

THE HARTLEIAN MALE PROTAGONIST:

A SEARCH FOR SELF

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By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

September 1985

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (1985)
(Humanities)

McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The Hartleian Male Protagonist: A Search for Self

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SUPERVISOR: Dr. Michael Ross

NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 278

ABSTRACT

This study examines L.P. Hartley's male protagonists who provide the focus for his major fiction. The male characters' difficulties in understanding themselves, and the world which confronts them, are issues discussed by the few serious critics of Hartley's work. The book-length criticism, however, has tended to rely heavily upon figures like Freud and Jung, and upon Romantic and Judaeo-Christian thinking and symbolism, in order to establish its views. My study constitutes an attempt to avoid the overt application of "schools" to Hartley's work, although like Hartley himself I cannot claim to have been completely untainted, for example, by our Freudian climate. Specifically, I am interested in demonstrating the complex processes by which Hartley's sensitive male protagonists near self-understanding, and how Hartley uses detailed, even intricate, symbolism to express those developments.

Using the Eustace and Hilda trilogy, I thoroughly examine Eustace Cherrington's growth toward self-understanding in order to demonstrate the special problems confronted by a typical Hartleian male. Leo Colston, in The Go-Between, and Stephen Leadbitter, in The Hireling, are then included in the discussion, and the three males' associations with fantasy worlds, and with manipulative women, are seen to contribute to

the difficulties faced by these protagonists. In a final chapter, by examining the earlier fiction in the light of some of Hartley's less symbolic later novels, in particular The Harness Room, I indicate how Hartley's symbolism has been used, in the past, to conceal his interest in male homosexual relationships.

Hartley, in addressing the issue of self-knowledge in his fiction, also makes a statement concerning the difficulty faced by the individual who, after the Second World War, was especially confronted with the task of securing an identity for himself in an increasingly egalitarian, fast-paced "modern" world. Hartley's canon is a metaphoric expression of how what Hartley terms the "Great Man" of Victorian fiction becomes the weak, victimised, but in many ways "greater" twentieth century man; for all his insecurity and failure, the Hartleian male of the 1970's is one who has painfully explored both himself and his environment in an attempt to survive, and to establish for himself, however temporarily, a "unique personality" appropriate to his time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to warmly thank Dr. Michael Ross for his patient and thorough readings of the thesis, and, of late, for his advice regarding future research. Professor Alwyn Berland, and Dr. Alan Bishop, have also made many suggestions for the improvement of the work, for which I extend my gratitude. I am further indebted to Dr. Bishop for the inquiries he has made about L.P. Hartley, on my behalf.

Thanks are also due to Professor Peter Bien, Dr. Edward Jones, Dr. Anne Mulkeen, Lord David Cecil and Francis King, who have enthusiastically, and on several occasions, answered my too many questions. Glenise Matheson, of John Rylands University Library, Manchester, has also generously offered information about Hartley's personal correspondence.

Dr. Bernard Trossman, Margaret Lister, Pauline Heron, Katherine O'Connor, Fiona Wilkie, Angela Collingwood and John Porter have also, in their own unique and sensitive ways, made immeasurable contributions to my intellectual and emotional development during this period of research. I thank them especially. Miss Debbie Mooney has typed many drafts of the thesis, and has variously contributed to its completion. I greatly appreciate her hard work.

Finally, I dedicate this study to William Thompson, who has so often furnished me with the most favourable conditions for thought and contemplation, and, of course, to my parents, Mark and Marjorie Tester, who have quietly and steadily supported my academic ventures.

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INTRODUCTION

L.P. Hartley (1895-1972) is the author of eight volumes of short stories, eighteen novels, and one collection of essays and lectures. Between 1923 and 1947, he regularly reviewed books for seven London publications.¹ His literary work was acclaimed by critics, and in 1948 he was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Eustace and Hilda, which was considered to be the outstanding book published in 1947. In 1953, the year of its publication, The Go-Between was awarded the W.H. Heinemann Foundation Prize.

In 1956, Hartley was created a Companion of the British Empire, and in 1972 he was named Companion of Literature by the Royal Society of Literature. For a number of years, he was a member of the administration of the Society of Authors, and he was also President of the English section of P.E.N., the International Association of Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists and Novelists. The Go-Between and The Hireling (1957) were both made into films, by Joseph Losey and Alan Bridges, respectively, and won Grand Prizes at Cannes (1971 and 1973).²

Trying to assess the popularity of Hartley's works is not an easy task. Writing in 1955, for example, Giorgio Melchiori informs us that "One of the most popular English novelists since the last war is undoubtedly L.P. Hartley. Perhaps too popular

for the taste of many critics, who grant him only the single merit of being in the novel tradition".³ Yet in 1970, Harvey Curtis Webster accounts for what he considers to have been a general neglect of Hartley's works, by pointing to the fact that between Simonetta Perkins (1925) and The Shrimp and the Anemone (1944), Hartley did not write a novel--"From what I have seen and heard it appears that there is only desultory knowledge of his work even among such informed contributors as those of The London Magazine":

Although he is esteemed in England and, to a lesser degree, in America, there is no mention of even his name in seven books having sections on contemporary British fiction that have appeared within the last ten years. In five other recent books and pamphlets of about the same time, he is dismissed with a flattering paragraph or page.⁴

Whatever the difficulty of determining the extent of Hartley's popularity, scholarly response to his earlier work has generally been favourable. In 1958, David Cecil spoke of the Eustace and Hilda trilogy as "in any age and by any standard ...a masterpiece",⁵ and in 1974, Walter Allen considered Hartley as "very much at the centre of the English tradition of the novel".⁶ Hartley will always suffer, however, from the uneven quality of his canon--Anne Mulkeen, for example, sees fit to describe the later works, after Poor Clare (1968), as "on the whole less seriously intended and executed" and thereby tending "to cast false light upon what has gone before".⁷

Webster reinforces such a view by explaining that "it would be easy to underestimate Hartley if one happened to pick up the wrong novel, or even the wrong two or three novels".⁸

Serious, book-length critical study of Hartley is mostly American, with four doctoral theses devoted exclusively to his writings, two of which became published books: Peter Bien's L.P. Hartley (1963) and Anne Mulkeen's Wild Thyme, Winter Lightning: The Symbolic Novels of L.P. Hartley (1974). E.T. Jones's L.P. Hartley (1978) joins their company, and is also an American study. Most of Hartley's books are now out of print, and what Robert Petersen says of America is probably true of other countries: "it is often economically more feasible to publish critical studies of a writer than to keep his books in print".⁹

The Critics

The major critical treatment of the canon is Bien's investigation of Hartley's thought and art in most of his writings up to 1963, the year in which Bien's full-length critique was published. Bien adapts his critical approach to each novel: with The Boat, he establishes a "reading", and includes biographical and critical materials in his analysis; with The Go-Between, he is a "new critic", and stays close to the text "in order to show the relationship of part to part". In addition, he stresses the importance of symbolic motifs in this novel. In his Freudian examination of the Eustace and Hilda

trilogy, he goes "to an extreme in...psychological treatment",¹⁰ so as to uncover important elements that, he believes, Hartley does not make explicit.

Mulkeen believes that Bien fails to acknowledge the many levels of interest in Hartley's works--"and Hartley at his best is concerned with far more than individual neuroses".¹¹ She leans heavily upon critics who have stressed Hartley's use of symbolism: David Cecil's introduction to the 1958 edition of the Eustace and Hilda trilogy, J.P. Vernier's "La Trilogie Romanesque" in Etudes Anglaises (1960), and Melchiori's "Tradizione Americana e Romanzo Inglese" in Studi Americani (reprinted as "The English Novelist and the American Tradition" in Sewanee Review (1955)).

Mulkeen does not discuss what she terms the Freudian suggestions in Hartley's symbols, nor does she interpret the symbols in "individual psychological and moral terms".¹² She stresses mythical and mythological elements in Hartley's writing, and demonstrates how "characters and objects and events are seen as at once themselves--particulars, individuals--and as suggestions of, embodiments of universals, essences, archetypes".¹³

Both critics have been commended for their ingenuity, but have also been criticised--Bien, for example, for being "foot-loose in his methods",¹⁴ and Mulkeen for playing "an intellectual game".¹⁵ Gavin Ewart notes Mulkeen's use of

C.G. Jung and Northrop Frye in tracing Hartley's attempts at writing in the romance and anti-romance traditions. He describes Mulkeen's book as reading "like a thesis for a doctorate", which was how the work began, and dismisses it for its exclusiveness: "How much good such books do, except to the doctors themselves and other doctors after them, is very debatable".¹⁶

Mulkeen, however, does help "correct the Freudian over-emphasis"¹⁷ in Bien, and both critics have clearly established the critical context, particularly by identifying Hartley's use of symbolism, for examining his fiction. Nevertheless, what Robert Taubman has said of Bien also applies to much of Mulkeen's criticism: "Mr. Bien digs out so much from all the novels that of course he goes on to theorise, and then to find more than Mr. Hartley provides".¹⁸

The first examination of the entire Hartley canon is by E.T. Jones, and is considered to be a "workmanlike study".¹⁹ It avoids overstatement, and stresses Hartley's interests in tradition, Christianity, and sensuality. Jones has considered the ideas of Bien and Mulkeen, and is interested in the work of Erik Erikson, but he avoids the excesses of critical interpretation demonstrated by his predecessors. The same may be said of Donald Reynolds' views.²⁰ Writing in 1967, when Hartley had published eleven novels, Reynolds discusses Hartley's child and adult heroes by examining thematic patterns and narrative techniques. Robert Petersen, also in an unpublished dissertation,

analyses Hartley's integration of realism with what he terms the "Judeo-Christian symbolism" in his work, in order to demonstrate the development of Hartley's moral vision.

