries to swallow his children, of the child-killing Pharaoh in the Old Testament, and of Herod in the New. In later fiction he often modulates to the usurping wicked uncle who appears several times in Shakespeare. The mother is thus often the victim of jealousy, persecuted or calumniated like the mother of Perseus or like Constance in the *Man of Law's Tale*. This version is very close psychologically to the theme of the rivalry of the son and a hateful father for possession of the mother. The theme of the calumniated girl ordered out of the house with her child by a cruel father, generally into the snow, still drew tears from audiences of Victorian melodramas, and literary developments of the theme of the hunted mother in the same period extend from Eliza crossing the ice in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to *Adam Bede* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*. The false mother, the celebrated cruel stepmother, is also common: her victim is of course usually female, and the resulting conflict is portrayed in many ballads and folktales of the Cinderella type. The true father is sometimes represented by a wise old man or teacher: this is the relation of Prospero to Ferdinand, as well as of Chiron the centaur to Achilles. The double of the true mother appears in the daughter of Pharaoh who adopts Moses. In more realistic modes the cruel parent speaks with the voice of, or takes the form of, a narrow-minded public opinion.

The second phase brings us to the innocent youth of the hero, a phase most familiar to us from the story of Adam and Eve in

Eden before the Fall. In literature this phase presents a pastoral and Arcadian world, generally a pleasant wooded landscape, full of glades, shaded valleys, murmuring brooks, the moon, and other images closely linked with the female or maternal aspect of sexual imagery. Its heraldic colors are green and gold, traditionally the colors of vanishing youth: one thinks of Sandburg's poem *Between Two Worlds*. It is often a world of magic or desirable law, and it tends to center on a youthful hero, still overshadowed by parents, surrounded by youthful companions. The archetype of erotic innocence is less commonly marriage than the kind of "chaste" love that precedes marriage; the love of brother for sister, or of two boys for each other. Hence, though in later phases it is often recalled as a lost happy time or Golden Age, the sense of being close to a moral taboo is very frequent, as it is of course in the Eden story itself. Johnson's *Rasselas*, Poe's *Eleanora*, and Blake's *Book of Thel* introduce us to a kind of prison-Paradise or unborn world from which the central characters long to escape to a lower world, and the same feeling of malaise and longing to enter a world of action recurs in the most exhaustive treatment of the phase in English literature, Keats's *Endymion*.

The theme of the sexual barrier in this phase takes many forms: the serpent of the Eden story recurs in *Green Mansions*, and a barrier of fire separates Amoret in Spenser from her lover Scudamour. At the end of the *Purgatorio* the soul reaches again its unfallen childhood or lost Golden Age, and Dante consequently finds himself in the garden of Eden, separated from the young girl Matelda by the river Lethe. The dividing river recurs in William Morris's curious story *The Sundering Flood*, where an arrow shot over it has to do for the symbol of sexual contact. In *Kubla Khan*, which is closely related both to the Eden story in *Paradise Lost* and to *Rasselas*, a "sacred river" is closely followed by the distant vision of a singing damsel. Melville's *Pierre* opens with a sardonic parody of this phase, the hero still dominated by his mother but calling her his sister. A good deal of the imagery of this world may be found in the sixth book of *The Faerie Queene*, especially in the stories of Tristram and Pastorella.

The third phase is the normal quest theme that we have been discussing, and needs no further comment at this point. The fourth phase corresponds to the fourth phase of comedy, in which the happier society is more or less visible throughout the action instead

of emerging only in the last few moments. In romance the central theme of this phase is that of the maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience. It thus often takes the form of a moral allegory, such as we have in Milton's *Comus*, Bunyan's *Holy War*, and many morality plays, including *The Castell of Perseveraunce*. The much simpler scheme of the *Canterbury Tales*, where the only conflict is to preserve the mood of holiday and festivity against bickering, seems for some reason to be less frequent.

The integrated body to be defended may be individual or social, or both. The individual aspect of it is presented in the allegory of temperance in the second book of *The Faerie Queene*, which forms a natural sequel to the first book, dealing as it does with the more difficult theme of consolidating heroic innocence in this world after the first great quest has been completed. Guyon, the knight of temperance, has as his main antagonists Acrasia, the mistress of the Bower of Bliss, and Mammon. These represent "Beauty and money," in their aspects as instrumental goods perverted into external goals. The temperate mind contains its good within itself, continence being its prerequisite, hence it belongs to what we have called the innocent world. The intemperate mind seeks its good in the external object of the world of experience. Both temperance and intemperance could be called natural, but one belongs to nature as an order and the other to nature as a fallen world. Comus's temptation of the Lady is based on a similar ambiguity in the meaning of nature. A central image in this phase of romance is that of the beleaguered castle, represented in Spenser by the House of Alma, which is described in terms of the economy of the human body.

The social aspect of the same phase is treated in the fifth book of *The Faerie Queene*, the legend of justice, where power is the prerequisite of justice, corresponding to continence in relation to temperance. Here we meet, in the vision of Isis and Osiris, the fourth-phase image of the monster tamed and controlled by the virgin, an image which appears episodically in Book One in connection with Una, who tames satyrs and a lion. The Classical prototype of it is the Gorgon's head on the shield of Athene. The theme of invincible innocence or virginity is associated with similar images in literature from the child leading the beasts of prey in Isaiah to Marina in the brothel in *Pericles*, and it reappears in later fictions

in which an unusually truculent hero is brought to heel by the heroine. An ironic parody of the same theme forms the basis of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata.*

The fifth phase corresponds to the fifth phase of comedy, and like it is a reflective, idyllic view of experience from above, in which the movement of the natural cycle has usually a prominent place. It deals with a world very similar to that of the second phase except that the mood is a contemplative withdrawal from or sequel to action rather than a youthful preparation for it. It is, like the second phase, an erotic world, but it presents experience as comprehended and not as a mystery. This is the world of most of Morris's romances, of Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance,* of the mature innocent wisdom of *The Franklin's Tale,* and of most of the imagery of the third book of *The Faerie Queene.* In this last, as well as in the late Shakespearean romances, notably *Pericles,* and even *The Tempest,* we notice a tendency to the moral stratification of characters. The true lovers are on top of a hierarchy of what might be called erotic imitations, going down through the various grades of lust and passion to perversion (Argante and Oliphant in Spenser; Antiochus and his daughter in *Pericles*). Such an arrangement of characters is consistent with the detached and contemplative view of society taken in this phase.

The sixth or *penseroso* phase is the last phase of romance as of comedy. In comedy it shows the comic society breaking up into small units or individuals; in romance it marks the end of a movement from active to contemplative adventure. A central image of this phase, a favorite of Yeats, is that of the old man in the tower, the lonely hermit absorbed in occult or magical studies. On a more popular and social level it takes in what might be called cuddle fiction: the romance that is physically associated with comfortable beds or chairs around fireplaces or warm and cosy spots generally. A characteristic feature of this phase is the tale in quotation marks, where we have an opening setting with a small group of congenial people, and then the real story told by one of the members. In *The Turn of the Screw* a large party is telling ghost stories in a country house; then some people leave, and a much smaller and more intimate circle gathers around the crucial tale. The opening dismissal of catechumens is thoroughly in the spirit and conventions of this phase. The effect of such devices is to present the story through a relaxed and contemplative haze as something that enter-

tains us without, so to speak, confronting us, as direct tragedy confronts us.

Collections of tales based on a symposium device like the *Decameron* belong here. Morris's *Earthly Paradise* is a very pure example of the same phase: there a number of the great archetypal myths of Greek and Northern culture are personified as a group of old men who forsook the world during the Middle Ages, refusing to be made either kings or gods, and who now interchange their myths in an ineffectual land of dreams. Here the themes of the lonely old men, the intimate group, and the reported tale are linked. The calendar arrangement of the tales links it also with the symbolism of the natural cycle. Another and very concentrated treatment of the phase is Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*, where a play representing the history of English life is acted before a group. The history is conceived not only as a progression but as a cycle of which the audience is the end, and, as the last page indicates, the beginning as well.

From Wagner's *Ring* to science fiction, we may notice an increasing popularity of the flood archetype. This usually takes the form of some cosmic disaster destroying the whole fictional society except a small group, which begins life anew in some sheltered spot. The affinities of this theme to that of the cosy group which has managed to shut the rest of the world out are clear enough, and it brings us around again to the image of the mysterious newborn infant floating on the sea.

One important detail in poetic symbolism remains to be considered. This is the symbolic presentation of the point at which the undisplaced apocalyptic world and the cyclical world of nature come into alignment, and which we propose to call the point of epiphany. Its most common settings are the mountain-top, the island, the tower, the lighthouse, and the ladder or staircase. Folk tales and mythologies are full of stories of an original connection between heaven or the sun and earth. We have ladders of arrows, ropes pecked in two by mischievous birds, and the like: such stories are often analogues of the Biblical stories of the Fall, and survive in Jack's beanstalk, Rapunzel's hair, and even the curious bit of floating folklore known as the Indian rope trick. The movement from one world to the other may be symbolized by the golden fire that descends from the sun, as in the mythical basis of the Danae

story, and by its human response, the fire kindled on the sacrificial altar. The "gold bug" in Poe's story, which reminds us that the Egyptian scarab was a solar emblem, is dropped from above on the end of a string through the eyehole of a skull on a tree and falls on top of a buried treasure: the archetype here is closely related to the complex of images we are dealing with, especially to some alchemical versions of it.

In the Bible we have Jacob's ladder, which in *Paradise Lost* is associated with Milton's cosmological diagram of a spherical cosmos hanging from heaven with a hole in the top. There are several mountain-top epiphanies in the Bible, the Transfiguration being the most notable, and the mountain vision of Pisgah, the end of the road through the wilderness from which Moses saw the distant Promised Land, is typologically linked. As long as poets accepted the Ptolemaic universe, the natural place for the point of epiphany was a mountain-top just under the moon, the lowest heavenly body. Purgatory in Dante is an enormous mountain with a path ascending spirally around it, on top of which, as the pilgrim gradually recovers his lost innocence and casts off his original sin, is the garden of Eden. It is at this point that the prodigious apocalyptic epiphany of the closing cantos of the *Purgatorio* is achieved. The sense of being between an apocalyptic world above and a cyclical world below is present too, as from the garden of Eden all seeds of vegetable life fall back into the world, while human life passes on.

