IN THE VAGUE SPACES OF DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT'S POETRY

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The diction Duncan Campbell Scott uses in "Poetry and Progress"[1] to articulate his understanding of poetry approximates to that used by many persons to describe their experience of God. It tends toward the language of religion. He says:

> . . . poetry and the poetic is a quality or state of mind and cannot be described, it is apprehended by sensation, not comprehended . . . is undefinable . . . The beauty is flashed upon the eye and withdrawn. It is remembered in darkness and is verified by the merest flutter or flash of illumination, but the secret of the beauty is shrouded in mystery.[2]

Later, probing more deeply, he says:

> But when so often calling on the name of poetry, I am thinking of that element in the art which is essential, in which the power of growth resides, which is the winged and restless spirit keeping pace with knowledge and often beating into the void in advance of speculation; the spirit which Shakespeare called "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come." This spirit endeavours to interpret the world in new terms of beauty, to find unique symbols, images and analogies for the varied forms of life. It absorbs science and philosophy, and anticipates social progress in terms of ideality. It is rare, but it is ever present, for what is it but the flickering and pulsation of the force that created the world.[3]

Beauty. The *secret* of beauty. Mystery. Essential element in which the *power* of *growth* resides. Spirit. Ideality. Creator of the world, even now continuously recreating or voicing life in the poetry of harmonious, authentic form wherever or however it exists. At the heart of all these epithets is the dynamic and absolute originator unnamed above apart from the ambiguous noun "force," while yet the aura of person—of

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[1]Duncan Campbell Scott, *The Circle of Affection and Other Pieces in Prose and Verse* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1947), pp. 123-47.
[2]Ibid., p. 132.
[3]Op. cit., p. 137.

purposeful knowledge and choice, particularly notable in the poetry itself—permeates and directs the vague description. Toward this heart or center all Scott's poetry tends or extends in the effort to "lure" it to vision or articulation "with a semblance of itself."[4] Clearly such writing is more than that inspired by the merely finite; somehow it rhythmically contains, shares, makes transparent an immanent and transcendent principle, producing "a true poem. We know instinctively and say, 'This is poetry,' and the need for definition ceases."[5]

Three major kinds of experience of transcendent presence are met in Scott's poetry. There is the compelling and ineffable encounter re-created in "The Height of Land." In another mode is the delightful visitation of intimate love imparted in "The Water Lily." The third type, the subject of this article, is perhaps even more recognizably the work of the author of the quotations presented above. Here reality, obscurely yet definitely known, is presented as mystery encountered on its own ground unsupported by the external senses. Various poems explore this type of meeting, using imagery commonly associated with confrontation of the unknown—haunted atmospheres characterized by half-light, shadows, lack of colour; "painful" situations met in a deprivation of sensory experience; objectively odd or weird behaviour and events. As we shall see, it is no accident that suggestions of death hover about such poems as "The Magic House," "Avis," "By the Willow Spring," "The Nightwatchman" (*GC*), and "Amanda" (*CA*).[6]

Perhaps before proceeding to these poems it will be helpful to look briefly at another which can serve by contrast to define the real yet sensuously empty world of the spirit. "Mid-August" is rendered totally in terms of sensory experience which unites a consciousness of religious response and mystery (stanzas 2-4) with description containing sexual overtones (stanzas 5-7). The sun floods the upland (stanza 1), but the speaker is deeply appreciative of the darkness of the pine wood (stanza 4): we have a sun-dark situation, but the positive focus prevails in the sensuous security of the sun's presence. Pleasant scents, sounds, experiences are present to the speaker in memory (1. 5) and in the immediate surroundings—in the "pale water" (1. 18) searching, the music-laden atmosphere, the deeply intimate reverberations he feels in

[4]Ibid., p. 132.
[5]Ibid., p. 132.
[6]*GC* and *CA* refer respectively to Scott's two final volumes: *The Green Cloister*: Later Poems and *The Circle of Affection and Other Pieces in Prose and Verse*. All other titles are from *The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott*.

the "tender" (l. 45) penetration of light everywhere. Here half-light is not eerie; it is presented with sexual resonance and wrapped in music metaphor. It engenders joy, a deep well-being which seems at times religious and at other times the natural joy of fruition after creative union:

> The joy that I am feeling
> Is there something in it
> Unlike the warble the linnet
> Phrases and intones?
> Or is it a like thought stealing
> With a rapture fine, free
> Through the happy pine tree
> Ripening her cones?
> (ll. 57-64)

Only at this point does consciousness depart from the sensory environment to muse on possible existence on other planets. Yet even here the close awareness of the material, the tangible, persists. Other planets are known to exist materially, so the departure is only relative. At each instant this poem is closely wedded to matter while the joy is supernatural in emphasis, issuing from the symbolism of the natural elements and giving knowledge of pervasive beauty:

> Beauties that meet and mingle
> In this quiet dingle
> With the beauty of the whole.
> (ll. 78-80)

Thus, so much of the eerie diction common to this poem and to "The Magic House" and the other works mentioned above is offset here by being in touch with material reality. The speaker is physically sheltered in a real thicket, and enjoys natural beauty like most of his readers. In this context "fragile melancholy" (l. 13), "pallid ghost flowers" (l. 14), "the shadow of a shrine" (l. 15), "The pale water searches" (l. 18), "Fairy like lute players/ Lulling music make," (ll. 23-24), "airy lair" (l. 28), "Wraithlike scents" (l. 34) are curious, but not frightening. Even the light, not at all like that of "The Water Lily"—

> Light has lost its splendour,
> Light refined and sifted,
> Cool light and dream drifted
> (ll. 41-43)

—invites rather than repels.

The case is quite different when the supernatural is the ground of reality. "The Magic House" presents such a situation. The house is symbolic of the soul, and probably of the soul's extensions, that is, supernatural reality perceived wherever the person goes. "Her chamber" we may take to be the soul itself, of which a person becomes deeply aware at some point in his or her life (11. 1-2); the terrace, turret, and garden clearly extend beyond the chamber while remaining part of the house. In this kind of writing, where the concrete image is not merely functioning within the natural world perceptible by the senses but is operating in a purely supernatural context, we have an example of writing on the supernatural level that is quite different from that seen in "Mid-August" where natural elements symbolically carry supernatural overtones. Here we are dealing with a casement of the soul, stairs in an incorporeal world, a terrace, a turret, a garden—things that only resonate by suggestion, the concrete metaphors being turned back on themselves to give some kind of truth in the supernatural medium. This technique is also different in means from

> Melody shadowed with melody,
> ("Ode for the Keats Centenary," 1. 115)

and

> Vague as shadows cast by a shadow.
> ("At Gull Lake: August, 1810," 1. 51),

but the end is the same—an effort to articulate supernatural reality. With terrace, turret, and garden we have indications of the soul's perspective outward, upward, within—the world of work and relaxation. It is notable that the eye of the poem does not move—it remains within the house or garden, staying close to the central inner life. This suggests the theme—experience which is focally inner. However, the indication of gazing beyond the "limits" of the soul (11. 16-30) not only reinforces the sense of essential loneliness characteristic of the individual spiritual life but also provides in this poem the soul's link with all creation outside itself. Thus we see that truly spiritual experience is not cut off from the rest of life.

"The Magic House" operates on two levels. On the supernatural level it creates a general sense of the prevailing disposition within the listening soul. This atmosphere is generated through sound and rhyme, through a figurative appeal to the senses of hearing, sight, smell. On the deeper level, the poem traces stages of progress in a soul's spiritual

life, climaxing with an experience of transcendent presence that is painful and somewhat frightening. As in "The Water Lily," such apprehension of transcendent reality is an atypical description of how a particular experience was perceived at a particular time.