Petersen and Reynolds are both critical of the scholarly reception of Hartley's writing. Petersen, for example, attributes Hartley's "relatively modest critical reputation" to "limitations inherent in the methodologies thus far brought to bear upon his fiction";²¹ he cites Freudian analyses, generic treatments, and thematic and historical discussion of the novels as examples of previous critical approaches to Hartley. Reynolds, however, makes a more telling comment on the sort of criticism that exists on Hartley's work:

Many of the questions that have been raised concerning Hartley's fiction have had the effect of deflecting attention away from the novels and towards analogues and sources.²²

The remarks of Petersen and Reynolds recall Hartley's warning to reviewers about using "ideas that may be irrelevant to literature".²³ While the critical thinking of Bien and Mulkeen, for example, is not irrelevant, in their approaches and in those of their successors, there is a reluctance to heed Hartley's injunction that art "be studied, not dictated to".²⁴

The social and cultural context of Hartley's major fiction

In 1934, J.B. Priestley's English Journey reported on the vast inequalities between rich and poor in post-World War One

England, yet, as John Atkins notes, Priestley also identified, with some exaggeration, a "new post-war England":

It was already an England of arterial and by-pass roads, filling stations and factories like exhibition halls, giant cinemas and dance halls with cafés, bungalows with tiny garages, cocktail bars, Woolworths, motor-coaches, wireless, hiking, factory girls looking like actresses, greyhound racing and dirt tracks, swimming pools and cigarette coupons. The tone was set by large-scale, mass production and cut prices. Woolworths was the symbol: nothing more than sixpence. In this sector of England there was almost equality of opportunity, because at that time there were many who did not want to enter it; those who did, did so on agreed terms. "It is an England, at last, without privilege", wrote Priestley, and added, "Modern England is rapidly Blackpooling itself."²⁵

By the close of the Second World War, England had seen more changes that would further alter the country's way of life. A commentator on the period 1945-1958 talks of the first thirteen years of the "Atomic Age", that bring with them endless tests of nuclear weapons, talks on disarmament, forays into outer space.²⁶ Krishan Kumar's remarks, also dealing with post-war England, but differing slightly from Priestley's pre-war views, focus attention upon the altered social structure, and the transformation of cultural and political life:

Before the Second World War, the British class system seemed more than ever firmly set in its grim contours of privilege and privation, upper-class glitter and working-class endurance, "them" and "us". The line was sharply drawn between the culture of

the masses, based largely on the dance hall and the cinema, and that of the elite, rooted in the traditional "high culture" of painting, music, drama and literature. After the war, it seemed for a while at least as if egalitarian philosophies might effect fundamental changes in the structure of society; while the organization of the arts, and the arrival of the classless medium of television, seemed to hold out some promise for the radical dream of a "common culture".²⁷

Commentators like Richard Hoggart in The Uses of Literacy (1957) and Michael Young in The Rise of the Meritocracy (1955), confirm the view that England was becoming culturally classless, a situation much accelerated by television, which Atkins refers to as "a socially mobile medium. The rest of society tends to lag behind".²⁸ Even wages and salaries were narrowing the gap between rich and poor: G.D.H. Cole in The Post-War Condition of Britain (1956) mentions that earned incomes rose after the war, which created a problem: "as people earn more they get the idea that they are rising up the class scale...".²⁹

What has been adjudged Hartley's best fiction was published between 1944 (The Shrimp and the Anemone) and 1957 (The Hireling), years of rapid change in an oppressive, "modern" world which Hartley disliked--"The distaste is increasingly implicit in his work, and when things become unbearable there is the occasional explicit statement".³⁰ Harrow and Oxford-educated, Hartley had always lived at a privileged level of society and, as his articles in Time and Tide (1946-1954) and Sketch (1929-1947) in particular attest, he objected to society's

move towards a "common culture". He also abhorred the "modern" interest in standardization, and the role played by huge impersonal administrations in everyday life. As Atkins points out, "Long before [Hartley] bewailed modern manners he celebrated the fancies of the rich. One could have forecast his post-war reactions".³¹

Even though he wrote a science fiction novel, Facial Justice (1960), depicting a Uniform State in which the character Jael rebels by demanding the right not to be equal, Hartley has not been seen as a social historian of his increasingly egalitarian time. Critics usually compare him, justifiably in many respects, with Ivy Compton-Burnett, whose novels also tend to "look back" to an earlier period in English history when society, at least on the surface, seemed to be more secure and settled; a period when the country-house still managed to exist, though with some exceptions, as a symbol of stability. G.S. Fraser, in a discussion of the novel of the 1950's, has suggested, further, that few writers had their fingers on the pulse of the fast-changing post-war period because "for most novelists this new society had not yet taken any imaginative configuration".³² Typically, therefore, critics have concentrated on Hartley's fiction as "a continuation of the late-Victorian novel",³³ or as expressive of his stature as a "marooned Edwardian".³⁴

Hartley's practice of "looking back" is not confined

to his use of setting, and his need to depict experiences born of a traditional upper-class milieu. He also belongs to a breed of "scholarly novelists" described by Walter Allen:

They approach the writing of fiction with a full knowledge of what has been done in the art before. They are conscious of the great exemplars. They are not the less original for this, but it means that generally they know precisely what it is they are doing, and what they are doing may well be ambitious indeed.³⁵

The influences of Emily Brontë, Henry James and Nathaniel Hawthorne are especially evident in Hartley's work, but his interest in them, and in a more solid, older world, is also indicative of a general change in literary taste which occurred after World War Two. As Rubin Rabinovitz has noted:

The English had begun, it seemed to be more and more vehement in rejecting the experimental novelists of the 1910-1940 era, particularly James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. At the same time there was, after the war, a revival of enthusiasm for the Victorian novelists which was apparently shared by the novelists of the postwar period.³⁶

Even though the 1950's saw the emergence of the nouveau roman in France, according to Rabinovitz "most English novelists had returned to the traditional forms".³⁷ C.P. Snow, Angus Wilson and Kingsley Amis advocated such a return, and consciously opposed the experimentalists. Evelyn Waugh, Anthony Powell, and Graham Greene more or less ignored the experimentalists, while Lawrence Durrell, William Golding and Iris Murdoch were exceptions; they consciously experimented.

Hartley is not easily placed within these categories, but neither are these above-mentioned novelists, when we consider Malcolm Bradbury's views. He reminds us how important it now seems to "stress that many of the best English writers of the 1950's were not intrinsically anti-experimental; more often they were simply defined as such by the critics who read them".³⁸ In 1977, discussing the "somewhat unreliable orthodoxy" that has grown up around the nature of the post-war novel, Bradbury states:

Most of the books about post-war English fiction are by American critics, a sad reflection on our own refusal to attend critically to our most interesting writers; nearly all of these--Frederick R. Karl's A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel (1950: rev. 1963), James Gordin's Postwar British Fiction: New Accents and Attitudes (1962), and Rubin Rabinovitz's significantly titled The Reaction Against Experiment in the English Novel: 1950-1960 (1967)--have, through their choice of authors, and the realistic emphasis of their criticism, defined a version of current English fiction which ignores a considerable part of its development....³⁹

The tenor of Bradbury's remarks echoes the sentiments of Jack Sullivan in his discussion of the critical treatment given to Hartley's ghost and horror stories:

...critics often feel a righteous obligation to concoct hierarchical distinctions between complementary impulses. The next step is to declare themselves uninterested in material that they have assigned to an inferior category.⁴⁰

While being cautious in our reading of criticism of the post-war period, therefore, we might recall Bien's seemingly accurate comment that Hartley is "neither an experimental novelist nor a fully traditional one".⁴¹ There may be traces of experiment in the "underlined"⁴² symbolism of the major fiction, in the double-narrative viewpoint of The Go-Between, for example, but certainly nothing of the order of Virginia Woolf's or James Joyce's experimentation. The traditional Jamesian influences in Simonetta Perkins, for example, are confined to Hartley's early period, and after the 1950's Hartley crafted his fiction into a less subtle, less restrained form. Just as Bradbury encourages us to reconsider views such as Rabinovitz's that novelistic experimentation was of little interest to the post-war writers, so should we reconsider notions like those of Fraser, which suggest that post-war novelists had not yet sufficiently digested the implications of their day to be able to express them in literature. As C.P. Snow suggests in his 1958 article "Challenge to the Intellect", "novel-writing of the 1950s may seem in a generation more charged with various kinds of interest than it does to us".⁴³ L.P. Hartley, in fact, was far more affected by the developments of his day than critics usually allow.