In *The Faerie Queene* there is a Pisgah vision in the first book, when St. George climbs the mountain of contemplation and sees the heavenly city from a distance. As the dragon he has to kill is the fallen world, there is a level of the allegory in which his dragon is the space between himself and the distant city. In the corresponding episode of Ariosto the link between the mountain-top and the sphere of the moon is clearer. But Spenser's fullest treatment of the theme is the brilliant metaphysical comedy known as the *Mutabilitie Cantoes*, where the conflict of being and becoming, Jove and Mutability, order and change, is resolved at the sphere of the moon. Mutability's evidence consists of the cyclical movements of nature, but this evidence is turned against her and proved to be a principle of order in nature instead of mere change. In this poem the relation of the heavenly bodies to the apocalyptic world is not metaphorical identification, as it is, at least as a poetic convention, in Dante's *Paradiso*, but likeness: they are still within nature, and

only in the final stanza of the poem does the real apocalyptic world appear.

The distinction of levels here implies that there may be analogous forms of the point of epiphany. For instance, it may be presented in erotic terms as a place of sexual fulfilment, where there is no apocalyptic vision but simply a sense of arriving at the summit of experience in nature. This natural form of the point of epiphany is called in Spenser the Gardens of Adonis. It recurs under that name in Keats's *Endymion* and is the world entered by the lovers at the end of Shelley's *Revolt of Islam.* The Gardens of Adonis, like Eden in Dante, are a place of seed, into which everything subject to the cyclical order of nature enters at death and proceeds from at birth. Milton's early poems are, like the *Mutabilitie Cantoes,* full of the sense of a distinction between nature as a divinely sanctioned order, the nature of the music of the spheres, and nature as a fallen and largely chaotic world. The former is symbolized by the Gardens of Adonis in *Comus,* from whence the attendant spirit descends to watch over the Lady. The central image of this archetype, Venus watching over Adonis, is (to use a modern distinction) the analogue in terms of Eros to the Madonna and Son in the context of Agape.

Milton picks up the theme of the Pisgah vision in *Paradise Regained,* which assumes an elementary principle of Biblical typology in which the events of Christ's life repeat those of the history of Israel. Israel goes to Egypt, brought down by Joseph, escapes a slaughter of innocents, is cut off from Egypt by the Red Sea, organizes into twelve tribes, wanders forty years in the wilderness, receives the law from Sinai, is saved by a brazen serpent on a pole, crosses the Jordan, and enters the Promised Land under "Joshua, whom the Gentiles Jesus call." Jesus goes to Egypt in infancy, led by Joseph, escapes a slaughter of innocents, is baptized and recognized as the Messiah, wanders forty days in the wilderness, gathers twelve followers, preaches the Sermon on the Mount, saves mankind by dying on a pole, and thereby conquers the Promised Land as the real Joshua. In Milton the temptation corresponds to the Pisgah vision of Moses, except that the gaze is turned in the opposite direction. It marks the climax of Jesus' obedience to the law, just before his active redemption of the world begins, and the sequence of temptations consolidates the world, flesh, and devil into the single form of Satan. The point of epiphany is here rep-

resented by the pinnacle of the temple, from which Satan falls away as Jesus remains motionless on top of it. The fall of Satan reminds us that the point of epiphany is also the top of the wheel of fortune, the point from which the tragic hero falls. This ironic use of the point of epiphany occurs in the Bible in the story of the Tower of Babel.

The Ptolemaic cosmos eventually disappeared, but the point of epiphany did not, though in more recent literature it is often ironically reversed, or brought to terms with greater demands for credibility. Allowing for this, one may still see the same archetype in the final mountain-top scene of Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken* and in the central image of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse.* In the later poetry of Yeats and Eliot it becomes a central unifying image. Such titles as *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair* indicate its importance for Yeats, and the lunar symbolism and the apocalyptic imagery of *The Tower* and *Sailing to Byzantium* are both thoroughly consistent. In Eliot it is the flame reached in the fire sermon of *The Waste Land,* in contrast to the natural cycle which is symbolized by water, and it is also the "multifoliate rose" of *The Hollow Men. Ash Wednesday* brings us back again to the purgatorial winding stair, and *Little Gidding* to the burning rose, where there is a descending movement of fire symbolized by the Pentecostal tongues of flame and an ascending one symbolized by Hercules' pyre and "shirt of flame."

THE MYTHOS OF AUTUMN: TRAGEDY

Thanks as usual to Aristotle, the theory of tragedy is in considerably better shape than the other three *mythoi,* and we can deal with it more briefly, as the ground is more familiar. Without tragedy, all literary fictions might be plausibly explained as expressions of emotional attachments, whether of wish-fulfilment or of repugnance: the tragic fiction guarantees, so to speak, a disinterested quality in literary experience. It is largely through the tragedies of Greek culture that the sense of the authentic natural basis of human character comes into literature. In romance the characters are still largely dream-characters; in satire they tend to be caricatures; in comedy their actions are twisted to fit the demands of a happy ending. In full tragedy the main characters are emancipated from dream, an emancipation which is at the same time a restriction,

because the order of nature is present. However thickly strewn a tragedy may be with ghosts, portents, witches, or oracles, we know that the tragic hero cannot simply rub a lamp and summon a genie to get him out of his trouble.

Like comedy, tragedy is best and most easily studied in drama, but it is not confined to drama, nor to actions that end in disaster. Plays that are usually called or classified with tragedies end in serenity, like *Cymbeline,* or even joy, like *Alcestis* or Racine's *Esther,* or in an ambiguous mood that is hard to define, like *Philoctetes.* On the other hand, while a predominantly sombre mood forms part of the unity of the tragic structure, concentrating on mood does not intensify the tragic effect: if it did, *Titus Andronicus* might well be the most powerful of Shakespeare's tragedies. The source of tragic effect must be sought, as Aristotle pointed out, in the tragic *mythos* or plot-structure.

It is a commonplace of criticism that comedy tends to deal with characters in a social group, whereas tragedy is more concentrated on a single individual. We have given reasons in the first essay for thinking that the typical tragic hero is somewhere between the divine and the "all too human." This must be true even of dying gods: Prometheus, being a god, cannot die, but he suffers for his sympathy with the "dying ones" (*brotoi*) or "mortal" men, and even suffering has something subdivine about it. The tragic hero is very great as compared with us, but there is something else, something on the side of him opposite the audience, compared to which he is small. This something else may be called God, gods, fate, accident, fortune, necessity, circumstance, or any combination of these, but whatever it is the tragic hero is our mediator with it.

The tragic hero is typically on top of the wheel of fortune, halfway between human society on the ground and the something greater in the sky. Prometheus, Adam, and Christ hang between heaven and earth, between a world of paradisal freedom and a world of bondage. Tragic heroes are so much the highest points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable conductors of the power about them, great trees more likely to be struck by lightning than a clump of grass. Conductors may of course be instruments as well as victims of the divine lightning: Milton's Samson destroys the Philistine temple with himself, and Hamlet nearly exterminates the Danish court in his own fall. Something of Nietzsche's mountain-top air of transvaluation clings to the tragic hero: his thoughts

are not ours any more than his deeds, even if, like Faustus, he is dragged off to hell for having them. Whatever eloquence or affability he may have, an inscrutable reserve lies behind it. Even sinister heroes—Tamburlaine, Macbeth, Creon—retain this reserve, and we are reminded that men will die loyally for a wicked or cruel man, but not for an amiable backslapper. Those who attract most devotion from others are those who are best able to suggest in their manner that they have no need of it, and from the urbanity of Hamlet to the sullen ferocity of Ajax, tragic heroes are wrapped in the mystery of their communion with that something beyond which we can see only through them, and which is the source of their strength and their fate alike. In the phrase which so fascinated Yeats, the tragic hero leaves his servants to do his "living" for him, and the center of tragedy is in the hero's isolation, not in a villain's betrayal, even when the villain is, as he often is, a part of the hero himself.

As for the something beyond, its names are variable but the form in which it manifests itself is fairly constant. Whether the context is Greek, Christian, or undefined, tragedy seems to lead up to an epiphany of law, of that which is and must be. It can hardly be an accident that the two great developments of tragic drama, in fifth-century Athens and in seventeenth-century Europe, were contemporary with the rise of Ionian and of Renaissance science. In such a world-view nature is seen as an impersonal process which human law imitates as best it can, and this direct relation of man and natural law is in the foreground. The sense in Greek tragedy that fate is stronger than the gods really implies that the gods exist primarily to ratify the order of nature, and that if any personality, even a divine one, possesses a genuine power of veto over law, it is most unlikely that he will want to exercise it. In Christianity much the same is true of the personality of Christ in relation to the inscrutable decrees of the Father. Similarly the tragic process in Shakespeare is natural in the sense that it simply happens, whatever its cause, explanation, or relationships. Characters may grope about for conceptions of gods that kill us for their sport, or for a divinity that shapes our ends, but the action of tragedy will not abide our questions, a fact often transferred to the personality of Shakespeare.

In its most elementary form, the vision of law (*dike*) operates as *lex talionis* or revenge. The hero provokes enmity, or inherits a

situation of enmity, and the return of the avenger constitutes the catastrophe. The revenge-tragedy is a simple tragic structure, and like most simple structures can be a very powerful one, often retained as a central theme even in the most complex tragedies. Here the original act provoking the revenge sets up an antithetical or counterbalancing movement, and the completion of the movement resolves the tragedy. This happens so often that we may almost characterize the total *mythos* of tragedy as binary, in contrast to the three-part saturnalia movement of comedy.

We notice however the frequency of the device of making the revenge come from another world, through gods or ghosts or oracles. This device expands the conceptions of both nature and law beyond the limits of the obvious and tangible. It does not thereby transcend those conceptions, as it is still natural law that is manifested by the tragic action. Here we see the tragic hero as disturbing a balance in nature, nature being conceived as an order stretching over the two kingdoms of the visible and the invisible, a balance which sooner or later *must* right itself. The righting of the balance is what the Greeks called *nemesis*: again, the agent or instrument of *nemesis* may be human vengeance, ghostly vengeance, divine vengeance, divine justice, accident, fate or the logic of events, but the essential thing is that *nemesis* happens, and happens impersonally, unaffected, as *Oedipus Tyrannus* illustrates, by the moral quality of human motivation involved. In the *Oresteia* we are led from a series of revenge-movements into a final vision of natural law, a universal compact in which moral law is included and which the gods, in the person of the goddess of wisdom, endorse. Here *nemesis*, like its counterpart the Mosaic law in Christianity, is not abolished but fulfilled: it is developed from a mechanical or arbitrary sense of restored order, represented by the Furies, to the rational sense of it expounded by Athene. The appearance of Athene does not turn the *Oresteia* into a comedy, but clarifies its tragic vision.