First, then, on the superficial level a general impression of harmony is cast into a context of timelessness where consciousness is ever alert, listening. Outstanding among the structural sources of this vital harmony is the rhyme pattern used in the poem. End rhyme constantly moves the poem forward, its scheme being *abcbc*. On the other hand, the patterned internal rhyme in each fifth line creates a contrapuntal harmony and an echo, both pleasing and mysterious, that produce an effect of delay:

> Lingering in the spaces vague,
> Like the breath within the flute,
> Winds shall move along the stair;
> When she walketh mute
> Music meet shall greet her there.
> (second stanza, 11. 6-10)

As seen in the above stanza, the basic musical pattern is supplemented and varied in impact by pervasive and free use of assonance and alliteration. By means of connotation—for example, of "spaces vague" (1. 6), "walketh mute" (1. 9), "Music meet . . . greet" (1. 10), even the idea of lingering like a breath (11. 6,7) in the stanza above—mystery is emphasized. At the same time, the basic underlying music of vowels and soft consonants sustains the sense of harmony, of rightness, modifying the mystery enough to make it endurable.

In combination with this fluctuating of sound (and of more or less regular metre) is the impact of explicit reference to music, to the stilling of time, to the reduction of light. All of these are lulling, pleasing, bespeaking peace as long as the element of mystery is accepted, as it seems to be. Indeed, music, fundamental harmony, is the aid to such acceptance (1. 3). It is notable that the life in the soul consists of personal response to an initiative independent of the soul yet within it. In the foregoing quotation of stanza two we see that winds corresponding to breath within a flute move discernibly within the soul. The musician is unnamed; "winds" suggests the playing of the instrument. Such music-making, the perception of which depends on the person's inner quiet, figuratively describes the basic dynamics of spiritual life: the soul hears and either listens or does not. In this poem the soul, or ordered self, listens.

In stanza three the other two factors, time and light, are described. The listening mentioned above results in delicate and discriminating perception. The outward world of the senses is not impressing the soul so much as it is making it engrossed with the harmony within. In the moments, or minutes, or hours of clock-time (that is, sense-time) in which the soul is thus totally engrossed, there occurs an intersection of time with eternity:

> Time shall make a truce with Time,
> (1. 11)

As a result, a sort of half and half consciousness prevails. On the one hand is a feeling of the rightness and fragility of the inner experience, the merging of "victor'sunlight" with "ruined rain" ("The Height of Land," 1. 91) in its awareness of "Irised hours of gossamer" ("The Magic House," 1. 13). On the other hand is the real obscurity of the whole situation, apart from the delicate affirmation supplied by the music "meet" (1. 10):

> Eve perpetual
> Shall the night or light defer.
> (11. 14-15)

Twilight, half-light, here seems to correspond to

> Conscious and still unconscious of the sun,
> ("The Water Lily," 1. 44).

In addition to half-light, stilled time and music are yet other factors sustaining the sense of place, they are contained for the odours which seem appropriate in their mixture of sweetness and bitterness. Thus the poem begins with an evocation of a specific atmosphere in terms of smells, sound and light—all of which are limitless in potential effect and none of which is qualified by change or, essentially, by variety. Rather, rhyme patterns remain constant, suggesting a continuation of the music metaphor of the first three stanzas; the twilight is "perpetual" (1. 15), and the smells, one may assume, are those which belong to this "house," introduced as they are in the very first stanzas. So we seem to have, then, on the surface of this poem, a basic harmony which is quietly alert, into which the sights, lack of sound, and presence of sound of the deeper level of meaning are introduced. This basic harmony sustains the experience of this deeper level with a calm indicated by the speaker's quiet, affirmative statement of events as progress is made from one stage to the next.

As has been suggested, the superficial impact of the poem serves the more important second level. This deeper level of meaning is emphasized throughout this restrained and harmonious poem by the repeated insistence of the auxiliary verb "shall," which shapes it in two ways: (1) all the action is presented in the future tense; (2) all of it, being rendered in the third person, is to an extent determined. Given the fact that the sould is disposed to listen, the development suggested "shall" happen. The four sections of the poem suggest the general movement on this second level of meaning.

Section one (11. 1-15) has already been discussed. It shows the prerequisite general atmosphere within the listening soul. Section two (11. 16-35) goes further. The soul first becomes aware of its "environment"—of the unconscious self (11. 16-18), dark, elemental, which is somehow associated with this obscure self (as juxtaposition and the elliptical second clause suggest) of experience of transcendent reality which enkindles hope and desire.

> [She] Shall [see] the sunsets swim
> Red with untold gold to her.
> (11. 19-20)

The soul learns from other struggling souls (11. 21-25) how to cope with life, how, in the words of "The Water Lily," to "slide with the air" (1. 10):

> How an eagle floats
> In the wan unconscious air.
> (11. 24-25)

It receives intimations of the beauty of the full life of the spirit (11. 26-30), possibilities envisioned in openness, in a kind of flexible suspension ("cloudy," 1. 27; "verge of space," 1. 28; "or . . . or," 1. 30), not grasped, not envisioned as more or less fixed as in the case of the young girl described in "Adagio," (11. 32-51). At this point, the soul is ready for deeper experience: in the midst of its own growth (11. 31-35) another sound, not quite identifiable (11. 33-35), comes to consciousness. Thus the second section (11. 16-35) presents growth in a spiritual outlook which orients the soul as it deepens its sense of identity.

Section three (11. 36-50) marks the climax reached in the journey or inner growth presented in this poem. Again, specific steps of progress are defined. Stanza eight seems to emerge from the perception noted in the end of the last section:

She shall seem to hear the sea,
Or behind the vines
Some small noise, a voice may be.
(11. 33-35)

The large symbol of deep life, the sea, equated in "Morning at Paramé" with the source of the soul's riches (1. 13), is confused by the soul with the accent of human speech. Stanza eight describes negatively the deep sense of loneliness which grips the consciousness with this reminder of the well-loved sensory world, human communication:

But no thing shall habit there,
There no human foot shall fall,
No sweet word the silence stir,
Naught her name shall call,
Nothing come to comfort her.
(11. 36-40)

But stanza eight and the first two lines of stanza nine imply that the soul continues to listen as it has to this point in the poem, despite the suffering involved in the deprivation of the outer senses of sight and hearing (11. 36-39), suffering implied by the word "comfort" (1. 40). Indeed, this sensory privation constitutes a darkness that is like night (1. 41), even though the prevailing half-light (11. 5, 14-15) endures and now repels (1. 42) because of the natural cry of the senses for satisfaction.