Post-war society and the Hartleian male protagonist

In "The Novelist and his Material", Hartley identifies some of the features of the period which he finds objectionable:

...ours is a collectivist age, in which the changes and developments that have most affected the lives of human beings have been brought about by mass movements, linked arms, an almost glacier-like progress in which each particle moves forward impacted with the rest. The symbol of our civilization today is the queue, a formation designed to keep people literally and figuratively in their places. It utterly forbids the quality of aspiration--which could only take the form of jumping the queue--and takes away every kind of moral responsibility except one: to accept your position and stay there.⁴⁴

In what Angela Thirkell refers to as "'the Brave and Revolting New World'" that came to fruition after the Labour victory of 1945,⁴⁵ Hartley saw "chaos in moral standards...brought about, to some extent, by the prevailing humanism of our age";⁴⁶ he satirised "the workings (if that be the word) of bureaucracy";⁴⁷ he railed against "the continuing increase in delinquency" in a society where crimes of violence are "regarded with admiration".⁴⁸ In "The Technique of the Novel", he laments the fact that the individual no longer counts for much--he has "to subordinate himself to the mass".⁴⁹ Admirably, therefore, Hartley, in "The Novelist and his Material", looks to the Golden Age of the Nineteenth century, and to the outstanding individual, the "Great Man", who was not so subjected to these collectivist influences:

The characters in Victorian novels were not only free to be themselves, in the cant phrase, they were encouraged to be, both by the writer and the public; they were appreciated, one might almost say, in proportion as they achieved a unique

personality. Besides this, they strove, they aspired for something beyond themselves, for happiness and goodness, it might be, or for money and position, by which they could raise themselves to a higher power. Even when, as in Hardy's works, they are the playthings of Destiny, unable to influence their fate, they are still figures of dignity and grandeur, over life-size, distinguishable from their fellows by their misfortunes and their capacity for suffering. Man was the measure of the universe in the Victorian Age, which was hierarchical, almost consciously ranking one man above another, and according awe and reverence to whoever, in whatever sphere of life, reached the top.⁵⁰

In "The Novelist's Responsibility", Hartley indicates how he was affected, in his presentation of character, by the post-war attitude that did not view the individual in the same, Victorian, way:

After the war, the devaluation of the individual in fiction, as in life, went still further, and his stature shrunk. Various factors contributed to this. One was the sufferings and inconveniences that most people, even those who had not been in the services, went through in the war years. The standard of suffering went up, or down, as you like to look at it, for everybody in every country. People ceased to expect a happy, easy, or even a physically safe life: and this had, perforce, an effect on the novelist's outlook. With stories of the atom bomb and the concentration camp, and the appalling sufferings they involved, fresh in people's minds, how could the novelist claim sympathy for the character who had, say, lost his money or his job or his wife, or even his life? What was one broken heart when so many millions of hearts had been broken? I remember telling a woman novelist, a friend of mine, about a story I

was writing, and I said, perhaps with too much awe in my voice, 'Hilda is going to be seduced', and I inferred that this would be a tragedy. I shall never forget how my friend laughed. She laughed and laughed and could not stop: and I decided that my heroine must be not only seduced, but paralysed into the bargain, if she was to expect any sympathy from the public.⁵¹

Through his fiction, Hartley attempts to re-assert the primacy of the individual who endeavours to find a "unique personality" under conditions of extreme difficulty. The often intense suffering of his male protagonists, as they near self-understanding, is also a metaphor for the condition of the individual in post-Second World War England who was faced with the stultifying features of the age. In spite of his frequent resorting to turn-of-the-century, or pre-war settings, and his studied emphasis on the male protagonist in a domestic milieu, with women, and with other men, Hartley provides us with a sense of the individual's lost bearings. This individual in the post-war period especially, increasingly becomes a victim of large, impersonal societal forces. Hartley's male protagonists, however, do at least have a marginal freedom to overcome the conditions that have compromised their personalities. Such freedom, Hartley believes, is important to a character in a novel:

To be interesting the characters in a novel must have a certain freedom of action and self-expression. Even if the author's theme is frustration (it is a very common one and no wonder) and he means to thwart his character at every turn he should, I think, suggest (a) that

they want to be free; (b) that there exists a freedom that they might attain to. But if no such freedom exists, the desire for it gradually atrophies: in self-defence we adapt ourselves to circumstances, we are content to lie down⁵² under such Juggernauts as pass over us.

The typical Hartleian male protagonist rarely possesses more than the freedom to defy the Juggernaut that urgently threatens to withhold from him a sense of identity. By "sense of identity" I mean the protagonist's capacity to understand his innermost needs and desires in order to be able to form a "unique personality". Once he has gained this self-knowledge, the character is able to enjoy a fulfilling relationship with another person, and thus establish "direction" in his life. I will also refer to "sense of identity" as "self-understanding", "self-knowledge", and "sense of self". Attempting to gain a sense of identity will also be referred to as attempting to "grow up". The typical Hartleian male protagonist is unable to understand either himself, or the world to which he is exposed. Pathetic individuals, like Timothy Casson in The Boat, Leo Colston in The Go-Between, Eustace Cherrington in the Eustace and Hilda trilogy, Leadbitter in The Hireling, Basil Hancock in My Sisters' Keeper, and Fergus Macready in The Harness Room, for example, they, Prufrock-like, attempt to understand and to assert themselves under increasingly alien circumstances:

Over-sensitive, over-intellectual, they suffer for imagined sins; deprived of religion, of the active life, yet hounded by leftover morality, they destroy themselves

from within. Their emotional starvation, their inability to love, to act, to assert their manliness--in short, their shrinking from life--is a personal problem paralleled by a public problem.⁵³

These protagonists experience loneliness, isolation, and find themselves drawn to an external reality about which they do not have sound knowledge. Having been content with their own vision of the world, the males are confronted by events which that vision does not easily, if at all, penetrate.⁵⁴ The consequences of their emergence into the world are sometimes fatal because they lack the flexibility to learn--"When reality comes breaking in", Reynolds tells us, "it kills, literally in Eustace's [Leadbitter's and Fergus's] case, figuratively in Leo and Richard's",⁵⁵ even though Richard, in The Brickfield, does manage to become a novelist after his childhood experiences.

The male protagonists in Hartley's world are often artist-figures, who are usually involved in writing novels or articles--Alec Goodrich in A Perfect Woman, and Timothy Casson, are struggling novelists, Leo turns, later in life, from writer to (non-artistic) bibliographer, Eustace reluctantly becomes a novelist, and Leadbitter creates a fictional "series" for Lady Franklin. When Hartley's males are not artists, like Basil Hancock and Fergus Macready, they betray a sensitivity that is traditionally associated with the "hero-as-artist" in fiction. When Hartley portrays these characters, he does so in the belief that an artist "must be an individual in the

fullest sense of that term, and in modern society this means he must be a nonconformist--even a misfit".⁵⁶ To enhance the sense of apartness identified with his male protagonists, Hartley also develops his typical hero from the region of "the tentative adolescent and the unsure adult"; Hartley has a "special sensitivity" for these stages of being.⁵⁷

Of the major critics, it is Mulkeen who prefers to discuss Eustace and Leo, for example, as "post-Victorian youths struggling for self-discovery", and who terms Hartley's world "a gallery of quests for selfhood".⁵⁸ Petersen also describes the trilogy as dramatising "the quest of a personality in search of meaning".⁵⁹ If the male protagonists do attain self-understanding, they do so less through questing, than through experiences related to passivity. In this respect, they represent the increasing tendency in the fiction of the inter- and post-war years "for the hero in novels to be a person to whom things happen, rather than someone who to any extent imposes his will on life--Eustace rather than Hilda--a whimper replaces a bang".⁶⁰

Focus of the thesis

The thesis concerns itself with the development of the Hartleian male protagonists who dominate the major fiction: Eustace Cherrington, Leo Colston, and Stephen Leadbitter. In three chapters, I will demonstrate, in detail, the complex processes by which these characters come to understand both themselves, and the world which confronts them. I have chosen

to investigate this theme in the Eustace and Hilda trilogy and The Go-Between because these are the works upon which rests Hartley's reputation as a novelist. Bien, for example, deems them Hartley's "best books".⁶¹ These are four substantial novels that best illustrate the difficulty faced by the typical Hartleian protagonist as he attempts to gain a sense of identity; the sensitive male "hero" in these novels, and his ordeal in growing up, is a theme that reverberates throughout Hartley's fiction, though it is depicted elsewhere in the canon with varying success.