There are two reductive formulas which have often been used to explain tragedy. Neither is quite good enough, but each is almost good enough, and as they are contradictory, they must represent extreme or limiting views of tragedy. One of these is the theory that all tragedy exhibits the omnipotence of an external fate. And, of course, the overwhelming majority of tragedies do leave us with a sense of the supremacy of impersonal power and of the limitation of human effort. But the fatalistic reduction of tragedy confuses the

tragic condition with the tragic process: fate, in a tragedy, normally becomes external to the hero only *after* the tragic process has been set going. The Greek *ananke* or *moira* is in its normal, or pre-tragic, form the internal balancing condition of life. It appears as external or antithetical necessity only after it has been violated as a condition of life, just as justice is the internal condition of an honest man, but the external antagonist of the criminal. Homer uses a profoundly significant phrase for the theory of tragedy when he has Zeus speak of Aegisthus as going *hyper moron, beyond* fate.

The fatalistic reduction of tragedy does not distinguish tragedy from irony, and it is again significant that we speak of the irony of fate rather than of its tragedy. Irony does not need an exceptional central figure: as a rule, the dingier the hero the sharper the irony, when irony alone is aimed at. It is the admixture of heroism that gives tragedy its characteristic splendor and exhilaration. The tragic hero has normally had an extraordinary, often a nearly divine, destiny almost within his grasp, and the glory of that original vision never quite fades out of tragedy. The rhetoric of tragedy requires the noblest diction that the greatest poets can produce, and while catastrophe is the normal end of tragedy, this is balanced by an equally significant original greatness, a paradise lost.

The other reductive theory of tragedy is that the act which sets the tragic process going must be primarily a violation of *moral* law, whether human or divine; in short, that Aristotle's hamartia or "flaw" must have an essential connection with sin or wrongdoing. Again it is true that the great majority of tragic heroes do possess hybris, a proud, passionate, obsessed or soaring mind which brings about a morally intelligible downfall. Such hybris is the normal precipitating agent of catastrophe, just as in comedy the cause of the happy ending is usually some act of humility, represented by a slave or by a heroine meanly disguised. In Aristotle the hamartia of the tragic hero is associated with Aristotle's ethical conception of *proairesis*, or free choice of an end, and Aristotle certainly does tend to think of tragedy as morally, almost physically, intelligible. It has already been suggested, however, that the conception of catharsis, which is central to Aristotle's view of tragedy, is inconsistent with moral reductions of it. Pity and terror are moral feelings, and they are relevant but not attached to the tragic situation. Shakespeare is particularly fond of planting moral lightning-rods on both sides of his heroes to deflect the pity and terror: we have mentioned Othello

flanked by Iago and Desdemona, but Hamlet is flanked by Claudius and Ophelia, Lear by his daughters, and even Macbeth by Lady Macbeth and Duncan. In all these tragedies there is a sense of some far-reaching mystery of which this morally intelligible process is only a part. The hero's act has thrown a switch in a larger machine than his own life, or even his own society.

All theories of tragedy as morally explicable sooner or later run into the question: is an innocent sufferer in tragedy (i.e., poetically innocent), Iphigeneia, Cordelia, Socrates in Plato's *Apology,* Christ in the Passion, not a tragic figure? It is not very convincing to try to provide crucial moral flaws for such characters. Cordelia shows a high spirit, perhaps a touch of wilfulness, in refusing to flatter her father, and Cordelia gets hanged. Joan of Arc in Schiller has a moment of tenderness for an English soldier, and Joan is burned alive, or would have been if Schiller had not decided to sacrifice the facts to save the face of his moral theory. Here we are getting away from tragedy, and close to a kind of insane cautionary tale, like Mrs. Pipchin's little boy who was gored to death by a bull for asking inconvenient questions. Tragedy, in short, seems to elude the antithesis of moral responsibility and arbitrary fate, just as it eludes the antithesis of good and evil.

In the third book of *Paradise Lost,* Milton represents God as arguing that he made man "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall." God knew that Adam would fall, but did not compel him to do so, and on that basis he disclaims legal responsibility. This argument is so bad that Milton, if he was trying to escape refutation, did well to ascribe it to God. Thought and act cannot be so separated: if God had foreknowledge he must have known in the instant of creating Adam that he was creating a being who would fall. Yet the passage is a most haunting and suggestive one nonetheless. For *Paradise Lost* is not simply an attempt to write one more tragedy, but to expound what Milton believed to be the archetypal myth of tragedy. Hence the passage is another example of existential projection: the real basis of the relation of Milton's God to Adam is the relation of the tragic poet to his hero. The tragic poet knows that his hero will be in a tragic situation, but he exerts all his power to avoid the sense of having manipulated that situation for his own purposes. He exhibits his hero to us as God exhibits Adam to the angels. If the hero was not sufficient to have stood, the mode is purely ironic; if he was not free to fall, the mode is purely romantic,

the story of an invincible hero who will conquer all his antagonists as long as the story is about him. Now most theories of tragedy take one great tragedy as their norm: thus Aristotle's theory is largely founded on *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and Hegel's on *Antigone*. In seeing the archetypal human tragedy in the story of Adam, Milton was, of course, in agreement with the whole Judaeo-Christian cultural tradition, and perhaps arguments drawn from the story of Adam may have better luck in literary criticism than in subjects compelled to assume Adam's real existence, either as fact or as a merely legal fiction. Chaucer's monk, who clearly understood what he was doing, began with Lucifer and Adam, and we may be well advised to follow his example.

Adam, then, is in a heroic human situation: he is on top of the wheel of fortune, with the destiny of the gods almost within his reach. He forfeits that destiny in a way which suggests moral responsibility to some and a conspiracy of fate to others. What he does is to exchange a fortune of unlimited freedom for the fate involved in the consequences of the act of exchange, just as, for a man who deliberately jumps off a precipice, the law of gravitation acts as fate for the brief remainder of his life. The exchange is presented by Milton as itself a free act or *proairesis*, a use of freedom to lose freedom. And just as comedy often sets up an arbitrary law and then organizes the action to break or evade it, so tragedy presents the reverse theme of narrowing a comparatively free life into a process of causation. This happens to Macbeth when he accepts the logic of usurpation, to Hamlet when he accepts the logic of revenge, to Lear when he accepts the logic of abdication. The discovery or *anagnorisis* which comes at the end of the tragic plot is not simply the knowledge by the hero of what has happened to him —*Oedipus Tyrannus*, despite its reputation as a typical tragedy, is rather a special case in that regard—but the recognition of the determined shape of the life he has created for himself, with an implicit comparison with the uncreated potential life he has forsaken. The line of Milton dealing with the fall of the devils, "O how unlike the place from whence they fell!", referring as it does both to Virgil's *quantum mutatus ab illo* and Isaiah's "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer son of the morning," combines the Classical and the Christian archetypes of tragedy—for Satan, of course, like Adam, possessed an original glory. In Milton the complement to the vision of Adam on top of the wheel of fortune and

falling into the world of the wheel is Christ standing on the pinnacle of the temple, urged by Satan to fall, and remaining motionless.

As soon as Adam falls, he enters his own created life, which is also the order of nature as we know it. The tragedy of Adam, therefore, resolves, like all other tragedies, in the manifestation of natural law. He enters a world in which existence is itself tragic, not existence modified by an act, deliberate or unconscious. Merely to exist is to disturb the balance of nature. Every natural man is a Hegelian thesis, and implies a reaction: every new birth provokes the return of an avenging death. This fact, in itself ironic and now called *Angst*, becomes tragic when a sense of a lost and originally higher destiny is added to it. Aristotle's hamartia, then, is a condition of being, not a cause of becoming: the reason why Milton ascribes his dubious argument to God is that he is so anxious to remove God from a predetermined causal sequence. On one side of the tragic hero is an opportunity for freedom, on the other the inevitable consequence of losing that freedom. These two sides of Adam's situation are represented in Milton by the speeches of Raphael and Michael respectively. Even with an innocent hero or martyr the same situation arises: in the Passion story it occurs in Christ's prayer in Gethsemane. Tragedy seems to move up to an *Augenblick* or crucial moment from which point the road to what might have been and the road to what will be can be simultaneously seen. Seen by the audience, that is: it cannot be seen by the hero if he is in a state of hybris, for in that case the crucial moment is for him a moment of dizziness, when the wheel of fortune begins its inevitable cyclical movement downward.

In Adam's situation there is a feeling, which in Christian tradition can be traced back at least to St. Augustine, that time *begins* with the fall; that the fall from liberty into the natural cycle also started the movement of time as we know it. In other tragedies too we can trace the feeling that *nemesis* is deeply involved with the movement of time, whether as the missing of a tide in the affairs of men, as a recognition that the time is out of joint, as a sense that time is the devourer of life, the mouth of hell at the previous moment, when the potential passes forever into the actual, or, in its ultimate horror, Macbeth's sense of it as simply one clock-tick after another. In comedy time plays a redeeming role: it uncovers and brings to light what is essential to the happy ending.

The subtitle of Greene's *Pandosto*, the source of *The Winter's Tale*, is "*The Triumph of Time*," and it well describes the nature of Shakespeare's action, where time is introduced as a chorus. But in tragedy the *cognitio* is normally the recognition of the inevitability of a causal sequence in time, and the forebodings and ironic anticipations surrounding it are based on a sense of cyclical return.

In irony, as distinct from tragedy, the wheel of time completely encloses the action, and there is no sense of an original contact with a relatively timeless world. In the Bible the tragic fall of Adam is followed by its historical repetition, the fall of Israel into Egyptian bondage, which is, so to speak, its ironic confirmation. As long as the Geoffrey version of British history was accepted, the fall of Troy was the corresponding event in the history of Britain, and, as the fall of Troy began with an idolatrous misapplication of an apple, there were even symbolic parallels. Shakespeare's most ironic play, *Troilus and Cressida*, presents in Ulysses the voice of worldly wisdom, expounding with great eloquence the two primary categories of the perspective of tragic irony in the fallen world, time and the hierarchic chain of being. The extraordinary treatment of the tragic vision of time by Nietzsche's Zarathustra, in which the heroic acceptance of cyclical return becomes a glumly cheerful acceptance of a cosmology of identical recurrence, marks the influence of an age of irony.