At this point—

Ancient thoughts and words long said,
Like an alien host,
There shall come unsummonéd.
(11. 43-45)

—new truth comes to consciousness, truth which is in the memory of the race ("long said," 1.43), new to the soul ("alien," 1. 44), faceted ("host," 1. 44), given ("shall come unsummonéd," 1. 45). "Thoughts and words" (1. 43) by synecdoche bespeak "person." We have here, then, an experience that is part of the adventure communicated in "The Height of Land" which is opposite in mood to that seen in "The Water Lily," which is obviously different again in kind from that of "The Piper of Arll" where the piper listens to the "alien" song with deep joy in complete openness ("The Piper of Arll," 1. 42). Here the listening drains the soul ("The Magic House," 11. 46-48) even as it proceeds to its term. "Dream" (1. 48), that which is true within it, comes to consciousness. But the text says "all" the dream. An absolute completeness in

terms of all truth, all truths, is excluded from meaning by the partial character implied in

> Ancientthoughts and words long said,
> Like an alien host,
> There shall come unsummoned.
> (11. 43-45)

Even "an . . . host" suggests a part of reality, a unified section of discrete parts. So "all the dream" seems rather to mean a grasp of essential truth, comprehensive, absolute. It sounds like an overpowering, formidable occurrence of the same experience that was described as

> a spell
> Golden and inappellable
> That gives the inarticulate part
> Of our strange being one moment of release
> That seems more native than the touch of time,
> ("The Height of Land," 11. 51-55)

where the awesomeness of the new consciousness changes "flashes" ("The Height of Land," 1. 50) to an "interval" ("The Magic House,11 1. 40) which extends with the slow pace suggested by the assonance of long "e's" and broad "a's," emphasized in the rhyming of "wall" (1. 47) and "all" (1. 48) and the connotation of "go by" (1. 48):

> With her forehead on her wrist
> She shall lean against the wall
> And see all the dream go by;
> (11. 46-48)

These judgments are supported by the final lines of the section:

> In the interval
> Time shall turn Eternity.
> (11. 49-50)

Sound and rhythm are emphatic here, making line 50 the effective result of the experience. The internal rhyme is notable. Not only is the new effect (analogous to the new birth implication of the central lines of "The Water Lily"—11. 70-37)[7] emphasized, but the repetition of "turn" in the internal rhyme (1. 50) suggests the completion of an experience which will recur. Such a possible pattern of repetition, a spiralling ascent, seems consonant with the matter-of-fact tone of the first line of the final section.

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[7]See C. Kelly, S.C.I.C., "Tremoured with Fire: The Love Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott,"

The final stanza of the poem constitutes its final section. Its function is to sum up the climactic experience of the poem and to indicate the changed perspective of the soul. The degree of painfulness and the duration of the experience are presented with the same deliberate, detached tone that has characterized the entire poem:

> But the agony shall pass—
> (1. 51)

Then follows a new and telling description of the experience—"unuttered prayer" (1. 52)—surely significant in terms of definition and implication of depth. It is as if the lines of "These Are in the Beginning" were conceived as a tapestry which has been reversed, where "gleam" is a particular kind of darkness, not of evil, nor of negativism, but of painfully dawning awareness in which the truth is realized:

> A throb in the secret heart,
> A warning of vision,—
> A gleam,—not a thought,
> Before the image is caught,
> Sullied or blurred
> By the touch of a word.
> ("These Are in the Beginning,"
> 11. 7-12)

Thus, such deep communication of truth, though painful, is also prayer as much as it was when

> The heart replies in exaltation
> And echoes faintly like an inland shell
> Ghost tremors of the spell;
> ("The Height of Land," 11. 69-71),

deep inter-communication without words, independent of personal thought:

> Thought reawakens and is linked again
> With all the welter of the lives of men.
> ("The Height of Land," 11. 72-73)

The change that goes with such experience ("The Height of Land," 11. 78-89) is also operative in "The Magic House." The world's outlines (the most explicit reference in "The Magic House" to all life exterior to the soul), the too bright light of worldly or sense life, the obscure pine wood are all now seen from the new spiritual perspective—the world no longer exerting the same attraction, as seems suggested in the change

of "heated" (1. 23) to "weary" (1. 54), the unconscious no longer threatening but more plainly recognized for what it is in its unchanging mystery. Both world and the unconscious assume their proper relative values in life as is seen by the connection made metrically and through rhyme, and, by design or not, in an echoing of "air" so pervasively symbolic of activation of the spiritual life, especially as brought out in "The Height of Land" (11. 16; 77-78; 95-98):

\- - / - /
And the weary glare
\- - / - / - /
And the bare unvaried pines.
("The Magic House," 11. 54-55)

Thus "The Magic House" communicates transcendent experience as an encounter on spiritual ground, which, by its total lack of satisfaction of the senses, man's ordinary mode of orientation, constitutes a humanly frightening, or at least painful experience. In the sense of laboured moments passing slowly yet inexorably in the emergence of new insight and conviction (11. 41-48) there hovers an impression of birth. At the same time, the word "magic" together with the eeriness generated through the impersonal tone of the prophecy of what will surely happen in these twilit, lulling, vague spaces and the cold indication of the human need for comfort in an agony—all these factors more largely conjure the impression of death. We have thus an experience of death in which a kind of birth takes place. In "Avis" the emphasis on death is even more striking.

The narrative poem "Avis" reports the experience that "The Magic House" predicts will happen, given the condition of inner quiet and listening. The omniscient speaker describes the spell (11. 1-14), how Avis experienced it in listening (11. 15-56), his own sensing of the experience primarily in terms of sight, but also of sound (11. 57-84), and, finally, his summary view of Avis (11. 85-98). Again, as in "The Magic House," we have an emphasis on melodious sound pervading the poetic structure itself and the use of music as an image to reinforce a harmonious atmosphere. In addition, there is a return to the sleep metaphor of "The Height of Land" to communicate the fact the experience is given and received independently of any design or specific choice on the part of the recipient. Not that choice is totally excluded from the experience. In the image of "falling," developed more fully in "The Eagle Speaks," we have an indication of clear choice on the

part of transcendent reality (1. 7), and of a responsive affirmation on the part of Avis, noted ambiguously in

> Where she was she fell,
> Drowsy as mandragora,
> Tranced to the root.
> (11. 40-42),

more clearly in

> (One who saith
> "Love—Undone" and falls).
> (11. 95-96).

In the first section (11. 1-14) transcendence is presented in majesty and power. In a possible allusion to Zeus in comparison with a falling eagle, and in a manner reminiscent of Hopkins' "The Windhover," mono- and disyllabic words move gracefully and deliberately to end the fall more alarmingly in "fatal spell" (1. 7). But the preceding lines are positive and grand. The strong consonants (alliterated "b," "g," and "t") combine with open and varied "o's" and "i's" to give an organ quality to the sound. Light ("golden," 1. 1; "gleaming," 1. 6) and powerful force ("fell," 1. 4; "Hurled," 1. 6; "Sprang," 1. 7) belie the negative overtones of "fatal" (1. 7) without nullifying them. In the second stanza, suggestions of retinue and magnificence continue the regal impression ("burnished," 1. 8; the repetition of "Gleaming," 1. 9; "arc and iris eye," 1. 13; "Burning," 1. 14), sustaining the light image while introducing associations of rainbow and fire, both connected with transcendent experience in Scott. Powerful movements in "Fell, soared and fell" (1. 12) echo the rolling bell sounds in action. The final impression is of rich and forceful energy that is purposeful yet beautiful.

Avis's reception of the visitation (11. 15-56) contrasts greatly with this power and grandeur; she perceives it as quiet sound which enlightens (11. 29-35) as it calls her by name (1. 36)—and she responds, totally:

> Where she was she fell,
> . . .
> Tranced to the root.
> (11. 40-42)

Birds are commonly used by Scott to signify the approach or the presence of transcendent reality. Here the "storm" of doves (1. 8) is ecperienced as

> . . . the sound of wings
> From the deeps of rosy gloom
> Rustled in the place.
> (11. 19-21)

while the booming bell merely breaks

> the quiet space
> Gathering softly in the room
> Round her face;
> (11. 15-18).

This variance between outer and inner experience, the strange usage of "space" (1. 15), "room" (1. 16), and "place" (1. 21) which recalls "the magic space" ("The Fragment of a Letter," 1. 56), the association of "the deeps of rosy gloom"—all indicate supernatural encounter.