In addition, I have selected The Hireling, rather than, for example, The Boat, as the fifth major Hartleian novel to be examined. The choice warrants some explanation, particularly because Bien refers to The Boat as Hartley's "'textbook novel'", in which "we can see most easily the working out of [Hartley's] basic attitudes to life and art". Nevertheless, Bien assures us that the same processes are presented "directly, too, in the Eustace trilogy".⁶² My reason for studying Leadbitter in this investigation of the Hartleian male is that, as E.T. Jones remarks, the chauffeur is Hartley's "most fully realized male character outside his own class".⁶³ If I am to achieve some balance in my examination of Hartley's treatment of his male protagonists, it seems reasonable to study Leadbitter rather than Timothy Casson who, anyway, is little more than an older Eustace or Leo. Although, like Timothy, Leadbitter enjoys an

extensive imaginative life, and is subjected to manipulation by women, he is also interesting for what he exposes of Hartley's "slightly pathetic desire to make himself more familiar with working class conditions and attitudes":

In the post-war work [references to the working-class] become more frequent, parallelling the greater confidence of the working-class which appears to affect Hartley in two ways: he recognises it and he hates it.⁶⁴

Hartley's difficulty with a character like Leadbitter, who is associated with proletarian life, will also be particularly useful to my discussion of male/male relationships in Chapter Three, where we will see that men of Leadbitter's kind are attractive to Hartley's other sensitive male protagonists. Study of The Hireling will also qualify what might be the general critical tendency to view Hartley as an exclusively symbolist novelist, and will, instead, point to the traditionalist element that also exists in Hartley's work;⁶⁵ by examining The Hireling, "'both'" Hartleys,⁶⁶ as Reynolds terms it, are represented in the material which provides a focus for the thesis.

Chapter One focuses attention upon Eustace, the typical Hartleian hero, whose life is a process of nearing self-understanding. As he confides to Victor Trumpington, he is "Just a blind creature...moving about in a world not realised" (EHT, p. 414). By examining events in his life, I will demonstrate how the usually passive Eustace makes three important efforts to assert himself, how each attempt involves,

directly or indirectly, his relationship with Hilda, and how each incident expresses Eustace's desire to establish a relationship with the outside world.

Chapter Two examines the craving to please in Leo, Eustace and Leadbitter, which establishes their susceptibility to being acted upon. By exploring their fantasies and day-dreams, I will show how these characters become victims of the women whom they encounter. The chapter closes by showing how the women's designing ways influence the male protagonists.

Chapter Three discusses Hartley's interest in male homosexual relations as an alternative to the predatory heterosexual relationships that he elsewhere depicts in the fiction. By exploring, in depth, Leo's attraction to Ted, and the relationship between Fergus Macready and Fred Carrington, I will demonstrate how Hartley suggests symbolically in The Go-Between what he presents directly in The Harness Room. The discussion in this chapter will also include Hartley's other novels wherever they provide useful examples or comparisons.

By demonstrating the difficulty faced by the male protagonists in gaining a sense of identity, and also by examining some of the later fiction, I hope to show in detail how Hartley wrestles with the problem of self-understanding, and then confronts, in a direct manner, the homosexual issue that lies, variously, therein. I will also briefly comment on how in more openly expressing the homosexual concerns of

some of his male protagonists Hartley finds a means for himself, and for his characters, of accommodating, in a small but important way, the oppressive environment that, at the time of the Second World War, had seemed to stifle the individual.

For all its uniformity and impersonality, post-war society which Hartley so berated, became, by the 1960's, more tolerant of homosexual orientation, and allowed the freer expression, in relationships and in literature, of what had earlier been repressed or concealed in some way. If Hartley, by the end of his career, began more soundly to deflect the "Juggernauts" who threaten to crush his sensitive male protagonists, then he also lifted a veil from the ghost of Simonetta Perkins: underneath was Fergus Macready who had somehow lingered there, in his many disguises prior to the publication of The Harness Room, almost, but not completely, unannounced.

NOTES

- ¹ 1923-1924--The Spectator
1925-1930--Saturday Review (London)
1929-1947--Sketch
1930-1934--Week-End Review
1935-1942--Observer
1943-1946--Life and Letters (To-Day)
1946-1954--Time and Tide

² The screenplays were written by Harold Pinter ("The Go-Between") and Wolf Mankowitz ("The Hireling").

³ Giorgio Melchiori, "The English Novelist and the American Tradition," Sewanee Review LXVIII (Summer 1960): 502.

⁴ Harvey Curtis Webster, After the Trauma: Representative British Novelists Since 1920 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1970) 152.

⁵ David Cecil, Introduction to Eustace and Hilda: A Trilogy (London: Faber and Faber, 1979) 7.

⁶ Walter Allen, Tradition and Dream: The English Novel From the 1920's to Our Time (London: Phoenix House, 1964) 256.

⁷ Anne Mulkeen, Wild Thyme, Winter Lightning: The Symbolic Novels of L.P. Hartley (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974) xiii.

⁸ Webster, Trauma, 153.

⁹ Robert Petersen, "The Common Sinner: Motif and Metaphor in the Fiction of L.P. Hartley," diss., Purdue U, 1980, 1.

¹⁰ Peter Bien, preface to L.P. Hartley (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963).

¹¹ Mulkeen, Wild, xii.

¹² Ibid., xii.

¹³ Ibid., xiii.

¹⁴Robert Taubman, "The Well-Brought-Up," New Statesman 65 (June 21, 1963): 936.

¹⁵Gavin Ewart, "Two of a Kind," London Magazine 14.1 (April/May 1974): 134.

¹⁶
Ibid., 134.

¹⁷"Mulkeen, Anne," Choice 11 (October 1974): 1138.

¹⁸Taubman, Statesman, 936.

¹⁹"Jones, Edward Trostle," Choice 15 (February 1979): 1664.

²⁰Donald Reynolds, "The Novels of L.P. Hartley," diss., U of Washington, 1967.

²¹Petersen, "Common Sinner," iv.

²²Reynolds, "Novels," 183.

²³L.P. Hartley, "Notes on the Way: When Critics Disagree," Time and Tide (January 10, 1959): 35. (First given as a lecture to the P.E.N. Club, by L.P. Hartley, on October 15, 1958).

²⁴Ibid., 35.

²⁵John Atkins, Six Novelists Look at Society (London: John Calder, 1977) 29.

²⁶Anthony Quinton, "The New Novelists: An Inquiry," London Magazine 5.11 (November 1958): 17.

²⁷Krishan Kumar, "The Social and Cultural Setting," The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: Volume 8: The Present, ed. Boris Ford (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 15.

²⁸Atkins, Six Novelists, 26.

²⁹Ibid., 20.

³⁰Ibid., 77.

³¹Ibid., 88.

³²G.S. Fraser, The Modern Novelist and his World (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1964) 160.

³³Frederick R. Karl, The Contemporary English Novel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961) 277.

³⁴Kenneth Allsop, The Angry Decade: A Survey of the 1950's (London: Peter Owen, 1964) 34.

³⁵Allen, Tradition, 257.

³⁶Rubin Rabinovitz, The Reaction Against Experiment in the English Novel: 1950-1960 (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1967) vii.

³⁷Ibid., 2.

³⁸Malcolm Bradbury, The Novel Today (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977) 17.

³⁹Ibid., 17-18.

⁴⁰Jack Sullivan, Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story from Le Fanu to Blackwood (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1978) 100.

⁴¹Bien, Hartley, 9.

⁴²C.P. Snow, "Challenge to the Intellect," Times Literary Supplement (August 15, 1958): iii.

⁴³Ibid., iii.

⁴⁴L.P. Hartley, "The Novelist and his Material," The Novelist's Responsibility (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1967) 186.

⁴⁵Kumar, "Social and Cultural," Pelican Guide, 16.

⁴⁶L.P. Hartley, "A Paradise for Novelists?," Time and Tide (December 7, 1957): 1528.

⁴⁷L.P. Hartley, "The Sleeping Sewer," Time and Tide (December 3, 1955): 1574.

⁴⁸L.P. Hartley, "Sin and Swans," Time and Tide (December 6, 1958): 1450.

⁴⁹L.P. Hartley, "The Technique of the Novel," The Author and the Public, ed. C.V. Wedgwood (London: Hutchinson, 1957) 165.

⁵⁰Hartley, "Material," Novelist's, 185-186.

⁵¹L.P. Hartley, "The Novelist's Responsibility," The Novelist's Responsibility, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1967) 11.

⁵²Ibid., 12.

⁵³Bien, Hartley, 26-27.

⁵⁴Reynolds, "Novels," 8-9.

⁵⁵Ibid., 4.

⁵⁶Bien, Hartley, 23.

⁵⁷Jones, Hartley, 203.

⁵⁸Mulkeen, Wild, x.

⁵⁹Petersen, "Common Sinner," 25.

⁶⁰G.H. Bantock, "The Social and Intellectual Background," The Pelican Guide to English Literature: Volume 7: From James to Eliot, ed. Boris Ford (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) 23.

⁶¹Bien, Hartley, 25.

⁶²Ibid., 23.

⁶³Jones, Hartley, 153.

⁶⁴Atkins, Six Novelists, 104.

⁶⁵Reynolds points to the similarity between Hartley, Hawthorne and James in their concern with "moral problems" (p. 4). Walter Allen has also discussed Hartley as someone who is "concerned with the behaviour of men and women in society, with the making of choices" (Tradition and Dream, 256).

⁶⁶Reynolds, "Novels," 3.