Anyone accustomed to think archetypally of literature will recognize in tragedy a mimesis of sacrifice. Tragedy is a paradoxical combination of a fearful sense of rightness (the hero must fall) and a pitying sense of wrongness (it is too bad that he falls). There is a similar paradox in the two elements of sacrifice. One of these is communion, the dividing of a heroic or divine body among a group which brings them into unity with, and as, that body. The other is propitiation, the sense that in spite of the communion the body really belongs to another, a greater, and a potentially wrathful power. The ritual analogies to tragedy are more obvious than the psychological ones, for it is irony, not tragedy, that represents the nightmare or anxiety-dream. But, just as the literary critic finds Freud most suggestive for the theory of comedy, and Jung for the theory of romance, so for the theory of tragedy one naturally looks to the psychology of the will to power, as expounded in Adler and Nietzsche. Here one finds a "Dionysiac" aggressive will, intoxicated by dreams of its own omnipotence, impinging upon an "Apol-

lonian" sense of external and immovable order. As a mimesis of ritual, the tragic hero is not really killed or eaten, but the corresponding thing in art still takes place, a vision of death which draws the survivors into a new unity. As a mimesis of dream, the inscrutable tragic hero, like the proud and silent swan, becomes articulate at the point of death, and the audience, like the poet in *Kubla Khan,* revives his song within itself. With his fall, a greater world beyond which his gigantic spirit had blocked out becomes for an instant visible, but there is also a sense of the mystery and remoteness of that world.

If we are right in our suggestion that romance, tragedy, irony and comedy are all episodes in a total quest-myth, we can see how it is that comedy can contain a potential tragedy within itself. In myth, the hero is a god, and hence he does not die, but dies and rises again. The ritual pattern behind the catharsis of comedy is the resurrection that follows the death, the epiphany or manifestation of the risen hero. In Aristophanes the hero, who often goes through a point of ritual death, is treated as a risen god, hailed as a new Zeus, or given the quasi-divine honors of the Olympic victor. In New Comedy the new human body is both a hero and a social group. The Aeschylean trilogy proceeds to the comic satyr-play, which is said to have affinities with spring festivals. Christianity, too, sees tragedy as an episode in the divine comedy, the larger scheme of redemption and resurrection. The sense of tragedy as a prelude to comedy seems almost inseparable from anything explicitly Christian. The serenity of the final double chorus in the St. Matthew Passion would hardly be attainable if composer and audience did not know that there was more to the story. Nor would the death of Samson lead to "calm of mind, all passion spent," if Samson were not a prototype of the rising Christ, associated at the appropriate moment with the phoenix.

This is an example of the way in which myths explain the structural principles behind familiar literary facts, in this case the fact that to make a sombre action end happily is easy enough, and to reverse the procedure almost impossible. (Of course we have a natural dislike of seeing pleasant situations turn out disastrously, but if a poet is working on a solid structural basis, our natural likes and dislikes have nothing to do with the matter.) Even Shakespeare, who can do anything, never does quite this. The action of *King Lear,* which seems heading for some kind of serenity, is suddenly

wrenched into agony by the hanging of Cordelia, providing a conclusion which the stage refused to act for over a century, but none of Shakespeare's tragedies impresses us as a comedy gone wrong—*Romeo and Juliet* has a suggestion of such a structure, but it is only a suggestion. Hence while of course a tragedy may contain a comic action, it contains it only episodically as a subordinate contrast or underplot.

The characterization of tragedy is very like that of comedy in reverse. The source of *nemesis*, whatever it is, is an *eiron*, and may appear in a great variety of agents, from wrathful gods to hypocritical villains. In comedy we noticed three main types of *eiron* characters: a benevolent withdrawing and returning figure, the tricky slave or vice, and the hero and heroine. We have the tragic counterpart to the withdrawn *eiron* in the god who decrees the tragic action, like Athene in *Ajax* or Aphrodite in *Hippolytus*; a Christian example is God the Father in *Paradise Lost*. He may also be a ghost, like Hamlet's father; or it may not be a person at all but simply an invisible force known only by its effects, like the death that quietly seizes on Tamburlaine when the time has come for him to die. Often, as in the revenge-tragedy, it is an event previous to the action of which the tragedy itself is the consequence.

A tragic counterpart to the vice or tricky slave may be discerned in the soothsayer or prophet who foresees the inevitable end, or more of it than the hero does, like Teiresias. A closer example is the Machiavellian villain of Elizabethan drama, who, like the vice in comedy, is a convenient catalyzer of the action because he requires the minimum of motivation, being a self-starting principle of malevolence. Like the comic vice, too, he is something of an *architectus* or projection of the author's will, in this case for a tragic conclusion. "I limned this night-piece," says Webster's Lodovico, "and it was my best." Iago dominates the action of *Othello* almost to the point of being a tragic counterpart to the black king or evil magician of romance. The affinities of the Machiavellian villain with the diabolical are naturally close, and he may be an actual devil like Mephistopheles, but the sense of awfulness belonging to an agent of catastrophe can also make him something more like the high priest of a sacrifice. There is a touch of this in Webster's Bosola. *King Lear* has a Machiavellian villain in Edmund, and Edmund is contrasted with Edgar. Edgar, with his bewildering variety

of disguises, his appearance to blind or mad people in different roles, and his tendency to appear on the third sound of the trumpet and to come pat like the catastrophe of the old comedy, seems to be an experiment in a new type, a kind of tragic "virtue," if I may coin this word by analogy, a counterpart in the order of nature to a guardian angel or similar attendant in romance.

The tragic hero usually belongs of course to the *alazon* group, an impostor in the sense that he is self-deceived or made dizzy by hybris. In many tragedies he begins as a semi-divine figure, at least in his own eyes, and then an inexorable dialectic sets to work which separates the divine pretence from the human actuality. "They told me I was everything," says Lear: " 'tis a lie; I am not ague-proof." The tragic hero is usually vested with supreme authority, but is often in the more ambiguous position of a *tyrannos* whose rule depends on his own abilities, rather than a purely hereditary or *de jure* monarch (*basileus*) like Duncan. The latter is more directly a symbol of the original vision or birthright, and is often a somewhat pathetic victim, like Richard II, or even Agamemnon. Parental figures in tragedy have the same ambivalence that they have in all other forms.

We found in comedy that the term *bomolochos* or buffoon need not be restricted to farce, but could be extended to cover comic characters who are primarily entertainers, with the function of increasing or focussing the comic mood. The corresponding contrasting type in tragedy is the suppliant, the character, often female, who presents a picture of unmitigated helplessness and destitution. Such a figure is pathetic, and pathos, though it seems a gentler and more relaxed mood than tragedy, is even more terrifying. Its basis is the exclusion of an individual from a group, hence it attacks the deepest fear in ourselves that we possess—a fear much deeper than the relatively cosy and sociable bogey of hell. In the figure of the suppliant pity and terror are brought to the highest possible pitch of intensity, and the awful consequences of rejecting the suppliant for all concerned is a central theme of Greek tragedy. Suppliant figures are often women threatened with death or rape, or children, like Prince Arthur in *King John*. The fragility of Shakespeare's Ophelia marks an affinity with the suppliant type. Often, too, the suppliant is in the structurally tragic position of having lost a place of greatness: this is the position of Adam and Eve in the tenth book of *Paradise Lost*, of the Trojan women after the fall

of Troy, of Oedipus in the Colonus play, and so on. A subordinate figure who plays the role of focussing the tragic mood is the messenger who regularly announces the catastrophe in Greek tragedy. In the final scene of comedy, when the author is usually trying to get all his characters on the stage at once, we often notice the introduction of a new character, generally a messenger bearing some missing piece of the *cognitio,* such as Jaques de Boys in *As You Like It* or the gentle astringer in *All's Well,* who represents the comic counterpart.

Finally, a tragic counterpart of the comic refuser of festivity may be discerned in a tragic type of plain dealer who may be simply the faithful friend of the hero, like Horatio in *Hamlet,* but is often an outspoken critic of the tragic action, like Kent in *King Lear* or Enobarbus in *Antony and Cleopatra.* Such a character is in the position of refusing, or at any rate resisting, the tragic movement toward catastrophe. Abdiel's role in the tragedy of Satan in *Paradise Lost* is similar. The familiar figures of Cassandra and Teiresias combine this role with that of the soothsayer. Such figures, when they occur in a tragedy without a chorus, are often called chorus characters, as they illustrate one of the essential functions of the tragic chorus. In comedy a society forms around the hero: in tragedy the chorus, however faithful, usually represents the society from which the hero is gradually isolated. Hence what it expresses is a social norm against which the hero's hybris may be measured. The chorus is not the voice of the hero's conscience by any means, but very seldom does it encourage him in his hybris or prompt him to disastrous action. The chorus or chorus character is, so to speak, the embryonic germ of comedy in tragedy, just as the refuser of festivity, the melancholy Jaques or Alceste, is a tragic germ in comedy.

In comedy the erotic and social affinities of the hero are combined and unified in the final scene; tragedy usually makes love and the social structure irreconcilable and contending forces, a conflict which reduces love to passion and social activity to a forbidding and imperative duty. Comedy is much concerned with integrating the family and adjusting the family to society as a whole; tragedy is much concerned with breaking up the family and opposing it to the rest of society. This gives us the tragic archetype of Antigone, of which the conflict of love and honor in Classical French drama, of *Neigung* and *Pflicht* in Schiller, of passion and

authority in the Jacobeans, are all moralized simplifications. Again, just as the heroine of comedy often ties together the action, so it is obvious that the central female figure of a tragic action will often polarize the tragic conflict. Eve, Helen, Gertrude, and Emily in the *Knight's Tale* are some ready instances: the structural role of Briseis in the *Iliad* is similar. Comedy works out the proper relations of its characters and prevents heroes from marrying their sisters or mothers; tragedy presents the disaster of Oedipus or the incest of Siegmund. There is a great deal in tragedy about pride of race and birthright, but its general tendency is to isolate a ruling or noble family from the rest of society.