In Scott, most notable in "The Height of Land," the receptive attitude of the human soul to transcendent experience is imaged as listening. "Avis" uses the image in varying degrees of penetration and scope. We have already seen the quiet quality. Another degree is perception conveyed in the abstract symbolic technique Scott often uses. The experience, the speaker says, is perceived by Avis only in the following way:

> Only in the purple deep,
> Streaming o'er,
> Came the dream of sound
> Silent as the dale of sleep,
> When the dreams are four.
> ((11. 24-48)

"Purple (signifying regal or imperial), "The dream of sound," "silent," "sleep," "dreams," "four" (symbolic of perfection)—the reference is to the same experience as the chilling one observed in "The Magic House" (11. 43-48). Here "four" ("Avis," 1. 28) seems the equivalent of "all" ("The Magic House," 1. 48). In stanza five the omniscient speaker parenthetically explains the interior experience and comments on it: Avis knows simultaneously love, fear, grief and pain—all without uttered response (cf. "The Magic House," 1. 52). The speaker's comments give the superficial human reaction to such experience: "Wan to look upon" (1.30), "Cowering stone" (1. 32), and with greater irony, "the dower of life,—" (1. 33). In this way in this poem, in place of a response from Avis similar to that given by the soul in "The Magic House" (11. 46-48), the reader is informed of the speaker's repugnance

toward the ultimate demands made on the finite by the infinite. Yet, as the same speaker realizes, the experience is a calling of her name, a deep invitation to all she is, softly harmonious (11. 36-39). Avis is enraptured, totally (1. 42).

In these ways the onset of the experience is conveyed. It expands, as is shown in what she hears. The identification of these sounds with transcendent reality is made in the metaphor of the repeatedly calling thrush, calling dreamily, that is, stirring consciousness:

> Like the mavis bird
> Calling, calling pensively
> From the eerie grove.
> (11. 47-49)

The repeated calling has three accents: (1) of parental love (11. 43-44), (2) of sexual love (11. 45-46), (3) finally, of infinite omnipresence (11. 50-56). In this discrimination of kinds of hearing we have, brief though it be, a most comprehensive record of human experience of transcendent reality. This is because all aspects—the thrilling expansiveness of "The Height of Land," the ardour of "The Water Lily," the eerie and unsettling quality of the poems under consideration in this article are all included—as levels of the majestic, powerfully moving experience of the eighth stanza. Here, too, we have the unity so notable in poems like "The Water Lily" and "Powassan's Drum," the underlying dynamic unity of all creation confirmed in these seven lines which recapitulate the sound of power and glory of the first stanza, shifting slightly, perhaps, in "rounded swell" (1. 53) to include the image of a great wave of the sea. Appropriately, too, in view of Scott's style, infinity is contained, emphatically so, in "closure" (1. 51), the paradox of the basic tension in his work appearing in new form in this particular experience:

> Then she heard within the vast
> Closure of the spell,
> Rolled and moulded into one
> Rounded swell,
> All the sounds that ever were
> Uttered underneath the sun,
> Heard in heaven or hell.
> (11. 50-56)

Such containment of infinity in terms of all sound possible, all sound "Uttered" (1. 55), is strongly suggestive of the incarnation of divinity

in the Word, as Jesus is called in the prologue to St. John's Gosepl (Jn 1:1, 14).

Section three of the poem (11. 57-91) views Avis exteriorly. From that perspective the nature of her experience is communicated first of all through the double functioning of the serpent as both a mythic and a phallic symbol. On the one hand is an effective rejection of the selfish pride of life seductively offered and accepted in the first home, Eden:

> In the arras moved the wind,
> And the window cloth
> Rippled like a serpent barred,
> Grey with wrath;
> (11. 57-60)

On the other hand, in close juxtaposition, is a contrasting affirmation of a consummated love conveyed with the symbols of fire and gold, both common referents to transcendence in Scott's poetry:

> In the brazier gold
> The wan ghost of a rose charred
> Fluttered like a moth.
> (11. 61-63)

Then, in a continuation of the dream and sleep symbolism which stress the unconscious aspect of the experience, in language reminiscent of Sonnet III of "Twelfth Anniversary" (*CA*), we see Avis recreated and replenished in her passive stillness. In the next stanza the internal mystical harmony is echoed by the piping of the birds chanting their dawn song as new levels of life emerge. Light—

> Silver with the light that flows
> In the interval.
> (11. 76-77)

—is half-light, in the water image of gray "whistling rain" (1. 75) reminiscent of the light "(Sleeping silver tender)" of "Mid-August" (1. 45), in the use of the word "interval" connected with "The Magic House" where "Time shall turn Eternity." (1. 50). In this third section, then, the external aspect of the experience complements the internal description (11. 15-56). The several stages indicated in this paragraph represent ever deepening metaphors, all external to Avis, corresponding to the internal aural images we have noted in the second section. Also as in section two the images of section three climax in a vision of unity, especially effective in the linguistic identity effected in "linnet leaves,"

where bird and tree, both common symbols in Scott for the actively developing soul, are made one, where the fusion of wind, water, trees is rendered so that the lines breathe the magic or miracle of the experience:

> Pallid poplars cast a shade,
> Twinkling gray and dun,
> Where the wind and water wove
> Into one
> All the linnet leaves,
> Greening from the mere and grove
> In the undern sun.
> (11. 78-84)

When considered along with the symbolic overtones of wind, water, mere, grove, and the mysterious quality in meaning and sound of the coinage "undern" (1. 84)—the emphatic lack of colour in "Pallid" (1. 78), "gray" (1. 79), and "dun" (1. 79) is amply given new orientation by the active quality of the present participle "greening" (1. 83), especially in conjunction with the star association in "twinkling" (1. 79). Lack of colour on the sensory level is, then, compensated by vital experience and promise of yet greater knowledge. The stanza thus presents a symbolic description which associates the environment surrounding Avis with her experience; her apprehension of dynamic unity is presented as being both shared by and reflected in surrounding nature. This being so, the contrasting stanzas which end the poem are especially significant in clarifying the meaning Scott attaches to death.

"Avis" differs from "The Magic House" in more explicitly noting the passage of time after the onset of the experience. Morning dawns (1. 73), night falls (1. 85), while Avis "neither moved nor heard" (1. 92). Symbolically this can refer to the dawn of a new phase of life experienced along with the night spoken of in "The Magic House" (1. 41), the night of the senses. The coexistence of night and dusk in both "The Magic House" and "Avis" supports this meaning:

> But about the middle night,
> When the dusk is loathed most,
> ("The Magic House," 11. 41-42)

> Night fell with the ferny dusk,
> ("Avis," 1. 85)

If, indeed, night is to be read in such a spiritual sense (the experience of transcendent reality present to consciousness when there is no sen-

sory evidence to support it), and the reflection of the experience in surrounding nature is accepted, then the impact of

> But she neither moved nor heard,
> (1. 92)

confirms total dedication of Avis, the rightness and joy of which spiritual bond is interpreted by another element of nature:

> Up, with lilt and clarid turns
> Throbbing through,
> Rose the robin's song,
> Heart of home and love that burns
> Beating in the dew.
> (11. 87-91)

Just as there is indication of the passing of suffering in "The Magic House" (1. 51), so there is possibility of such passage in "Avis." Night gives way to morning in nature. However, there is no indication of such passage in "Avis." Rather, there is emphasis on death, finality, at least superficially. I suggest that in view of the signs of new life indicated in the listening in section two, especially in 11. 50-56, of the dynamic vitality of the corresponding 11. 78-84 of section three, especially as conveyed in "greening" (1. 83), and finally, of the exuberant life, central, fundamental home life of love in section four—that in view of this pattern of bourgeoning new life, death refers to a fixed and final break from all that opposes complete union with transcendent reality as expressed in nature, creating a new life in new "dells" (1. 98), even in this life. In its minimum meaning such a break implies a firm choice or commitment to live by nature's law.