CHAPTER I

TO BE "ETERNALLY, ENTIRELY FREE":

EUSTACE'S DIFFICULTY IN BECOMING A MAN

Hartley's trilogy, "the tragedy of Eustace",¹ appeared between 1944 and 1947. It consists of The Shrimp and the Anemone (1944),² Hilda's Letter, which is an additional linking short story, The Sixth Heaven (1946), and Eustace and Hilda (1947).³ The work has been called Hartley's masterpiece,⁴ and not only by his friend David Cecil, who decided, hyperbolically, that sections of the trilogy are "the most beautiful in all modern English literature".⁵ E.T. Jones makes reference to the sustained, high reputation of the trilogy,⁶ and Walter Allen considers it "the peak of Hartley's achievement".⁷

The focus of the trilogy is the passive Eustace's growth from childhood into manhood;⁸ the process has been variously treated by critics. Bien believes that the work is "over and above its sociological and moral aspects...a study of neurosis",⁹ and he examines Eustace as someone who, like Leo Colston in The Go-Between, destroys himself from within.¹⁰ A part of Mulkeen's approach concerns itself with Eustace, "who dies because he and Hilda can no longer exist in the same world, because one can only live at the expense of the other".¹¹ E.T. Jones follows Bien's lead and studies

Eustace as "the prototype of the well-meaning but neurotic protagonists who inhabit Hartley's fiction".¹² And Robert Petersen, looking at the trilogy in terms of the Christian theme in Hartley's novels, states that the major triumph of the work is "its analysis of the regeneration of [Eustace's] soul".¹³

Bien's Freudian psychology, Mulkeen's mythical and metaphysical interests, Jones's partly Eriksonian attitude and Petersen's Judaeo-Christian concerns all make valuable contributions to the discussion of Eustace's attempts to grow up; Eustace's development clearly involves psychological, metaphysical and spiritual issues. I have chosen an approach which, though cognisant of these critics' views, attempts to make little or no use of analogues and sources; my concern is to keep close to the text in order to identify what Hartley has shown of Eustace's development into manhood. In the present chapter I will demonstrate how, in spite of his failure to assert himself, and to live successfully, Eustace finally achieves a measure of self-understanding.

Although Walter Allen has not written at length about the Eustace and Hilda trilogy, he usefully describes Eustace's development in terms of his "awakening mind". Allen suggests that "throughout the three books [Eustace's] mind is continually unfolding".¹⁴ The statement is a simple one, but it illustrates how we might examine Eustace's progress in life

as the gradual exposure of a sensitive mind to the world. By the time we read of Eustace's premature death, we recognise that much of his experience has merely acquainted him with the possibility of gaining a sense of identity; ironically, just before he dies, Eustace is able to envisage his life as separate from Hilda's. Finally he has begun to know who he is, and what his needs are, instead of waiting for Hilda to influence him. While Eustace does not overtly quest for this sense of himself as an individual with a personality of his own, he gains at least a glimpse of his fuller self when, on three occasions, he asserts himself. Once as a child and twice as an adult, Eustace creates an incident that reveals his desire to escape Hilda or to destroy her. All three incidents illustrate Eustace's need to reach out to a world beyond that in which he lives, consciously and subconsciously, with Hilda.

In this chapter, I propose examining, in Part I, how Eustace experiences childhood as a process of repression, and of rebellion as an imaginary destroyer against such control. I shall then discuss Eustace's two acts of self-assertiveness, at the paper-chase and at the Redentore, by comparing them, and by identifying features of Eustace's involvement in the events that are expressive of his growth towards a better understanding of his repressed personality.

In the first section of Part II, I will demonstrate the self-deceiving nature of Eustace's attempt to sever links with the world, after the Redentore; and I will go on to examine the illusory nature of Eustace's expiation for allegedly causing Hilda's paralysis. In a second section, I will study Eustace's difficulty in choosing between Hilda and a life involving other people. I will focus attention upon the way in which Eustace's imaginative life again encourages him to be the destroyer of Hilda, as it had done in his childhood. Finally, I will show how Eustace's bicycle ride up Frontisham Hill, and the cliff-top experiment, are Eustace's final acts of self-assertiveness and are therefore expressive of his need to define himself as someone who both loves and hates his sister, and yet who has access to a world beyond such an intense relationship.

PART ONE

TOWARDS THE REDENTORE:

EUSTACE'S EXPOSURE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF GROWTH

I. Repression and Rebellion

Young Richard Mardick in The Brickfield could well be speaking of Eustace when he describes his problem as being that "I lived so much in other people's conceptions of me, that my own personality, if I had one, was hidden from me" (BFD, p. 184). Similarly, Basil Hancock, in My Sisters' Keeper, confesses a difficulty often shared with other Hartleian male protagonists:

He didn't realize that he was living
in other people's opinion of him; basking
in the sunshine of their approval, or
shivering in the chill of their disapproval.
(MSK, p. 49)

Eustace's life, too, is lived in subjection to others' impressions, demands and needs. Like Basil Hancock, who suffers from "'sisteritis'" (MSK, p. 211), Eustace is excessively committed to his elder sister, Hilda. She, anyway, has appointed herself his mother-surrogate, and exercises great control over him. As Peter Bien has stated:

Before knowing what Eustace must
proceed towards if he is to mature into
a fully developed human being, we should
know what he must escape. Most simply,
this is his sister Hilda.¹⁵

Her effect upon Eustace is clearly demonstrated when Hilda informs Miss Fothergill that, as the boy's sister, she has taught him "'not to be independent'" (EHT, p. 67). So dominating is she, that Hilda commands Eustace to love her (EHT, p. 29), compels him to toboggan with her, which makes him ill (EHT, p. 56), directs him to speak to Miss Fothergill, whom he dislikes (EHT, p. 63), and smothers him to the point where he cannot experience life in her absence. On the occasion of their having a smarting hot-water mustard bath, for example, Eustace cries "'Isn't it wonderful?...I could never have felt it without you!'" (EHT, p. 236). In childhood, Eustace is even "lulled and invigorated by her anger" (EHT, p. 73), when Hilda rebukes him for being frightened when he imagines that Miss Fothergill is a ghost.

In spite of Eustace's joyful acknowledgement of his dependence upon Hilda, he does not fully understand her interest in leading a life of so little pleasure. When Eustace makes some suggestions about how they might spend Miss Fothergill's legacy, for example, Hilda is not stimulated by the prospect of inheriting a fortune:

...he had never learned to reckon with the austerity of her nature, its manifestations were a continual surprise to him. She seemed to do disagreeable jobs because she liked doing them, not because they were milestones on the steep but shining pathway of self-sacrifice. A future that would be dark for him might be bright for her.

(EHT, p. 188)

Eustace has noted idiosyncracies in Hilda, and, he confides to Nancy, during the tobogganing, that his sister "'doesn't like being touched. Isn't it funny? She doesn't mind so much if you hit her'" (EHT, p. 47). Hilda thrives upon life-denying, punishing experiences, and she instills a taste for masochism in Eustace through her attempts to determine his character and personality.

Hilda's effect upon Eustace is symbolically suggested, in their childhood, when they play on the sands at Anchorstone. Subjected, as ever, to his sister's wishes, Eustace goes about his task of controlling and manipulating the water that has been left by the receding tide:

It was an artificial pond--a lake almost--lying between rocks. The intervals between the rocks were dammed up with stout banks of sand. To fill the pond they had to use borrowed water, and for this purpose they dug channels to the natural pools left by the tide at the base of the sea-wall. A network of conduits criss-crossed over the beach, all bringing their quota to the pond which grew deeper and deeper and needed ceaselessly watching.

(EHT, pp. 29-30)

Hilda is the great harnesser of water, and it was she "who kept the spirit of pond-making alive" (EHT, p. 30); she supervises the building of walled pools that keep the sea at bay. In the same way as she inflicts repressions upon Eustace in all areas of his life, Hilda likes to ensure that the "retaining wall" of a pond does not give way "in one place or other" (EHT, p. 30). In The Brickfield, Richard

Mardick himself uses water imagery to illustrate his childhood confinements:

At home in Fosdyke even at the age of five, I was aware of things I must and must not do. My life was confined by prohibitions and inhibitions like the water in a Fen drain; and if I flowed faster than it did, it wasn't so much with my own momentum, my nature finding its own level, as with the stimulus which...my father and my mother gave me. They were such strong characters and so full of aspirations for me, that from an early age I was much more aware of what they wanted than of what I wanted.

(BFD, pp. 23-24)

Like Richard then, Eustace is contained by his elders and the situation is symbolically expressed by the controlling of water. Characteristically, Hilda teaches Eustace that if a wall does give way it is "the signal for an outburst of frenzied activity". The anxious behaviour of the Cherrington siblings, however, is in marked contrast to the actions of the other Anchorstone children, who "would wantonly break down their own wall for the pleasure of watching the water go cascading out". Those other boys and girls would witness "their work go to ruin without a sigh" (EHT, p. 30).