The phases of tragedy move from the heroic to the ironic, the first three corresponding to the first three phases of romance, the last three to the last three of irony. The first phase of tragedy is the one in which the central character is given the greatest possible dignity in contrast to the other characters, so that we get the perspective of a stag pulled down by wolves. The sources of dignity are courage and innocence, and in this phase the hero or heroine usually is innocent. This phase corresponds to the myth of the birth of the hero in romance, a theme which is occasionally incorporated into a tragic structure, as in Racine's *Athalie*. But owing to the unusual difficulty of making an interesting dramatic character out of an infant, the central and typical figure of this phase is the calumniated woman, often a mother the legitimacy of whose child is suspected. A whole series of tragedies based on a Griselda figure belong here, stretching from the Senecan *Octavia* to Hardy's Tess, and including the tragedy of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*. If we are to read *Alcestis* as a tragedy, we have to see it as a tragedy of this phase in which Alcestis is violated by Death and then has her fidelity vindicated by being restored to life. *Cymbeline* belongs here too: in this play the theme of the birth of the hero appears offstage, for Cymbeline was the king of Britain at the time of the birth of Christ, and the halcyon peace in which the play concludes has a suppressed reference to this.

An even clearer example, and certainly one of the greatest in English literature, is *The Duchess of Malfi*. The Duchess has the innocence of abundant life in a sick and melancholy society, where the fact that she has "youth and a little beauty" is precisely why she is hated. She reminds us too that one of the essential character-

istics of innocence in the martyr is an unwillingness to die. When Bosola comes to murder her he makes elaborate attempts to put her half in love with easeful death and to suggest that death is really a deliverance. The attempt is motivated by a grimly controlled pity, and is roughly the equivalent of the vinegar sponge in the Passion. When the Duchess, her back to the wall, says "I am the Duchess of Malfi still," "still" having its full weight of "always," we understand how it is that even after her death her invisible presence continues to be the most vital character in the play. *The White Devil* is an ironic parody-treatment of the same phase.

The second phase corresponds to the youth of the romantic hero, and is in one way or another the tragedy of innocence in the sense of inexperience, usually involving young people. It may be simply the tragedy of a youthful life cut off, as in the stories of Iphigeneia and Jephthah's daughter, of Romeo and Juliet, or, in a more complex situation, in the bewildered mixture of idealism and priggishness that brings Hippolytus to disaster. The simplicity of Shaw's Joan and her lack of worldly wisdom place her here also. For us however the phase is dominated by the archetypal tragedy of the green and golden world, the loss of the innocence of Adam and Eve, who, no matter how heavy a doctrinal load they have to carry, will always remain dramatically in the position of children baffled by their first contact with an adult situation. In many tragedies of this type the central character survives, so that the action closes with some adjustment to a new and more mature experience. "Henceforth I learn that to obey is best," says Adam, as he and Eve go hand in hand out to the world before them. A less clear cut but similar resolution occurs when Philoctetes, whose serpent-wound reminds us a little of Adam, is taken off his island to enter the Trojan war. Ibsen's *Little Eyolf* is a tragedy of this phase, and with the same continuing conclusion, in which it is the older characters who are educated through the death of a child.

The third phase, corresponding to the central quest-theme of romance, is tragedy in which a strong emphasis is thrown on the success or completeness of the hero's achievement. The Passion belongs here, as do all tragedies in which the hero is in any way related to or a prototype of Christ, like *Samson Agonistes*. The paradox of victory within tragedy may be expressed by a double perspective in the action. Samson is a buffoon of a Philistine carnival and simultaneously a tragic hero to the Israelites, but the trag-

edy ends in triumph and the carnival in catastrophe. Much the same is true of the mocked Christ in the Passion. But just as the second phase often ends in anticipation of greater maturity, so this one is often a sequel to a previous tragic or heroic action, and comes at the end of a heroic life. One of the greatest dramatic examples is *Oedipus at Colonus*, where we find the usual binary form of a tragedy conditioned by a previous tragic act, ending this time not in a second disaster, but in a full rich serenity that goes far beyond a mere resignation to Fate. In narrative literature we may cite Beowulf's last fight with the dragon, the pendant to his Grendel quest. Shakespeare's *Henry V* is a successfully completed romantic quest made tragic by its implicit context: everybody knows that King Henry died almost immediately and that sixty years of unbroken disaster followed for England—at least, if anyone in Shakespeare's audience did not know that, his ignorance was certainly no fault of Shakespeare's.

The fourth phase is the typical fall of the hero through hybris and hamartia that we have already discussed. In this phase we cross the boundary line from innocence to experience, which is also the direction in which the hero falls. In the fifth phase the ironic element increases, the heroic decreases, and the characters look further away and in a smaller perspective. *Timon of Athens* impresses us as more ironic and less heroic than the better known tragedies, not simply because Timon is a more middle-class hero who has to buy what authority he has, but because the feeling that Timon's suicide has somehow failed to make a fully heroic *point* is very strong. Timon is oddly isolated from the final action, in which the breach between Alcibiades and the Athenians closes up over his head, in striking contrast with the conclusions of most of the other tragedies, where nobody is allowed to steal the show from the central character.

The ironic perspective in tragedy is attained by putting the characters in a state of lower freedom than the audience. For a Christian audience an Old Testament or pagan setting is ironic in this sense, as it shows its characters moving according to the conditions of a law, whether Jewish or natural, from which the audience has been, at least theoretically, redeemed. *Samson Agonistes*, though unique in English literature, presents a combination of Classical form and Hebrew subject-matter that the greatest contemporary tragedian, Racine, also reached at the end of his life in *Athalie* and

Esther. Similarly the epilogue to Chaucer's *Troilus* puts a Courtly Love tragedy into its historical relation to "payens corsed olde rites." The events in Geoffrey of Monmouth's British history are supposed to be contemporary with those of the Old Testament, and the sense of life under the law is present everywhere in *King Lear*. The same structural principle accounts for the use of astrology and other fatalistic machinery connected with the turning wheels of fate or fortune. Romeo and Juliet are star-crossed, and Troilus loses Criseyde because every five hundred years Jupiter and Saturn meet the crescent moon in Cancer and claim another victim. The tragic action of the fifth phase presents for the most part the tragedy of lost direction and lack of knowledge, not unlike the second phase except that the context is the world of adult experience. *Oedipus Tyrannus* belongs here, and all tragedies and tragic episodes which suggest the existential projection of fatalism, and, like much of the Book of Job, seem to raise metaphysical or theological questions rather than social or moral ones.

Oedipus Tyrannus, however, is already moving into the sixth phase of tragedy, a world of shock and horror in which the central images are images of *sparagmos*, that is, cannibalism, mutilation, and torture. The specific reaction known as shock is appropriate to a situation of cruelty or outrage. (The secondary or false shock produced by the outrage done to some emotional attachment or fixation, as in the critical reception of *Jude the Obscure* or *Ulysses,* has no status in criticism, as false shock is a disguised resistance to the autonomy of culture.) Any tragedy may have one or more shocking scenes in it, but sixth-phase tragedy shocks as a whole, in its total effect. This phase is more common as a subordinate aspect of tragedy than as its main theme, as unqualified horror or despair makes a difficult cadence. *Prometheus Bound* is a tragedy of this phase, though this is partly an illusion due to its isolation from the trilogy to which it belongs. In such tragedies the hero is in too great agony or humiliation to gain the privilege of a heroic pose, hence it is usually easier to make him a villainous hero, like Marlowe's Barabas, although Faustus also belongs to the same phase. Seneca is fond of this phase, and bequeathed to the Elizabethans an interest in the gruesome, an effect which usually has some connection with mutilation, as when Ferdinand offers to shake hands with the Duchess of Malfi and gives her a dead man's hand. *Titus Andronicus* is an experiment in Senecan sixth-phase horror which

makes a great deal of mutilation, and shows also a strong interest, from the opening scene on, in the sacrificial symbolism of tragedy.

At the end of this phase we reach a point of demonic epiphany, where we see or glimpse the undisplaced demonic vision, the vision of the *Inferno*. Its chief symbols, besides the prison and the madhouse, are the instruments of a torturing death, the cross under the sunset being the antithesis of the tower under the moon. A strong element of demonic ritual in public punishments and similar mob amusements is exploited by tragic and ironic myth. Breaking on the wheel becomes Lear's wheel of fire; bear-baiting is an image for Gloucester and Macbeth, and for the crucified Prometheus the humiliation of exposure, the horror of being watched, is a greater misery than the pain. *Derkou theama* (behold the spectacle; get your staring over with) is his bitterest cry. The inability of Milton's blind Samson to stare back is his greatest torment, and one which forces him to scream at Delilah, in one of the most terrible passages of all tragic drama, that he will tear her to pieces if she touches him.

THE MYTHOS OF WINTER: IRONY AND SATIRE

We come now to the mythical patterns of experience, the attempts to give form to the shifting ambiguities and complexities of unidealized existence. We cannot find these patterns merely in the mimetic or representational aspect of such literature, for that aspect is one of content and not form. As structure, the central principle of ironic myth is best approached as a parody of romance: the application of romantic mythical forms to a more realistic content which fits them in unexpected ways. No one in a romance, Don Quixote protests, ever asks who pays for the hero's accommodation.

The chief distinction between irony and satire is that satire is militant irony: its moral norms are relatively clear, and it assumes standards against which the grotesque and absurd are measured. Sheer invective or name-calling ("flyting") is satire in which there is relatively little irony: on the other hand, whenever a reader is not sure what the author's attitude is or what his own is supposed to be, we have irony with relatively little satire. Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* is satiric irony: certain flat moral judgements made by the narrator (as in the description of Bagshot in chapter twelve) are in accord with the decorum of the work, but would be out of key in,

say, *Madame Bovary.* Irony is consistent both with complete realism of content and with the suppression of attitude on the part of the author. Satire demands at least a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognizes as grotesque, and at least an implicit moral standard, the latter being essential in a militant attitude to experience. Some phenomena, such as the ravages of disease, may be called grotesque, but to make fun of them would not be very effective satire. The satirist has to select his absurdities, and the act of selection is a moral act.