The title "Avis" is significant. The name associates itself with "the mavis bird," the thrush, which calls pensively, as does the poem. It is interesting that Scott used "lonelily" [sic] instead of "pensively" in the 1898 version—which very much accords with what has been said in this analysis.

But there are reverberations from the French in the title—indirect links with *vis-à-vis*, with *voir* and *vivre*, as much as with the noun *avis*. These indistinct connections seem to have a bearing on the action of the poem and the meaning of death. It is from experiencing the reality of transcendence, seeing dimly face to face, so to speak, that decision is arrived at, choice is made. In terms of the poem, the choice is for life (*à vie*), even if it involves death to undue sensory satisfaction, to whatever is disorderly in life.

The superficial atmosphere of "Avis" recurs in Scott's work, so much so that a general impression of darkness, of mystery, and undoubtedly, of vagueness, seems to attach itself to all his work. But there is in addition in the majority of these poems, to a greater or lesser degree, a sense of dankness, of mustiness, which perhaps issues from fear in the direct evocation of human sensibility confronting a radical choice for life beyond the senses, an evocation which involves the risk of and/or need for painful ordering of sensory life. Such choices do repel humanity, do occasion fears that they are far-fetched, unreal, too much, fanciful, weird. The mood of many poems, those mentioned in this article, and others, including "The November Pansy," and "The Violet Pressed in a Copy of Shakespeare," contain this repulsion; but the tone is definite, deliberate, as noted in "The Magic House" and "Avis." In other words, although there is much natural ambivalence in the mood of such poems, there is none in the final tone.

A later poem expresses the deep ambivalence present in these mysterious and unsettling works but seems also in relation to the early "By the Willow Spring" to register some detachment acquired through maturity. In "The Nightwatchman" (*GC*) we have the following sentiments of an older speaker remembering his fears as a child:

> My fears were draped around the lean pale head
> That peered amongst the flowers, and my dread
> Of darkness and of every frightening thing
> Was focused on the solemn mourning-ring.
> (11. 47-50)

Mister Alfred Mee is presented right from the first of the poem as "a man of mystery" (1. 2), "strange" (1. 3), "far beyond my range" (1. 4):

> A shadow—he was always clad in gray—
> His face and hands were pallid like dry clay,
> Hair shaggy, dark and sleepless-looking eyes
> That blinked at light; then the enormous size
> Of the long hand that bore the curious thing
> Of heavy gold surrounding a black stone
> That made a blot upon the skin and bone
> Of his long finger.
> (11. 9-17)

So much of the vocabulary is common to the poems proper to this article. Indeed, one receives the impression that the mystery of unseen reality "charmed and held" Scott as curiously as did the ring the little

boy. And, again, the centre of fascination, the ring, is significant in both its shape and its description as "heavy gold surrounding a black stone" (l. 15), and "blot" (l. 16). The hint of a closed circle of morbid fear experienced by the boy grows more definite as the poem progresses. In the second section of the poem is the description of the moulding-shop, unlike the magic house in being dusty and grimy, but related to it in the moulding aspect, the darkness, silence, and fearsomeness:

> . . . but the moulding-shop by far
> Was weirdest; no clanging noises there to jar
> But only space, and gloom in the raftered roof,
> Grey light through grimy panes almost sun-proof,
> With flags of cobwebs hanging in many a shred,
> Laden with dust, and all the shadowy shed
> Filled with the smell of the charred moulding-earth
> On a cool air;
> (ll. 35-42)

Like the black stone, the shop gives the impression of a grave, but it is in this space that Alfred Mee finally does die. We have on one hand the symbol of death, on the other, that of the life situation which calls for deliberate change and adaptation. The poem shows that the boy's fear extends to this life. In projecting the older man's attitude against the boy's fear, the poem registers a change or growth that is authentic yet far from complete. Obviously such change incurs real difficulty for human nature.

Earlier in the poem we see that the deliberate inhalation of the acrid atmosphere, the confronting of death during life is part of Alfred Mee's philosophy:

> And plants of pungent leaf, and one of those
> Weird Mister Mee would crush beneath my nose
> And say, "Now sniff this hard and you will be
> Someday a tall and strong OLD MAN like me".
> (ll. 60-63)

". . . a tall and strong old man like me." Mr. Mee was sure of himself—the fears and apprehension are self-admitted shades of the viewpoint of the speaker, as we have already seen (ll. 47-50). Mistress Mee, practical, cheery, logical, understands both the small boy's fear and the importance of Mister Mee's remark, as is shown by the double meaning of her rejoinder:

"For
sure
O Mister Mee, you are a perfect cure:"
(11. 64-65)

The text of the poem supports the serious tenor of these words in the use of a colon—the succeeding lines go on to show the nightwatchman choosing flowers from his garden to send ("Dreamily," 1. 71) to the little boy's mother. The boy senses the deeper situation, the reality of a life beyond the senses, fearful only partly because he does not understand. The man does not deny the fear in himself, but he shows growth because, in the last lines of the poem, he finally in hope places together the flowers which by the metaphor "garden gem" (1. 51) become symbolic of the affirmation of nature's law (the heliotrope) and of the struggle to live by that law (the plant OLD MAN):

When I approach the headstone I should hope
To know it by the scent of heliotrope,
And rooted firm within their tiny span,
To find the pungent herb that's called OLD MAN.
(11. 145-48)

The heliotrope and OLD MAN are together representative of the saving attitudes of Mister and Mistress Mee.

Let us look at the subject of the boy's deep-set repugnance more closely. He says of Mister Mee:

But to my timid heart the day was rife
With shadows from his other hidden life,
And as he floated about and came and went,
Flower-scent was mingled with the acrid scent
Of the burnt soil; and close, a paler man
Clad in blue overalls, bearing a can
Of secret food, near him there seemed to lurk;
(Thus had I seen him slouching to his work).
(11. 73-80)

The terms are positive, even if seen in fear—the flower-scent is no illusion, emphasized as the word is by the sudden rhyme with "went" (1. 75) and by immediate juxtaposition and repetition in "acrid scent" (1. 76). The man works (1. 78), eats (1. 79), is present in normal social settings (1. 75). He is gently at home with the young visitors, chuckles at the boy's recitations, is concerned about their mother, close to his wife, happy with his job, interested in gardening—he lives, in other words, a normal life conformable to the situation he is in. The fears of

the speaker make the great difference between the extremely positive portrayal of the wife and the dread-filled portrait of the husband. This seems especially true in the absence of any sign of fear in the other child or children (11. 8, 93, 104, 112).

Not that the individual lives of the Mees are conspicuously similar: she is active in daylight, when he sleeps; "he slept throughout the day and worked at night;" (1. 5). In Mister and Mistress Mee we have symbolized the complementary visible and invisible lives of each human being; and, on another level, the practical life dominated by reason and the spiritual life moulded through felt perception of and adherence to nature's law—all aspects comprising the "me," the self. It is notable in this connection that the wife lives in close agreement with her husband, even while remaining quite free in her own domain. Theirs is a well ordered and integrated life. In "The Nightwatchman," then, the fears of the speaker, heightened by the concreteness of everything connected with Mistress Mee, project in another way the pain that attends the acceptance of the inner life by reason of the necessary attendant letting go of sensory satisfaction. The pain is the growth of faith. Thus these fears described through the boy's emotional portrait of Mister Mee are a dramatization of the interior pressure experienced by the soul in "The Magic House." The older man, the speaker of the poem, comes to understand his fear through his childhood recollection; he seems finally to accept the greater importance of the inner life as is shown by the tone and manner in which he describes the death of each Mee:

> For gentle, buxom Mistress Mee is gone
> All her treasures to the four winds strown;
> And Mister Mee they found one morning dead
> Clutching his lantern in the moulding-shed.
> (11. 118-21)

A few lines later, in the request for prayer by the writer of the epitaph (11. 138-40) and in the speaker's deliberate questioning of his identity (11. 141-42), the essential unity of all mankind is brought out. The human fear and the reality of the struggle of life are thus universalized while they are affirmed.