Just as Hilda's pools must not leak, so must Eustace not get his feet wet--wetting them would be naughtiness of some considerable degree. Both objectives are usually achieved, but Eustace remembers one occasion when calamity had struck:

...Hilda had waded knee-deep in the water and ordered Eustace to follow. To him this voluntary immersion seemed cataclysmic,

the reversal of a lifetime's effort to keep dry. They were both punished for it when they got home.

(EHT, p. 30)

To get wet is to take a risk and is therefore a punishable offence, even if Hilda is in control. The event, however, anticipates Eustace's more total immersion in the sea in Venice, where he discovers that his sister's influence upon him has continued unabated.

The symbolic importance of the ponds in representing Eustace's condition is emphasised when, on the beach, Eustace deserts Hilda for Nancy after the siblings' quarrel. Eustace's "Indomitable" hat is left lying in a pool, creating the illusion that he has drowned. The suggestion that by remaining under Hilda's influence the boy may lose his life is prophetic of Eustace's destiny.

Hilda's control over Eustace continues to the period when he attends St. Joseph's College, in Oxford. Eustace, however, acknowledges a debt to his sister when he reminisces to Stephen Hilliard about his childhood:

"...we've always been very fond of each other in a kind of way," said Eustace.
 "She was ambitious for me--she still is. I doubt if I should have got my scholarship or anything but for her prodding me on."

"...I owe Hilda a great deal."

(EHT, p. 244)

In her manipulation of Eustace, however, Hilda has nurtured in him a characteristic that he confesses to Stephen--"I'm

like a top that always needs whipping; I'm inert, I don't go by myself'" (EHT, p. 248). Eustace recognises that Hilda plays a role in his life even at those times when she is not physically present:

...Hilda was always putting her oar in, constituting herself the voice of conscience; she was a task-mistress, leading the chorus, undefined, unrecognised, but clearly felt, of those who thought he ought to try more, to do more, be more, than he had it in him to try, or do, or be.

(EHT, p. 256)

If Eustace must escape Hilda in order to become a fully developed human being, then he must also learn to moderate his highly sensitive imagination. In his childhood particularly, such sensitivity interrupts his growth.

The prospect of growing up is something that Eustace faces with reluctance. The members of the Cherrington family, on the trip to the Downs for example, assure Eustace that being able to drive a carriage is a rite of passage to manhood that he must undergo. If he wants to "be a man", then he must assist Craddock by holding the horses' reins:

...the future was already dull and menacing with the ambitions other people entertained on his behalf. It seldom occurred to him to question their right to cherish these expectations....

In self-defence Eustace had formed the mental habit of postponing starting to make a man of himself to an unspecified date that never came nearer, remaining miraculously just far enough away not to arouse feelings of nervous dread, but not so far away as to give his conscience cause to reproach him with neglect of his duties.

(EHT, p. 43)

The future is particularly fraught with anxiety about where Eustace is to be educated. The thought of attending the Reverend A.J. Johnson's preparatory school, for instance, appalls Eustace, so "he devoted certain private prayers to the effect that he might never become any older than he was..." (EHT, p. 41).

Furthermore, when he learns from Craddock that he is to be "'going away'" (EHT, p. 158), Eustace prefers to tunnel into an obsession that he is to die, rather than endeavour to face the reality that he is to be sent away to school (EHT, pp. 161-162). While under this sort of spell, Eustace holds on to "a settled melancholy" which forms his protection from the Cherringtons, amongst whom he presently feels so vulnerable. From his secure retreat, Eustace observes his former self "going through the motions of daily living". His observation post is on "another plane of experience", so far removed from everyday life that he can believe that nothing matters (EHT, p. 161).

The outside world, however, soon comes buzzing at the window of Eustace's inward-looking mind. Eustace loses his grip on the inner world whose comfort he has sought during his retreat from external reality:

But, as ever, there was a part of him
which was in league with the enemy, a
traitor who wanted to open the gates.

Eustace awoke one morning to find
that the foe had forced an entrance, taken

possession, formulated its charge and, unusually practical, told him what he must do to placate it. Eustace did not put up a fight.

(EHT, p. 162)

Eustace is finally prepared to address the problem that has so affected him. The "foe" is that outer world that encroaches upon his faltering inner life. Eustace cannot for long protect himself from the intimidating external world that demands he face his responsibilities, and the truth.

Controlled and manipulated as Eustace is, he demonstrates, through his imagination, a desire to rebel. Eustace's uncharacteristically destructive behaviour is prophetic of a thread of ruthlessness that continues into his adult life.¹⁶ His boyhood play expresses the turbulent feelings that have been engendered in him by the repressions that he suffers.

As suggested earlier, the pools of water on Anchorstone beach symbolise Hilda's control of Eustace. It is therefore instructive to note the boy's reactions on an occasion when a pool bursts its banks,

...making a rent a yard wide and leaving a most imposing delta sketched with great ruinous curves in low relief upon the sand. The pond was empty and all the imprisoned water had made its way to the sea. Eustace secretly admired the out-rush of sand and was mentally transforming it into the Nile estuary at the moment when Hilda stuck her spade into it.

(EHT, pp. 30-31)

Eustace's imagination is as excited by such defiance of Hilda as by the watery landscape. The serpentine lines of water

symbolically represent an escape from his sister's retentive behaviour; applied to Eustace, the image signifies that if he is to develop into a man, with an identity independent of his sister, he too must contend with the retaining wall that Hilda has built around him. Richard Mardick, who suffers constraints similar to those inflicted upon Eustace, is also excited by the release of water:

'..[the sluice] was raised, letting the imprisoned water gush out into the drain-- a foaming waterfall perhaps two feet high. This rare spectacle always excited me.... I don't know why it stirred me so profoundly to look forward to, to feel, and to look back on; I suppose it was the proof that even in the Fens Nature could have its fling."

(BFD, p. 23)

Anchorstone beach offers Eustace other opportunities for developing his interest in the processes of destruction in Nature. While procrastinating about returning to Hilda, Eustace, in Nancy's company, builds in the sand what he imagines to be the cone of Cotopaxi. He acknowledges his romantic affection for "all volcanoes, earthquakes and violent manifestations of Nature", and proceeds to calculate the range of the lava flow, with the help of his spade (EHT, p. 28).

Later, in the bathtub at Cambo, Eustace satisfies his "lust for destruction" by imagining that the chips in the bath's enamel are cities "destined for inundation" (EHT, p. 133). As he submerges his body, the water level rises, and Eustace excitedly observes the washing-out of the

"conurbations" of livid blue in the whitish enamel.

During the experiences of Cotopaxi and the bathtub, Eustace is acutely aware of his own role in the destruction. He "conceived himself to be the Angel of Death, a delicious pretence, for it involved flying and the exercise of supernatural powers":

On he flew. Could Lisbon be destroyed a second time? It would be a pity to waste the energy of the eruption on what was already a ruin; but no doubt they had rebuilt it by now. Over it went and, in addition, an enormous tidal wave swept up the Tagus, ravaging the interior.

(EHT , p. 28)

In the tub it is "the spirit of the tidal wave" that "possessed him utterly" (EHT, p. 133). But Eustace rarely allows the bathwater to rise towards Rome, "his favourite victim", because not much more than an inch above it is the Death-Spot-- "If the water so much as licked the Death-Spot Eustace was doomed" (EHT, p. 133).

On the beach, however, it is not his own prospective death but that of Hilda which makes him sensitive to his destructive behaviour:

The inundation of Portugal stopped at Hilda's feet.

For some days afterwards Eustace was haunted at odd times by the thought that he had accidentally included Hilda in the area of doom....he hadn't meant to hurt her....

"It only just missed you," he remarked cryptically.

Silence.

"You only just escaped; it was a narrow shave," Eustace persisted, still hoping to interest his sister in her deliverance....

"It was an eruption," he explained, "and you were the city of Athens and you were going to be destroyed...."

(EHT, pp. 28-29)

Closely bound up with Eustace's tendency to engage in symbolic destructive acts is the possibility of his causing his own or Hilda's death. In this context, Reynolds has equated Eustace's behaviour with that of a god "who has the potential ability to sacrifice or destroy".¹⁷ When Eustace is untypically persuasive in asking Hilda to accept Dick's invitation to visit Anchorstone Hall, she equates Eustace's triumph over her with his temperament as a destroyer:

"You have made me happy," he said.
"I never felt so happy before."

"That's your destructiveness coming out," said Hilda. "You look forward to seeing me sacrificed on the social altar. When you were a little boy you used to play at being a tidal wave or an earthquake or the Angel of Death. You were always destroying things--in your imagination, of course."

(EHT, p. 337)

Hilda's prophecy is almost completely fulfilled when she finds herself jilted by Dick, whom, initially, she had reluctantly courted. In the wake of Hilda's paralysis, caused by her shock at learning that Dick is to marry someone else, Eustace begins to reconsider his own behaviour:

He remembered Dick's political ambitions, abandoned now; he remembered his life at home; he remembered his family's anxiety for him the night they all thought he had crashed; he remembered Monica Sheldon's dumb, swollen-eyed misery. The torturing uncertainty they went through then would now be a matter of months and years, not hours. I have done them all great harm, he thought, and he no longer felt vindictive against Dick.