The argument of Swift's *Modest Proposal* has a brain-softening plausibility about it: one is almost led to feel that the narrator is not only reasonable but even humane; yet the "almost" can never drop out of any sane man's reaction, and as long as it remains there the modest proposal will be both fantastic and immoral. When in another passage Swift suddenly says, discussing the poverty of Ireland, "But my Heart is too heavy to continue this Irony longer," he is speaking of satire, which breaks down when its content is too oppressively real to permit the maintaining of the fantastic or hypothetical tone. Hence satire is irony which is structurally close to the comic: the comic struggle of two societies, one normal and the other absurd, is reflected in its double focus of morality and fantasy. Irony with little satire is the non-heroic residue of tragedy, centering on a theme of puzzled defeat.

Two things, then, are essential to satire; one is wit or humor founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack. Attack without humor, or pure denunciation, forms one of the boundaries of satire. It is a very hazy boundary, because invective is one of the most readable forms of literary art, just as panegyric is one of the dullest. It is an established datum of literature that we like hearing people cursed and are bored with hearing them praised, and almost any denunciation, if vigorous enough, is followed by a reader with the kind of pleasure that soon breaks into a smile. To attack anything, writer and audience must agree on its undesirability, which means that the content of a great deal of satire founded on national hatreds, snobbery, prejudice, and personal pique goes out of date very quickly.

But attack in literature can never be a pure expression of merely personal or even social hatred, whatever the motivation for it may be, because the words for expressing hatred, as distinct from enmity, have too limited a range. About the only ones we have are

derived from the animal world, but calling a man a swine or a skunk or a woman a bitch affords a severely restricted satisfaction, as most of the unpleasant qualities of the animal are human projections. As Shakespeare's Thersites says of Menelaus, "to what form, but that he is, should wit larded with malice, and malice forced with wit, turn him to? To an ass, were nothing; he is both ass and ox; to an ox, were nothing; he is both ox and ass." For effective attack we must reach some kind of impersonal level, and that commits the attacker, if only by implication, to a moral standard. The satirist commonly takes a high moral line. Pope asserts that he is "To Virtue only and her friends a friend," suggesting that that is what he is really being when he is reflecting on the cleanliness of the underwear worn by the lady who had jilted him.

Humor, like attack, is founded on convention. The world of humor is a rigidly stylized world in which generous Scotchmen, obedient wives, beloved mothers-in-law, and professors with presence of mind are not permitted to exist. All humor demands agreement that certain things, such as a picture of a wife beating her husband in a comic strip, are conventionally funny. To introduce a comic strip in which a husband beats his wife would distress the reader, because it would mean learning a new convention. The humor of pure fantasy, the other boundary of satire, belongs to romance, though it is uneasy there, as humor perceives the incongruous, and the conventions of romance are idealized. Most fantasy is pulled back into satire by a powerful undertow often called allegory, which may be described as the implicit reference to experience in the perception of the incongruous. The White Knight in Alice who felt that one should be provided for everything, and therefore put anklets around his horse's feet to guard against the bites of sharks, may pass as pure fantasy. But when he goes on to sing an elaborate parody of Wordsworth we begin to sniff the acrid, pungent smell of satire, and when we take a second look at the White Knight we recognize a character type closely related both to Quixote and to the pedant of comedy.

As in this *mythos* we have the difficulty of two words to contend with, it may be simplest, if the reader is now accustomed to our sequence of six phases, to start with them and describe them in order, instead of abstracting a typical form and discussing it first. The first three are phases of satire, and correspond to the first three or ironic phases of comedy.

The first phase corresponds to the first phase of ironic comedy in which there is no displacement of the humorous society. The sense of absurdity about such a comedy arises as a kind of backfire or recall after the work has been seen or read. Once we have finished with it, deserts of futility open up on all sides, and we have, in spite of the humor, a sense of nightmare and a close proximity to something demonic. Even in very light-hearted comedy we may get a trace of this feeling: if the main theme of *Pride and Prejudice* had been the married life of Collins and Charlotte Lucas, one wonders how long Collins would continue to be funny. Hence it is in decorum for even a satire prevailingly light in tone, such as Pope's second Moral Essay on the characters of women, to rise to a terrifying climax of moral intensity.

The satire typical of this phase may be called the satire of the low norm. It takes for granted a world which is full of anomalies, injustices, follies, and crimes, and yet is permanent and undisplaceable. Its principle is that anyone who wishes to keep his balance in such a world must learn first of all to keep his eyes open and his mouth shut. Counsels of prudence, urging the reader in effect to adopt an *eiron* role, have been prominent in literature from Egyptian times. What is recommended is conventional life at its best: a clairvoyant knowledge of human nature in oneself and others, an avoidance of all illusion and compulsive behavior, a reliance on observation and timing rather than on aggressiveness. This is wisdom, the tried and tested way of life, which does not question the logic of social convention, but merely follows the procedures which in fact do serve to maintain one's balance from one day to the next. The *eiron* of the low norm takes an attitude of flexible pragmatism; he assumes that society will, if given any chance, behave more or less like Caliban's Setebos in Browning's poem, and he conducts himself accordingly. On all doubtful points of behavior convention is his deepest conviction. And however good or bad expertly conventional behavior may be thought to be, it is certainly the most difficult of all forms of behavior to satirize, just as anyone with a new theory of behavior, even if saint or prophet, is the easiest of all people to ridicule as a crank.

Hence the satirist may employ a plain, common-sense, conventional person as a foil for the various *alazons* of society. Such a person may be the author himself or a narrator, and he corresponds to the plain dealer in comedy or the blunt adviser in tragedy. When

distinguished from the author, he is often a rustic with pastoral affinities, illustrating the connection of his role with the *agroikos* type in comedy. The kind of American satire that passes as folk humor, exemplified by the Biglow Papers, Mr. Dooley, Artemus Ward, and Will Rogers, makes a good deal of him, and this genre is closely linked with the North American development of the counsel of prudence in Poor Richard's Almanac and the Sam Slick papers. Other examples are easy enough to find, both where we expect them, as in Crabbe, whose tale *The Patron* also belongs to the counsel-of-prudence genre, and where we might not expect them, as in the Fish-Eater dialogue in Erasmus's *Colloquies.* Chaucer represents himself as a shy, demure, inconspicuous member of his pilgrimage, agreeing politely with everybody ("And I seyde his opinion was good"), and showing to the pilgrims none of the powers of observation that he displays to his reader. We are not surprised therefore to find that one of his "own" tales is in the counsel of prudence tradition.

The most elaborate form of low-norm satire is the encyclopaedic form favored by the Middle Ages, closely allied to preaching, and generally based on the encyclopaedic scheme of the seven deadly sins, a form which survived as late as Elizabethan times in Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse* and Lodge's *Wits Miserie.* Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* belongs to this tradition, in which the link with the corresponding comic phase, the view of an upside-down world dominated by humors and ruling passions, can be clearly seen. When adopted by a preacher, or even an intellectual, the low norm device is part of an implied *a fortiori* argument: if people cannot reach even ordinary common sense, or church porch virtue, there is little point in comparing them with any higher standards.

Where gaiety predominates in such satire, we have an attitude which fundamentally accepts social conventions but stresses tolerance and flexibility within their limits. Close to the conventional norm we find the lovable eccentric, the Uncle Toby or Betsey Trotwood who diversifies, without challenging, accepted codes of behavior. Such characters have much of the child about them, and a child's behavior is usually thought of as coming towards an accepted standard instead of moving away from it. Where attack predominates, we have an inconspicuous, unobtrusive *eiron* standard contrasted with the *alazons* or blocking humors who are in charge of society. This situation has for its archetype an ironic

counterpart of the romance theme of giant-killing. For society to exist at all there must be a delegation of prestige and influence to organized groups such as the church, the army, the professions and the government, all of which consist of individuals given more than individual power by the institutions to which they belong. If a satirist presents, say, a clergyman as a fool or hypocrite, he is, *qua* satirist, attacking neither a man nor a church. The former has no literary or hypothetical point, and the latter carries him outside the range of satire. He is attacking an evil man protected by his church, and such a man is a gigantic monster: monstrous because not what he should be, gigantic because protected by his position and by the prestige of good clergymen. The cowl might make the monk if it were not for satire.

Milton says, "for a Satyr as it was born out of a Tragedy, so ought to resemble his parentage, to strike high, and adventure dangerously at the most eminent vices among the greatest persons." Apart from the etymology, this needs one qualification: a great vice does not need a great person to represent it. We have mentioned the gigantic size of Sir Epicure Mammon's dream in *The Alchemist*: the whole mystery of the corrupted human will is in it, yet the utter impotence of the dreamer is essential to the satire. Similarly, we miss much of the point of *Jonathan Wild* unless we take the hero seriously as a parody of greatness, or false social standards of valuation. But in general the principle may be accepted for the satirist's antagonists that the larger they come, the easier they fall. In low-norm satire the *alazon* is a Goliath encountered by a tiny David with his sudden and vicious stones, a giant prodded by a cool and observant but almost invisible enemy into a blind, stampeding fury and then polished off at leisure. This situation has run through satire from the stories of Polyphemus and Blunderbore to, in a much more ironic and equivocal context, the Chaplin films. Dryden transforms his victims into fantastic dinosaurs of bulging flesh and peanut brains; he seems genuinely impressed by the "goodly and great" bulk of Og and by the furious energy of the poet Doeg.

The figure of the low-norm *eiron* is irony's substitute for the hero, and when he is removed from satire we can see more clearly that one of the central themes of the *mythos* is the disappearance of the heroic. This is the main reason for the predominance in fictional satire of what may be called the Omphale archetype, the man bullied or dominated by women, which has been prominent in

satire all through its history, and embraces a vast area of contemporary humor, both popular and sophisticated. Similarly, when the giant or monster is removed we can see that he is the mythical form of society, the hydra or fama full of tongues, Spenser's blatant beast which is still at large. And while the crank with his new idea is an obvious target for satire, still social convention is mainly fossilized dogma, and the standard appealed to by low-norm satire is a set of conventions largely invented by dead cranks. The strength of the conventional person is not in the conventions but in his common-sense way of handling them. Hence the logic of satire itself drives it on from its first phase of conventional satire on the unconventional to a second phase in which the sources and values of conventions themselves are objects of ridicule.

The simplest form of the corresponding second phase of comedy is the comedy of escape, in which a hero runs away to a more congenial society without transforming his own. The satiric counterpart of this is the picaresque novel, the story of the successful rogue who, from Reynard the Fox on, makes conventional society look foolish without setting up any positive standard. The picaresque novel is the social form of what with *Don Quixote* modulates into a more intellectualized satire, the nature of which needs some explanation.