The picture of Mister Mee in death, "clutching" the lantern even though "resigned and full of hope" (1. 129), bears strong resemblance to the father of "A Mystery Play" clutching his shovel. There is a desperation attached by the poet to faith in that poem, too, even though the song of the angels and the symbolic description of dawn that closes

the play affirm realization of the characters' faith and hope. We see again the depth of ambivalence of mood noted before, together with a tone which opts clearly for pursuit of nature's law. The frustration of the uncertainty is literally admitted in "Ode" for the Keats Centenary" where the speaker says the Muse bids her favoured poets to

> feed on hope,
> A plant of bitter growth,
> Deep-rooted in the past;
> Truth, 'tis a doubtful art
> To make Hope sweeten
> Time as it flows;
> For no man knows
> Until the very last,
> Whether it be a sovereign herb that he has eaten,
> Or his own heart.
>
> (11. 6-14)

The struggle against the fear, the uncertainty, against the sense of weirdness (the very struggle of effort so emphasized by Scott in, for example, "Labour and the Angel," "Lines Written in Memory of Edmund Morris," "The Eagle Speaks"), is the struggle in hope of the speaker of "The Nightwatchman." The evident difficulty of resolution of the fear is seen in the lack of strong affirmation of Mee's life at the end of the poem. Instead of such acknowledgement we have a presentation of fact, an anonymous epitaph that is unconvincing in its depiction of heaven (though quite easily integrated into the life of Mee himself), a plea for prayer, and an ambiguous resolution to "someday" (1. 143) seek out the graves of his old friends. Trouble is still there, but the speaker has recognized it, admitted it, and has in spite of it placed symbolic elements together rightly to express the Mee's life, which he hopes to imitate.

We have been talking much about fear, suggesting that it is bound up in the ambivalence that colours to a greater or lesser extent the mood of the poems we have been discussing in this article. We have been this ambivalence manifested in the haunted quality of these poems, where the grey of half-light darkens for the soul to the blackness of night, suggesting a deepening of human difficulty. We have seen, too, how such a situation amounts to a kind of death. However, we must remember that the more positive poems, notably the important and central recreation of awareness of transcendent visitation in "The Height of Land," show Scott's deep appreciation of the fundamental order of the universe. Of particular note is his use of cold, and of words like

"pure" and "virgin"[8] to convey, it would seem, the rightness, and hence the necessity, of living as fully as possible according to this order as it is perceived to exist, not as selfishness would have it.

The deep-seated tension so obvious in all Scott's work seems to have its roots in this very idealistic perception. His clarity of insight and strength of conviction regarding fundamental order, his belief in a loving transcendent reality that is at the heart of this order, that is at the heart of man, seems to have generated in Scott a probing search for what this might mean in practical living. Experience evidently showed that living according to this order is not at all to bask in continuous light and love. We have seen something of his darker understanding of transcendent visitation in "The Magic House" and "Avis." We have suggested the possible impact of fear in the later poem "The Nightwatchman." Let us now look at an early work which takes a situation like that projected in "Avis" and logically and objectively traces it through to at least one conclusion.

"By the Willow Spring," the final poem of the first collection, *The Magic House and Other Poems*, might well mark an emotional nadir consequent on an intellectual extension of truth perceived as it was by "Avis." A pattern of life similar to the one projected in that poem might have been apprehended as a necessary personal response to transcendent visitation, a pattern which in time adjusts to a more flexible outlook in "The Nightwatchman." Such a vision might well be disturbing in its implications for change, in its potential for absorbing all of life to the extent that from an ordinary, natural point of view it is not living at all. The tone of the narrator in the final four lines of the poem suggests something of the repressed and deep ambivalence he experiences in the face of a situation ideally right yet repelling in its total bypassing of human interaction:

> Let us be gone; this is no place for tears,
> Let us go slowly with the guardian years;
> Let us be brave, the day is almost done,
> Another setting of the pleasant sun.
> (11. 196-99)

The outstanding structural features of "By the Willow Spring" are: (1) a third person observer point of view which, by recounting inner spiritual development almost entirely in terms of exterior details, produces a negative effect; (2) an introduction and conclusion which stress

[8]Kelly, op cit., pp. ??

the integaration of nature with the life of the young girl, giving a strong positive accent to her life; (3) a concentration of diction that is primarily alienating because of its melancholy and repelling joylessness.

A mere listing of the external signs of the stages of progress in the young girl's spiritual life discloses a framework that is inhibiting to a reader. After a bizarre sounding childhood (which could have been presented in terms of wonder) she is in time "led" (1. 70) to the pool:

> And looked upon the water's crystal face;
> She saw—what kind of beauty or of awe
> I know not, no one knoweth what she saw.
> (11. 70-73)

It is "a magic pool" (1. 82), and the life she lives is that of "The Magic House" turned inside out. The world is her house; she lives publicly in "the magic space" ("The Fragment of a Letter," 1. 56) as if no other human beings were around her. Time passes in distinct stages: (1) The first phase is that of "gazing" (1. 80); of growing "subtle rule" (1. 89). (2) The second phase is that of giving gifts—all she valued (11. 110-11), all that she could bring that was beautiful: flowers and the fruits in season. These undoubtedly have symbolic values of blossoming and fruiting virtues. (3) After the gift of her deepest self (the clear golden apple) she strives to be ever present to her "shadow-god" (1. 133). (4) She prays in a language foreign to her family's speech, musical in the way of spring itself (11. 138-43). (5) Her gradual transfiguration to the likeness of transcendence becomes visible (11. 144-47). (6) She, "like to death" (1. 150), is removed from her love and worships from afar. (7) She shuts out the visible world completely (11. 164-65), "wintering" this way until spring. (8) On one spring day, when the sun "changed the wildwood with his alchemy" (1. 171), she dies.

So we see that the skeleton of the story is humanly unattractive; an unsurprising effect in view of the speaker's complete omission of direct reaction by the young girl herself, to say nothing of his failure to recreate the drawing power of transcendence, even in some way similar to that achieved in "Avis." Such direct revelation of the girl's experience would necessarily be positive, given her unquestioned strong choice and the unprejudiced view of a loved and unspoiled child completely isolated from things which divert and please the senses. Thus, as we see in the next paragraph, a negative mood is enclosed in a firm affirmation of the experience and of its rightness. The speaker is ambivalent.