(EHT, p. 640)

Eustace's judgment of himself precedes, but endorses, Sarah Cherrington's view that although he cannot be held entirely to blame, "'he is a good deal responsible'" (EHT, p. 646). The basis for Aunt Sarah's criticism is that no good ever comes of social-climbing. She berates Eustace for always having "'a hankering after rich people'" (EHT, p. 647). Sarah further suggests that Eustace will be harmed by trying to climb out of the class into which he was born, just as Hilda has been injured by Eustace's aspirations.

Hilda, not surprisingly, also criticises Eustace for having promoted her interests with Dick. Even after Eustace has cured Hilda of her paralysis, she reproaches him for his treatment of her:

"And you were cruel too, Eustace. You helped him."

Eustace's much-tried heart turned over. Was he to go through all this again--Sisyphus resuming his stone?

"Oh, Hilda," he began, "I--"

"Yes, you did, you put me into his clutches...."

(EHT, p. 721)

Eustace cannot defend himself against Hilda's insistence that he precipitated the encounter between her and Dick. In causing Dick and Hilda to meet, Eustace has indeed brought Hilda to a social altar where she is sacrificed; an event which fulfills her prophecy that Eustace's conduct has been prompted by motives of destruction. When Dr. Powell in My Sisters' Keeper tries to determine what it is that Basil seeks in his life, he reaches a conclusion that is also expressive of Hilda's view of Eustace's behaviour:

"...I want to be happy."

"You are wrong," said Dr. Powell, decisively. "You are wrong, my dear Basil. What you would say, if you spoke the truth is, 'I don't want to be happy, but I want other people to be happy, through me, at whatever cost to themselves.'" (MSK, pp. 230-231)

Basil, like Eustace, through his ostensibly good intentions ("the efforts he had made...on other people's behalf, especially on his sister's" (MSK, p. 231)) may have contributed to the destruction of others, rather than to their well-being. Dr. Powell's suggestion to Basil, however, ("'do what you don't want to do....Expose yourself naked on an ice-floe perhaps'" (MSK, p. 230)) that he succumb more to his inclinations, is advice from which Eustace, too, could benefit.

Eustace, in a reverie, retraces his career as a destroyer, as Basil does when with his doctor. Eustace imagines that Hilda is relating a conversation to him that has

occurred between her and the directors of the Highcross Hill
Clinic:

"We don't altogether blame you, though it's you who must take the blame. We blame your brother Eustace. He's a mild-mannered boy, with a soft face, and he smiles easily, and looks as if he wouldn't hurt a fly. But do you know he's really a destroyer--he was the volcano who overwhelmed the cities on the sands, he was the tidal wave who blotted them out in his bath. He may have spoken nicely to everyone, he may have kissed old ladies and inherited their money, he may have held doors open for the daughters of earls to pass through and picked up their handbags, he may have poured money into the clinic to enlarge it--but at heart he's a destroyer. Right inside him, under layer on layer of colourless fat, behind his goggling eyes and those antennae that sway so sensitively in the current--right in the seemingly transparent middle of him, there's a tiny grain of explosive, and it's gone off at last. The rumble, the roar, the explosion, the tearing sound, the cities piled in ruins, the dead scattered on the plain, that's what he really wants, and what he's always wanted. See, the towers are toppling. And it's you who will suffer, Miss Cherrington. You will not find it easy to get another post."

(EHT, pp. 628-629)

While much of the criticism that Eustace applies to himself in this reverie is founded upon his boyhood play activities, there is some truth to the imaginary appraisal given by the doctors. As a destroyer, Eustace reveals his desire to escape his sister and to face the future without her. If we examine in detail the self-assertive moments in Eustace's life, prior to his return to England from Venice, we can see how each of these events presents Eustace with the dilemma of

choosing between Hilda and the freedom to grow up independently. We will also see how Eustace's powers of destruction are ultimately inflicted upon himself.

PART TWO

ACTS OF WHOLE BEING:

EUSTACE'S EFFORTS TO ASSERT HIMSELF

When we first meet Nancy, she is Eustace's childhood friend playing on Anchorstone beach. After accusing Hilda of being the murderer of the shrimp and the anemone, Eustace deserts his sobbing sister, and goes to make sandcastles with Nancy. Eustace likes Nancy because "she never made a fuss" (EHT, p. 23)--a disposition that genuinely pleases him after all the "bossing" that he receives from Hilda (EHT, p. 93).

Nancy has seen Hilda pulling Eustace about, and has heard her making "no end of a din", and so she enquires about the incident. Eustace, after some delay, manages to explain that his sister was "'very much upset'":

Nancy nodded sagely, as though she understood what Eustace had left unexpressed and respected his reticence. Sunning himself in the warmth of her hardly won approval, and feeling he had done his best for Hilda, Eustace let his sister and her troubles slip out of his mind.

(EHT, p. 23)

Nancy, with her hedonistic streak, offers Eustace a sense of freedom as well as a refuge from his sister. Through her quietly receptive manner she allows Eustace to experience the sympathy and friendship that he sometimes misses in Hilda's behaviour.

At the tobogganing on the Downs, Nancy more clearly demonstrates a certain faith in Eustace--"'I feel quite safe'", she says, when Eustace is given the responsibility of riding with her (EHT, p. 52). Eustace is described as being in "seventh heaven" when he is given the opportunity to assert himself and to act independently of Hilda by taking Nancy on the toboggan (EHT, p. 52). Much later, in the third novel of the trilogy, while writing his final telegram to Lady Nelly, he again describes himself as being in "seventh heaven"; he also arranges to meet her at Whaplode (EHT, p. 725). It is significant that on both occasions Eustace is made happy by having gained some measure of independence from Hilda, and by having sought out another person.

Nancy asserts her sense of security when in Eustace's company by asking that he sit at the front of their sleigh, thus convincing Eustace that he is a competent driver. As we noted earlier, to be able to drive is a skill that the Cherringtons equate with the approach of manhood. Nancy, with her life-affirming spirit, gives Eustace the opportunity to develop a skill--as a result, the life-denying Hilda and Aunt Sarah frown upon his elation. The Cherringtons, with their tendency to single out the boy's weaknesses and failurés ("Oh dear! Here was the voice of criticism again..." (EHT, p. 40)), and to expect too much of him (EHT, p. 43), scare Eustace away from the challenges in life that he faces, with some verve, when in Nancy's company.

Nancy repeatedly fosters in Eustace a sense of self-esteem and of independent-mindedness. At the dancing class, her decision to waltz with Eustace transforms his habitually clumsy steps into apparently successful manoeuvres. During the class, as Bien notes, Eustace is "able to act with his whole being":¹⁸

To have so signally pleased Nancy had indeed robbed Eustace of his nervousness, and his feet now seemed the most creditable part of him. They had advanced him to glory. Never, even in the most ecstatic moments of the toboggan run, had he felt so completely at harmony with himself, or with the rest of the world: he found himself smiling self-confidently at the other couples as he steered, or fancied he was steering, Nancy through them. But he did not recognise them; he did not even notice Hilda passing by on the arm of a tall youth in spectacles.

(EHT, p. 77)

Nancy again furnishes Eustace with an experience that leads him to forget Hilda, and that allows him the opportunity to excel.

The zenith of Eustace's childhood experiences with Nancy is marked by the paper-chase. Eustace, who has been coerced by Hilda and Aunt Sarah into visiting Miss Fothergill, does not wish to go. He suffers what he believes is a crisis, a "paralysis of the emotions" (EHT, p. 81). For most of the tea, which Eustace has termed "Wednesday's ordeal" (EHT, p. 71), he suffers "the most exquisite discomfort" (EHT, p. 81).

As a result of Eustace's hesitations about going to

Laburnum Lodge, a typical dialogue occurs, in his imagination, between an apologist and a prosecutor. The "mental scuffle" (EHT, p. 82) between the advocate for Miss Fothergill's tea, and the speaker for the paper-chase, provides Eustace with the opportunity for a thorough analysis of his condition:

Almost for the first time in the history of their relationship Eustace felt that Hilda was treating him badly....

She was a tyrant, and he was justified in resisting her. Nancy was right to taunt him with his dependence on her....He was surrounded by tyrants who thought they had a right to order him about: it was a conspiracy. He could not call his soul his own. In all his actions he was propitiating somebody. This must stop....

It was along some such route as this, if not with the same stopping-places, that Eustace arrived at the conviction that his servitude must be ended and the independence of his personality proclaimed.

(EHT, pp. 84-85)

"I don't care what happens," he thought, "I will go, and they shan't stop me."

(EHT, p. 87)

Eustace joins the paper-chase in order to assert himself as an independent individual. Nevertheless, he is concerned, initially, that the Cherringtons might be worried about him. Nancy rather bluntly declares that his family's worries do not matter. Her response surprises Eustace--"Cautiously he introduced the new thought into his consciousness and found it took root....He had forgotten Cambo and Miss Fothergill; the pleasure of the hour absorbed him" (EHT, p. 90).