Satire, according to Juvenal's useful if hackneyed formula, has an interest in anything men do. The philosopher, on the other hand, teaches a certain way or method of living; he stresses some things and despises others; what he recommends is carefully selected from the data of human life; he continually passes moral judgements on social behavior. His attitude is dogmatic; that of the satirist pragmatic. Hence satire may often represent the collision between a selection of standards from experience and the feeling that experience is bigger than any set of beliefs about it. The satirist demonstrates the infinite variety of what men do by showing the futility, not only of saying what they ought to do, but even of attempts to systematize or formulate a coherent scheme of what they do. Philosophies of life abstract from life, and an abstraction implies the leaving out of inconvenient data. The satirist brings up these inconvenient data, sometimes in the form of alternative and equally plausible theories, like the Erewhonian treatment of crime and disease or Swift's demonstration of the mechanical operation of spirit.

The central theme in the second or quixotic phase of satire, then, is the setting of ideas and generalizations and theories and dogmas over against the life they are supposed to explain. This theme is presented very clearly in Lucian's dialogue *The Sale of Lives,* in which a series of slave-philosophers pass in review, with all their arguments and guarantees, before a buyer who has to consider living with them. He buys a few, it is true, but as slaves, not as masters or teachers. Lucian's attitude to Greek philosophy is repeated in the attitude of Erasmus and Rabelais to the scholastics, of Swift and Samuel Butler I to Descartes and the Royal Society, of Voltaire to the Leibnitzians, of Peacock to the Romantics, of Samuel Butler II to the Darwinians, of Aldous Huxley to the behaviorists. We notice that low-norm satire often becomes *merely* anti-intellectual, a tendency that crops up in Crabbe (*vide The Learned Boy*) and even in Swift. The influence of low-norm satire in American culture has produced a popular contempt for longhairs and ivory towers, an example of what may be called a fallacy of poetic projection, or taking literary conventions to be facts of life. Anti-intellectual satire proper, however, is based on a sense of the comparative naivete of systematic thought, and should not be limited by such ready-made terms as skeptical or cynical.

Skepticism itself may be or become a dogmatic attitude, a comic humor of doubting plain evidence. Cynicism is a little closer to the satiric norm: Menippus, the founder of the Menippean satire, was a cynic, and cynics are generally associated with the role of intellectual Thersites. Lyly's play *Campaspe*, for instance, presents Plato, Aristotle, and Diogenes, but the first two are bores, and Diogenes, who is not a philosopher at all but an Elizabethan clown of the malcontent type, steals the show. But still cynicism is a philosophy, and one that may produce the strange spiritual pride of the Peregrinus of whom Lucian makes a searching and terrible analysis. In the *Sale of Lives* the cynic and the skeptic are auctioned in their turn, and the latter is the last to be sold, dragged off to have his very skepticism refuted, not by argument but by life. Erasmus and Burton called themselves Democritus Junior, followers of the philosopher who laughed at mankind, but Lucian's buyer considers that Democritus too has overdone his pose. Insofar as the satirist has a "position" of his own, it is the preference of practice to theory, experience to metaphysics. When Lucian goes to consult his master Menippus, he is told that the method of wisdom is to do the task

that lies to hand, advice repeated in Voltaire's *Candide* and in the instructions given to the unborn in *Erewhon*. Thus philosophical pedantry becomes, as every target of satire eventually does, a form of romanticism or the imposing of over-simplified ideals on experience.

The satiric attitude here is neither philosophical nor anti-philosophical, but an expression of the hypothetical form of art. Satire on ideas is only the special kind of art that defends its own creative detachment. The demand for order in thought produces a supply of intellectual systems: some of these attract and convert artists, but as an equally great poet could defend any other system equally well, no one system can contain the arts as they stand. Hence a systematic reasoner, given the power, would be likely to establish hierarchies in the arts, or censor and expurgate as Plato wished to do to Homer. Satire on systems of reasoning, especially on the social effects of such systems, is art's first line of defence against all such invasions.

In the warfare of science against superstition, the satirists have done famously. Satire itself appears to have begun with the Greek *silloi* which were pro-scientific attacks on superstition. In English literature, Chaucer and Ben Jonson riddled the alchemists with a cross-fire of their own jargon; Nashe and Swift hounded astrologers into premature graves; Browning's *Sludge the Medium* annihilated the spiritualists, and a rabble of occultists, numerologists, Pythagoreans, and Rosicrucians lie sprawling in the wake of *Hudibras*. To the scientist it may seem little short of perverse that satire placidly goes on making fun of legitimate astronomers in *The Elephant in the Moon*, of experimental laboratories in *Gulliver's Travels*, of Darwinian and Malthusian cosmology in *Erewhon*, of conditioned reflexes in *Brave New World*, of technological efficiency in 1984. Charles Fort, one of the few who have continued the tradition of intellectual satire in this century, brings the wheel full circle by mocking the scientists for their very freedom from superstition itself, a rational attitude which, like all rational attitudes, still refuses to examine all the evidence.

Similarly with religion. The satirist may feel with Lucian that the eliminating of superstition would also eliminate religion, or with Erasmus that it would restore health to religion. But whether Zeus exists or not is a question; that men who think him vicious and stupid will insist that he change the weather is a fact, accepted by

scoffer and devout alike. Any really devout person would surely welcome a satirist who cauterized hypocrisy and superstition as an ally of true religion. Yet once a hypocrite who sounds exactly like a good man is sufficiently blackened, the good man also may begin to seem a little dingier than he was. Those who would agree even with the theoretical parts of *Holy Willie's Prayer* in Burns look rather like Holy Willies themselves. One feels similarly that while the personal attitudes of Erasmus, Rabelais, Swift, and Voltaire to institutional religion varied a good deal, the effect of their satire varies much less. Satire on religion includes the parody of the sacramental life in English Protestantism that runs from Milton's divorce pamphlets to *The Way of All Flesh*, and the antagonism to Christianity in Nietzsche, Yeats, and D. H. Lawrence based on the conception of Jesus as another kind of romantic idealist.

The narrator in *Erewhon* remarks that while the real religion of most of the Erewhonians was, whatever they said it was, the acceptance of low-norm conventionality (the goddess Ydgrun), there was also a small group of "high Ydgrunites" who were the best people he found in Erewhon. The attitude of these people reminds us rather of Montaigne: they had the *eiron's* sense of the value of conventions that had been long established and were now harmless; they had the *eiron's* distrust of the ability of anyone's reason, including their own, to transform society into a better structure. But they were also intellectually detached from the conventions they lived with, and were capable of seeing their anomalies and absurdities as well as their stabilizing conservatism.

The literary form that high Ydgrunism produces in second-phase satire we may call the *ingenu* form, after Voltaire's dialogue of that name. Here an outsider to the society, in this case an American Indian, is the low norm: he has no dogmatic views of his own, but he grants none of the premises which make the absurdities of society look logical to those accustomed to them. He is really a pastoral figure, and like the pastoral, a form congenial to satire, he contrasts a set of simple standards with the complex rationalizations of society. But we have just seen that it is precisely the complexity of data in experience which the satirist insists on and the simple set of standards which he distrusts. That is why the *ingenu* is an outsider; he comes from another world which is either unattainable or associated with something else undesirable. Montaigne's cannibals have all the virtues we have not, if we don't mind being

cannibals. More's Utopia is an ideal state except that to enter it we must give up the idea of Christendom. The Houyhnhnms live the life of reason and nature better than we, but Gulliver finds that he is born a Yahoo, and that such a life would be nearer the capacities of gifted animals than of humans. Whenever the "other world" appears in satire, it appears as an ironic counterpart to our own, a reversal of accepted social standards. This form of satire is represented in Lucian's *Kataplous* and *Charon*, journeys to the other world in which the eminent in this one are shown doing appropriate but unaccustomed things, a form incorporated in Rabelais, and in the medieval *danse macabre*. In the last named the simple equality of death is set against the complex inequalities of life.

Intellectual satire defends the creative detachment in art, but art too tends to seek out socially accepted ideas and become in its turn a social fixation. We have spoken of the idealized art of romance as in particular the form in which an ascendant class tends to express itself, and so the rising middle class in medieval Europe naturally turned to mock-romance. Other forms of satire have a similar function, whether so intended or not. The *danse macabre* and the *kataplous* are ironic reversals of the kind of romanticism that we have in the serious vision of the other world. In Dante, for instance, the judgements of the next world usually confirm the standards of this one, and in heaven itself nearly the whole available billeting is marked for officers only. The cultural effect of such satire is not to denigrate romance, but to prevent any group of conventions from dominating the whole of literary experience. Second-phase satire shows literature assuming a special function of analysis, of breaking up the lumber of stereotypes, fossilized beliefs, superstitious terrors, crank theories, pedantic dogmatisms, oppressive fashions, and all other things that impede the free movement (not necessarily, of course, the progress) of society. Such satire is the completion of the logical process known as the *reductio ad absurdum*, which is not designed to hold one in perpetual captivity, but to bring one to the point at which one can escape from an incorrect procedure.

The romantic fixation which revolves around the beauty of perfect form, in art or elsewhere, is also a logical target for satire. The word satire is said to come from *satura*, or hash, and a kind of parody of form seems to run all through its tradition, from the mix-

ture of prose and verse in early satire to the jerky cinematic changes of scene in Rabelais (I am thinking of a somewhat archaic type of cinema). *Tristram Shandy* and *Don Juan* illustrate very clearly the constant tendency to self-parody in satiric rhetoric which prevents even the process of writing itself from becoming an over-simplified convention or ideal. In *Don Juan* we simultaneously read the poem and watch the poet at work writing it: we eavesdrop on his associations, his struggles for rhymes, his tentative and discarded plans, the subjective preferences organizing his choice of details (e.g.: "Her stature tall—I hate a dumpy woman"), his decisions whether to be "serious" or mask himself with humor. All of this and even more is true of *Tristram Shandy*. A deliberate rambling digressiveness, which in *A Tale of a Tub* reaches the point of including a digression in praise of digressions, is endemic in the narrative technique of satire, and so is a calculated bathos or art of sinking in its suspense, such as the quizzical mock-oracular conclusions in Apuleius and Rabelais and in the refusal of Sterne for hundreds of pages even to get his hero born. An extraordinary number of great satires are fragmentary, unfinished, or anonymous. In ironic fiction a good many devices turning on the difficulty of communication, such as having a story presented through an idiot mind, serve the same purpose. Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* is made up of speeches of characters constructed precisely out of what they do *not* say, but what their behavior and attitudes say in spite of them.