The positive element of the young firl's response to unseen reality is heightened in the outer frame in which the story is enclosed. Indeed, the introduction (11. 1-25) develops a sense of fragile beauty in its apostrophe to "Care" (11. 1-14), despite the lightly ominous ring to "oblivion" (1.9) and "wan" (1.12). It insists on the need for a complete lack of prejudice and for a gentle hearing (a significant explicit inclusion which further supports an impression of deep ambivalence in the speaker). Symbols associated with transcendent presence appear in both the introduction and conclusion:

> the last thing there
> Was a white butterfly upon the air,
> And even now a thrush was in the grass,
> To feel the sovereign water slowly pass.
>
> (11. 5-8)

> She cometh here sometimes on summer eves,
> Her quiet spirit lingers in the leaves,
> And while this spring flows on, and while the wands
> Sway in the moonlight, while in drifting bands,
> The thistledown blows gleaming in the air,
> And dappled thrushes haunt the precinct fair,
> She will return, she will return and lean
> Above the crystal in the covert green,
> And dream of beauty on the shadow flung
> Of irised distance when the world was young.
>
> (11. 186-95)

Even the inner story picks up the language associated in Scott with supernatural presence:

> She saw—what kind of beauty or of awe
> I know not, no one knoweth what she saw.
>
> (11. 70-73)

> Perhance she thought that, breaking through the spell,
> Her shadow-god, deep in the tranquil well,
> Had taken her last gift;—no man may know;
>
> (11. 132-34)

The similarity of wording of these lines to the following relates them in meaning:

> Though yet no man may tell
> The secret of that spell
> Golden and inappellable.
>
> ("The Height of Land," 11. 57-59)

> The scene that was veiled had a meaning,
> So deep that none might know;
> ("Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris,"
> 11. 190-91)

These symbolic and verbal features support the tacit premise that encounter with transcendent reality is of its nature desirable, making for happiness. Ironically, the only reference to such effect of the experience on the part of the young girl appears in a summary affirmation:

> Or her slight spirit bore too great a bliss;
> (1. 143)

A more convincing description of her final bliss only comes with the evocation of spring joy (11. 170-75; 177).

But these indications of joy are weak indeed amidst the weight of diction related to magic, charm, and enchantment. The effect is to produce an uncanny atmosphere even more pervasive and chilling than that in "Avis" as, for example, where the music metaphor, harmonious diction, and integrated impressions of joy and beauty offset the ghostly effect. A penetrating melancholy pervades this poem because of the emphasis created through the diction. In addition to the references noted above we have: "touched with faery from her fatal birth;" (1. 27), "Not clouded with her hovering destiny," (1. 29); "But shifted strangely on the whimsy air,/ Not quiet nor contented anywhere." (11. 34-35), "O love, that watched the weird and charméd child,/ Change from her airy fancies sweet and mild, . . . Like a blue brook that clear a meadow spring,/ . . . And gathers darkness in those deeps of hers," (11. 50-51; 52, 55), "But something wild in her new spirit lies," (1. 60), "And leaning gravely on her slanted arm," (1. 78), "She left it sadly . . ." (1. 128), "Something of her spirit's loneliness; . . ." (1. 39), ". . . her beauty grew more frail,/ More mute, more eerie, more ethereal;" (11. 145-46), "And like to death he found the charméd child;" (1. 150), "And sadly hearkened . . ." (1. 154).

In addition to the heavy atmosphere created by the foregoing descriptive details is the depressing effect of the lack of understanding of the apparently God-fearing, loving family:

> Her folk thought: She is very wild and odd,
> But she is good, we'll wait and trust in God.
> (11. 48-49)

According to the details selected by the speaker, the family members tried to understand the girl, but, being unsuccessful, they proceeded to

look after as one would care for a handicapped or mentally unbalanced person. The impression of singularity and human deficiency is increased by a later comment on family concern:

> They thought to win her from the liquid spell,
> And tried to tease the elfin maid to tell,
> What was the charm that led her to the spring;
> But all their words availed not anything.
> (11. 84-87)

Obviously the speaker is concerned with externals, and is impressed by the mysterious element of the experience which has such a claim on the girl. He gives no details to support her "bliss" (1.143). He talks about her devotion, appeals to love (1. 50). But what is communicated is the coldness of pure choice in the unswerving dedication his story affirms. The complete lack of joy in the speaker, the uncanny mood he creates with his appeal to magic, his evident distaste for what he protests is good—all these negative points tend to dominate the narrative. We again have, then, a manifestation of deep ambivalence. Considering the choice of such a narrator, one wonders what the impact of the judgment of other people had on Scott. Was it what others might think that moved him, or was it a profound discomfort with his own objective projection of total religious commitment? Or was it, finally, a fear of what a religious commitment might entail? An affirmative answer to any or to all these questions would provide, in proportion to the degree of negativity contained there, an opposing tension to the idealistic world view so apparent in his work. This basic tension seems to assume many forms; but it is conceivable that the roots lie in the opposition he experienced in his human nature to the deep attraction he felt toward his supernatural ground of being. "Amanda," another dark narrative included in the later poems of *The Circle of Affection*, seems to reveal a greater ease with personal frailty.

"Amanda" is concerned ultimately with an acceptance of man's wounded nature. I view the character Amanda as an allegorical figure, an embodiment of pure loving kindness as indicated by the gerundive of the Latin root: *amare*, to love; *amandus, amanda, amandum*, to be loved, must be or ought to be loved. Without being too definite (in his own way!), Scott seems to create in this narrative a sense of pure, unselfish love (that is, innocence) dying and dead within the race, within the individual (11. 1-5), its death mourned imperfectly because it is not accurately identified (11. 6-13) except by those whose inner life is attuned to transcendent reality (11. 14-19). They, having heard and

understood a call to the basic natural order, conformed their lives, wore "smouldering-colour garments" (1. 17), were "not of our country and our tongue" (1. 15). Within the individual this confusion translates into the varied, mixed feelings, insights, convictions which more or less imperfectly mourn man's pristine, ordered nature by their insistent stirrings in life. We have in "Amanda," then, an extroverted, dramitized version of the inner tensions and stirrings depicted in "The Half-Breed Girl." Something which the speaker of "Amanda" identifies but does not know so fully as he would wish stirs behind his life, "Shines like a fragile veil." ("The Half-Breed Girl," 1. 4). Evidently he had known in himself a loving kindness that has disappeared, just as the human race has attested in the arts. Within himself he had known a righteousness that does not seem operative in the life he describes in the first four verse paragraphs of the poem (11. 1-54). But both cases the attitudes of mankind as expressed in the arts and the sorrow experienced in his own life have finally seemed useless to him, unauthentic (11. 20-23). As a result, ten years of unproductive grieving have passed (11. 23-24), years, presumably, of near despair.

The fourth stanza of the poem (11. 25-54) gives an allegorical description of what a Christian might call original sin. The speaker protests his knowledge of this fundamental disorder (1. 25), its origin (1. 30), its general recognition by those who know reality (1. 34). Evil masks as good in the world (11. 32-33, 35-37), invidiously contaminating all living men. Like an ancient prophet, the speaker has warned those around him (and his own inert self) about the fatal effect of evil on love. Not being heard, he kept "safe in his head" (not safe in his heart) what he "heard" (11. 52-54) or experienced in his recognition of the demise of love.

Stanza five (11. 55-74) gives the ironic sequel to stanza four. Conviction of the evil in human nature had apparently never really been a personal experience for the speaker. Other persons and things were always at fault. But some time after sustaining an absence of love he met the evil in himself in the context of evil (11. 55-56). And this meeting was ordinary, friendly; that is, open, accepting. A supernatural intervention apparently occurred, because

> I was compelled to say
> Amanda, and I spoke the words she said.
> (11. 61-62)

The effect is dramatic. His disordered self reacts; it

> Broke into sudden ecstasies,
> Tears hard as pearls stood in his eyes;
> "Amanda Wonder-Love of all the World,—
> "The words she moaned,
> "Pity,—have pity,—Jesu save me, save."
> (11. 64-68)

The ecstasy of the transcendent experience initiated by the urge to speak Amanda's name and the words she said redeem once again, more effectively this time, because of his openness (11. 56-57).

The language of the poem doubles back on itself in yet a new way. The "I spoke" (1. 62) is evidently equivalent in meaning to "He spoke" (1. 69) while the destructive fire of "blistering tears" and "deep heart-agony" mentioned in stanza three (11. 21-22) is repeated in the anger of the "he" (11. 69-70), 76-77), the selfish burning being akin to the fire of "The Height of Land," section four (11. 93-119). For the speaker the primal disorder is effectively nullified in his awareness of evil in himself and acceptance of the saving power of Jesus (1. 48). Indeed, the orthographic change between "Amanda wonder-love of all the world" (1. 45) and "Amanda Wonder-Love of all the World,—" (1. 66) seems to relate the love mourned in Amanda to Jesus, where the primal love lost and mourned is operative in incarnated Love. Such a link between stanzas four and five suggests others. Possibly the disc bearing malignant charm (1. 35) "Nailed in the sapling tree' is also to be linked paradoxically to Jesus in a similar way. This can be so, for Jesus redeemed the sin of man's disordered choice on the cross, and in this poem's terms, the "wild wanderer from the haunted sea" can be said to have nailed him there. In such a reading the malignant charm, sin, is transformed in the corrosion (death) of the disc, dropping a distillation (in Christian terms, grace) which brings about a death similar to that we see in the speaker (11. 69-73). By his recognition of evil within himself and his prayer for forgiveness, the dramatic beginning of new life free of the blistering tears and deep heart agony he has been suffering takes place. Thus a whole double sequence, one based on the Old Adam-New Adam metaphor, is possible within the understanding of the poem. On the one hand, man can, like Adam, continue in a pattern of disordered choice, in which case Amanda would die with the inevitability of "Growing, growing, all the glory going" of part I of "Improvisation on an Old Song." The towering elm (1. 26) grown from the sapling tree (1. 29) would then endure. Or, man can, like Jesus,

through his grace, accept the death leading to new life, in which case Amanda dies so that new life is possible.

In such a reading, then "Amanda" differs from the other poems of this article. Ambivalence seems absent because of the forthright manner of the speaker; the darkness is unequivocally that associated with evil and with death in either its negative or positive sense, an unvarnished expression of relaity experienced. In belonging to the final group of published poems, "Amanda" thus seems both a resolution of the ambivalence noted previously, and a presentation in dominantly dark terms of the reality of the suffering inherent in life as a result of primal disordered choice.

If such connections are plausible, then the word "spell" (1. 25) can be said to have also its more positive and ordinary meaning as used in "The Height of Land." The speaker would have known intellectually of the experience of God enjoyed by mankind, from "the old wise women" (11. 11, 34), that is, from a known source of wisdom like the Bible. Without really understanding, he could watch the spell "Gather round her beauty," as another person watched and described a spell gathering around the face of Avis ("Avis," 11. 17-18). And certainly, in the death of the poisonous anger he had been harbouring, he could say "the spell has won" (1. 79).

Stanza six (11. 75-82) seems to corroborate such a reading, far-fetched as it may seem. The speaker repeats that his blistering tears (11. 21, 76) and heart-agony (11. 22, 77) have robbed him of ten years. That was the period of time between the death of Amanda, which induced the onset of his agony (11. 21-22), and death of the dominating control of his disordered self manifested in the disappearance of his anger. "Robbed" shows how negative this time has been, a time without love; "blistering" and "heart" (11. 22, 77) are allied to the poisonous action of the evil charm (1. 30), the "hid, festering malice at the core" (1. 47). His statement is simple:

> As you must see,—
> Those blistering tears,
> That deep heart-agony
> Have robbed me of ten years.
> (11. 75-78)

And just as simple is his declaration of a completely changed outlook. His warnings occasioned by the tree, an evil growth, have given way to peaceful knowledge that all is well, "clean" (1. 81). The "roots of

mist" (1. 80) or liklihood of error remain, evidently, but the fatal tree of the poem has vanished. Therefore the way is safe under the sweet sun of transcendent order.

Despite the positive direction of "Amanda" the poem, like "The Magic House," "Avis," and "The Nightwatchman," contains mystery. But the mystery seems deliberately created in the use of language and in the suggestive double functioning of symbols. The short poem seems to contain a concentration of what a Christian would call "salvation" history; not only that, it applied "salvation" history to the individual. However, in seeing the links of this poem to those others mentioned in this article, including the melodramatic element common to both it and to "By the Willow Spring," we seem to be seeing a more peaceful resolution of the inner tension we have been noting. Scott's ambivalence seems connected with faith—the necessity of leaving the security of data presented by the senses if one is to choose firmly the unseen source of the supernatural experience. The absence of light is, then, on one level at least, the absence of scientific certainty. Uncertainty generates fear to a greater or lesser degree. When the uncertainty surrounds a choice in faith, the human fear is that much greater. The ambivalence we have noted might well be the expression of such fear. In this connection "Amanda" seems to register much spiritual growth.

"Amanda" presents an additional reminder of the darkness and repellent atmosphere of disordered living evoked in section four of "The Height of Land." Darkness in "Amanda" is a moral indicator, allied to interior disturbance consequent on separation from the natural order of the universe, thus generating feelings of separation from self, nature, and the human family. So ten years "died" in the narrator's life. This death is the complete absence of love. It is quite different from the other death, the death of the active control of disorder in his life (11. 69-70), the passion which caused the bitter tears and the heart agony—such death leads to the new life, the new outlook through love returned. Again, we have still another kind of death, that suggested in "The Magic House" and more dramatically pictured in "Avis." That was the painful or astounding change from a life dominated by sense experience (one staisfying in large measure to the corporeal self) to a life more and more ordered by faith in the unseen world of transcendent reality. Finally, there is the earthly or physical death, the time of arrival at the destination after the journey along life's raod, which is illustrated at the end of both "By the Willow Spring" and "The Nightwatchman."

So the mysterious aspect of transcendent reality does of its nature involve consideration of death. Moreover, in its meaning of progressive struggle to live by nature's law, that is, to grow by faith, it demands techniques of articulation like those we have noted in this article. In this connection the shifting degrees of the light-dark continuum and the degree and various uses of shadow as an image in itself are joined, as we have seen, to a great dependence on hearing as the prime bridge between the natural and supernatural worlds. To a limited extent this seems well in accord with St. Paul:

> So then faith cometh by hearing,
> and hearing by the word of God.
> Romans 10: 17

The vague spaces of Scott's poetry are undoubtedly a poetic equivalent for the power which initiates and engenders a spiritual growth, the phases of which require corresponding personal deaths. Presumably a true poet would have unique experiences of the varied interventions recreated in "The Height of Land," "The Water Lily," and the poems examined in this article. But to me Scott's vision extends beyond poetic creativity. His sustained tone of wonder; his consistent use of diction, allusion and symbol that have religious overtones; his highly crafted, probing discrimination and weighting of language toward uncovering the mysterious source of poetry; his pervasive attention to the need for right human response while being painfully aware of imperfection and dependence—all imply a transcendent absolute, one which could well be the God of Christians. In the words of "June Lyrics," the poetry urgently and restlessly affirms something more—more even than poetry—a most powerful something more that inspires and enables and produces not only poetry but the world and all it contains. However, regardless of the correct explication of ultimate source, one thing at least seems certain: the vagueness decried or variously excused by critics until fairly recently is neither a flaw nor a weakness nor a regrettable characteristic. Rather, in the poems examined here and in every work to at least some significant degree, vagueness is for Scott an intrinsically essential and sensitive instrument for articulating his experience of Life.

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