This technique of disintegration brings us well into the third phase of satire, the satire of the high norm. Second-phase satire may make a tactical defence of the pragmatic against the dogmatic, but here we must let go even of ordinary common sense as a standard. For common sense too has certain implied dogmas, notably that the data of sense experience are reliable and consistent, and that our customary associations with things form a solid basis for interpreting the present and predicting the future. The satirist cannot explore all the possibilities of his form without seeing what happens if he questions these assumptions. That is why he so often gives to ordinary life a logical and self-consistent shift of perspective. He will show us society suddenly in a telescope as posturing and dignified pygmies, or in a microscope as hideous and reeking giants, or he will change his hero into an ass and show us how humanity looks from an ass's point of view. This type of fantasy

breaks down customary associations, reduces sense experience to one of many possible categories, and brings out the tentative, *als ob* basis of all our thinking. Emerson says that such shifts of perspective afford "a low degree of the sublime," but actually they afford something of far greater artistic importance, a high degree of the ridiculous. And, consistently with the general basis of satire as parody-romance, they are usually adaptations of romance themes: the fairyland of little people, the land of giants, the world of enchanted animals, the wonderlands parodied in Lucian's *True History*.

When we fall back from the outworks of faith and reason to the tangible realities of the senses, satire follows us up. A slight shift of perspective, a different tinge in the emotional coloring, and the solid earth becomes an intolerable horror. *Gulliver's Travels* shows us man as a venomous rodent, man as a noisome and clumsy pachyderm, the mind of man as a bear-pit, and the body of man as a compound of filth and ferocity. But Swift is simply following where his satiric genius leads him, and genius seems to have led practically every great satirist to become what the world calls obscene. Social convention means people parading in front of each other, and the preservation of it demands that the dignity of some men and the beauty of some women should be thought of apart from excretion, copulation, and similar embarrassments. Constant reference to these latter brings us down to a bodily democracy paralleling the democracy of death in the *danse macabre*. Swift's affinity with the *danse macabre* tradition is marked in his description of the Struldbrugs, and his *Directions to Servants* and his more unquotable poems are in the tradition of the medieval preachers who painted the repulsiveness of gluttony and lechery. For here as everywhere else in satire there is a moral reference: it is all very well to eat, drink, and be merry, but one cannot always put off dying until tomorrow.

In the riotous chaos of Rabelais, Petronius, and Apuleius satire plunges through to its final victory over common sense. When we have finished with their weirdly logical fantasies of debauch, dream, and delirium we wake up wondering if Paracelsus' suggestion is right that the things seen in delirium are really there, like stars in daytime, and invisible for the same reason. Lucius becomes initiated and slips evasively out of our grasp, whether he lied or told the truth, as St. Augustine says with a touch of exasperation; Rabelais promises us a final oracle and leaves us staring at an empty bot-

tle; Joyce's HCE struggles for pages toward wakening, but just as we seem on the point of grasping something tangible we are swung around to the first page of the book again. The *Satyricon* is a torn fragment from what seems like a history of some monstrous Atlantean race that vanished in the sea, still drunk.

The first phase of satire is dominated by the figure of the giant-killer, but in this rending of the stable universe a giant power rears up in satire itself. When the Philistine giant comes out to battle with the children of light, he naturally expects to find someone his own size ready to meet him, someone who is head and shoulders over every man in Israel. Such a Titan would have to bear down his opponent by sheer weight of words, and hence be a master of that technique of torrential abuse which we call invective. The gigantic figures in Rabelais, the awakened forms of the bound or sleeping giants that meet us in *Finnegans Wake* and the opening of *Gulliver's Travels*, are expressions of a creative exuberance of which the most typical and obvious sign is the verbal tempest, the tremendous outpouring of words in catalogues, abusive epithets and erudite technicalities which since the third chapter of Isaiah (a satire on female ornament) has been a feature, and almost a monopoly, of third-phase satire. Its golden age in English literature was the age of Burton, Nashe, Marston, and Urquhart of Cromarty, the uninhibited translator of Rabelais, who in his spare time was what Nashe would call a "scholastical squitter-book," producing books with such titles as *Trissotetras, Pantochronochanon, Exkubalauron* and *Logopandecteison*. Nobody except Joyce has in modern English made much sustained effort to carry on this tradition of verbal exuberance: even Carlyle, from this point of view, is a sad comedown after Burton and Urquhart. In American culture it is represented by the "tall talk" of the folklore boaster, which has some literary congeners in the catalogues of Whitman and *Moby Dick*.

With the fourth phase we move around to the ironic aspect of tragedy, and satire begins to recede. The fall of the tragic hero, especially in Shakespeare, is so delicately balanced emotionally that we almost exaggerate any one element in it merely by calling attention to it. One of these elements is the elegiac aspect in which irony is at a minimum, the sense of gentle and dignified pathos, often symbolized by music, which marks the desertion of Antony by Hercules, the dream of the rejected Queen Catherine in *Henry VIII*, Hamlet's "absent thee from felicity awhile," and Othello's

Aleppo speech. One can of course find irony even here, as Mr. Eliot has found it in the last named, but the main emotional weight is surely thrown on the opposite side. Yet we are also aware that Hamlet dies in the middle of a frantically muddled effort at revenge which has taken eight lives instead of one, that Cleopatra fades away with great dignity after a careful search for easy ways to die, that Coriolanus is badly confused by his mother and violently resents being called a boy. Such tragic irony differs from satire in that there is no attempt to make fun of the character, but only to bring out clearly the "all too human," as distinct from the heroic, aspects of the tragedy. King Lear attempts to achieve heroic dignity through his position as a king and father, and finds it instead in his suffering humanity: hence it is in *King Lear* that we find what has been called the "comedy of the grotesque," the ironic parody of the tragic situation, most elaborately developed.

As a phase of irony in its own right, the fourth phase looks at tragedy from below, from the moral and realistic perspective of the state of experience. It stresses the humanity of its heroes, minimizes the sense of ritual inevitability in tragedy, supplies social and psychological explanations for catastrophe, and makes as much as possible of human misery seem, in Thoreau's phrase, "superfluous and evitable." This is the phase of most sincere, explicit realism: it is in general Tolstoy's phase, and also that of a good deal of Hardy and Conrad. One of its central themes is Stein's answer to the problem of the "romantic" Lord Jim in Conrad: "in the destructive element immerse." This remark, without ridiculing Jim, still brings out the quixotic and romantic element in his nature and criticizes it from the point of view of experience. The chapter on watches and chronometers in Melville's *Pierre* takes a similar attitude.

The fifth phase, corresponding to fatalistic or fifth-phase tragedy, is irony in which the main emphasis is on the natural cycle, the steady unbroken turning of the wheel of fate or fortune. It sees experience, in our terms, with the point of epiphany closed up, and its motto is Browning's "there may be heaven; there must be hell." Like the corresponding phase of tragedy, it is less moral and more generalized and metaphysical in its interest, less melioristic and more stoical and resigned. The treatment of Napoleon in *War and Peace* and in *The Dynasts* affords a good contrast between the fourth and fifth phases of irony. The refrain in the Old English *Complaint of Deor*: "Thaes ofereode; thisses swa maeg" (freely

translatable as "Other people got through things; maybe I can") expresses a stoicism not of the "invictus" type, which maintains a romantic dignity, but rather a sense, found also in the parallel second phase of satire, that the practical and immediate situation is likely to be worthy of more respect than the theoretical explanation of it.

The sixth phase presents human life in terms of largely unrelieved bondage. Its settings feature prisons, madhouses, lynching mobs, and places of execution, and it differs from a pure inferno mainly in the fact that in human experience suffering has an end in death. In our day the chief form of this phase is the nightmare of social tyranny, of which 1984 is perhaps the most familiar. We often find, on this boundary of the *visio malefica,* the use of parody-religious symbols suggesting some form of Satan or Antichrist worship. In Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* a parody of original sin appears in the officer's remark, "Guilt is never to be doubted." In 1984 the parody of religion in the final scenes is more elaborate: there is a parody of the atonement, for instance, when the hero is tortured into urging that the torments be inflicted on the heroine instead. The assumption is made in this story that the lust for sadistic power on the part of the ruling class is strong enough to last indefinitely, which is precisely the assumption one has to make about devils in order to accept the orthodox picture of hell. The "telescreen" device brings into irony the tragic theme of *derkou theama,* the humiliation of being constantly watched by a hostile or derisive eye.

The human figures of this phase are, of course, *desdichado* figures of misery or madness, often parodies of romantic roles. Thus the romantic theme of the helpful servant giant is parodied in *The Hairy Ape* and *Of Mice and Men,* and the romantic presenter or Prospero figure is parodied in the Benjy of *The Sound and the Fury* whose idiot mind contains, without comprehending, the whole action of the novel. Sinister parental figures naturally abound, for this is the world of the ogre and the witch, of Baudelaire's black giantess and Pope's goddess Dullness, who also has much of the parody deity about her ("Light dies before thy uncreating word!"), of the siren with the imprisoning image of shrouding hair, and, of course, of the *femme fatale* or malignant grinning female, "older than the rocks among which she sits," as Pater says of her.

This brings us around again to the point of demonic epiphany,

the dark tower and prison of endless pain, the city of dreadful night in the desert, or, with a more erudite irony, the *tour abolie,* the goal of the quest that isn't there. But on the other side of this blasted world of repulsiveness and idiocy, a world without pity and without hope, satire begins again. At the bottom of Dante's hell, which is also the center of the spherical earth, Dante sees Satan standing upright in the circle of ice, and as he cautiously follows Virgil over the hip and thigh of the evil giant, letting himself down by the tufts of hair on his skin, he passes the center and finds himself no longer going down but going up, climbing out on the other side of the world to see the stars again. From this point of view, the devil is no longer upright, but standing on his head, in the same attitude in which he was hurled downward from heaven upon the other side of the earth. Tragedy and tragic irony take us into a hell of narrowing circles and culminate in some such vision of the source of all evil in a personal form. Tragedy can take us no farther; but if we persevere with the *mythos* of irony and satire, we shall pass a dead center, and finally see the gentlemanly Prince of Darkness bottom side up.