Eustace immerses himself in the hedonistic experience, as he had done with Nancy on the beach. Excited yet troubled by the exertion involved in the chase, Eustace is spurred on by Nancy's zeal and by her approval of his boyish pride:

"I might run away and leave you."

A shadow crossed Eustace's face. "Yes, I should get tired first. You see I ran all the way to the water-tower to begin with."

"You told us about that."

"Oh, I'm sorry. Do you think I'm boastful?"

"Not for a boy."

For some reason the answer pleased Eustace. He mended his pace and caught up with Nancy who had got a little ahead of him.

(EHT, p. 90)

As a boy, Eustace is granted privileges when in Nancy's company; the insight lends him physical strength. In this changed environment, where his egoism is acceptable, Eustace can feel confident that "'I was brave about coming, wasn't I? I stole out right under their noses'" (EHT, p. 89). Also fostered in him, under these conditions, are some of those "knightly virtues" to which Eustace is later so attracted in Dick; "courage, strength and the ability to act"¹⁹ become even more important to Eustace when he has been forbidden to display them himself after the paper-chase.

To crown the day's triumph, Eustace gets wet through, a condition highly disapproved of by Aunt Sarah (EHT, p. 18,

p. 30). Eustace "felt exhilarated; nothing like this had ever happened to him before" (EHT, p. 92). Rather like his 'heroic' behaviour at the toboggan race (EHT, p. 51), Eustace's participation in hare and hounds is a daring act of self-assertiveness, and Nancy has again nurtured Eustace's pride in his physical prowess (EHT, p. 90).

When the sodden boy is returned to Cambo, his strength earns Major Steptoe's comment, "'Plucky little chap'", even though Eustace is also described as being "'rather blue about the gills'" (EHT, p. 95). Later, we learn from Miss Fothergill that even Dr. Speedwell had approved of Eustace's adventure-- "'it did [him] credit'", he had said. Eustace had been "'right to go on the paper-chase'", even if he had been ill afterwards (EHT, p. 127). At the time, the doctor also enjoins on Eustace's relations "the necessity of fomenting his [Eustace's] self-esteem. 'If he goes on chattering [about being blamed] in this strain...I won't answer for the consequences'" (EHT, p. 97).

Eustace's triumph, however, is severely diminished by the collapse he experiences during the chase. As happens in the aftermath of his other independent acts, Eustace becomes very ill. In this, he displays the sort of frailty suffered by many of Hartley's male protagonists. Basil Hancock, for example, suffers a "minor breakdown" after the stress of dealing with the aftermath of an incident involving Terry in a public lavatory (MSK, p. 144); and Hartley describes Basil in

general as "a valetudinarian rather than a hypochondriac (in view of his history of minor nervous breakdowns he had ample reason to be both)" (MSK, p. 210). Richard Mardick, too, is "highly strung", and after Lucy's death "might even have a breakdown", according to Dr. Butcher (BFD, p. 184). More amusing, but related to these characters' frail and nervous conditions, is the quality of Timothy Casson's relationship with Vera Cross, in The Boat; at one point he believes, briefly, that they are "United by a headache!" (B, p. 253).

Eustace's condition after the paper-chase, however, is more serious than the vomiting and tiredness he had experienced after the toboggan races. Dr. Speedwell informs Miss Cherrington, in Hilda's hearing, that "'There's nothing organically wrong with his heart, but it's weak and he's managed to shift it a little'" (EHT, p. 97). Eustace is not spared further, if minor, discomfort, either, when he becomes sick after receiving Alfred Cherrington's unduly zealous reprimand over the incident (EHT, pp. 111-114).

On top of poor health, blame is another result of his assertiveness that Eustace must face. As Harvey Curtis Webster has noted, "During his childhood every assertion of himself is followed by the feeling that he must perform an act of expiation, which is usually formulated by Hilda".²⁰ In his delirium, Eustace expects everyone, especially Hilda, to be angry with him. Minney suggests that it is Hilda's treatment of him

that Eustace is trying to escape--"'to be by himself for once'" (EHT, p. 93). Hilda is, of course, upset and annoyed, to the extent that Nurse Hapgood keeps brother and sister apart "for their own sakes" (EHT, p. 97). By far the worst attack comes, paradoxically in view of his temperament, from Eustace's father. The amiable and easy-going Alfred Cherrington makes "the business of administering discipline far more painful to the culprit than it need have been" (EHT, p. 111).

Eustace never fully recovers from the chase and its aftermath, either in terms of his health, or in terms of his self-assertiveness. Eustace's ominous conclusion after hearing his father, is that he will never again do anything he really wants to do--"'I shall always do what other people expect me to. Then they can't be angry'" (EHT, p. 115). In Eustace's eyes, the experience with Nancy, and all that it has contributed to his sense of self-esteem, is forever negated. Eustace prepares to do Aunt Sarah's and Hilda's bidding, and to visit Miss Fothergill for tea, preparations which illustrate the repression to which he has been returned.

Eustace is prohibited by his family from seeing Nancy again. Years later, however, as Lady Nelly's guest in Venice, Eustace encounters her. Now Mrs. Alberic, she has recently left India and her failed marriage. Nancy offers Eustace the opportunity to spend the night in her hotel room. Eustace appears to misunderstand the proposition, and offers

to send her a cheque to provide the "'help'" she seeks (EHT, p. 70).

In a way that reminds us of his childhood experiences with Nancy, Eustace is made an offer that will allow him to grow-up, and to act independently of others. Nancy draws Eustace's attention to the way in which he is jeopardising his sense of manhood by dancing attendance on Lady Nelly; "'being a rich woman's darling'", she states, is "'no life for a man'" (EHT, p. 568). The "boyiness", and its boasts, which she had accepted in Eustace on the paper-chase, have not become the manly sexual potency she would have expected from the adult Eustace.

Only in his imagination can Eustace contemplate the experience that Nancy would have allowed him if he had accepted her offer to go to her room. And then, he can only reflect upon the incident after Nancy has angrily departed. The discomfort of Eustace's childhood crisis, when he had had to decide between the paper-chase and Miss Fothergill's tea, rises within him again. On this occasion, however, Eustace can only conceive of action in terms of a divided self:

His personality painlessly divided, the proto-Eustace stayed decorously outside the door until his daring doppelgänger within, having covered himself with glory, rejoined him in the corridor. Immediately they were as one.

(EHT, p. 572)

Young Richard Mardick, too, who must face the difficulty of acknowledging Aunt Carrie's departure for Australia, splits his personality in order to cope with a keenly felt problem--"I lived a double life. The Richard of St. Botolph's wasn't and couldn't be the Richard of the Brickfield" (BFD, p. 160). Eustace no longer has his "pluck", and cannot precipitate himself into a sexual relationship with Nancy. Nancy becomes a victim of Eustace's recognition, after the Redentore, that his life is in Hilda's hands. An affair with anyone, at this stage, is unthinkable for Eustace, whilst Hilda is at the centre of his world, always in control.

In Venice, Eustace is confronted by the problem of defining himself among many other people. Under Lady Nelly's tutelage, a phase of his career which will be fully discussed in Chapter Two, Eustace is encouraged to separate himself from Hilda and to find his own way in life (EHT, pp. 606-607). Like Nancy, Lady Nelly offers Eustace the opportunity to grow and so establish a sense of identity. Eustace also experiences the Redentore in Venice, which provides him with self-knowledge crucial to his development. It is significant that Hartley describes Venice in terms that symbolise Eustace's exposure to these life-enhancing conditions.

Venice, though significantly different from Anchorstone, recalls Eustace's childhood beach and its pools, criss-crossing

conduits, serpentine streams, rocks, castles and zig-zagging steps. It is a city of lagoons, channels, palazzos, the serpentine Grand Canal, and "mud flats...peeping through in places" (EHT, p. 476). It is a locale where light, lines and water have effectively "let go", and where "Rope ladders of light" chase "each other across the ceiling" (EHT, p. 451). By contrast, the "Parallel straight lines" Eustace had traced across the Anchorstone sands were of a more rigid nature:

...they followed a serpentine course,
bulging at times and then narrowing,
like a boa-constrictor that has swallowed
a donkey. Perhaps with a little manipu-
lation they could be made to meet.

He drew the lines closer. Yes, it
looked as though they might converge.
(EHT, p. 231)

Lines that were simply "bulging" at home, are, in Venice, each other's pursuer, and the "little manipulation" Eustace had contemplated on Anchorstone beach to make the lines meet is now unnecessary--the linear pyrotechnics of Venice are vastly more animated and demanding of the eye:

Everything Eustace saw clamoured for attention. The scene was like an orchestra without a conductor; and to add to the confusion the sights, unlike the sounds, did not come from any one place: they attacked him from all sides, and even the back of his head felt bombarded by impressions. There was no refuge from the criss-cross flights of the Venetian visual missiles, no calculating the pace at which they came.
(EHT, p. 451)

How to see clearly and accurately in Venice is a major difficulty for Eustace, and this problem reflects his inability, as yet, to clearly understand himself. The gentler impressions of the childhood beach where Eustace would carefully and meticulously play, become, in Venice, a chaos of warring impressions--the effect of the "visual missiles" leaves his "ascetic northern eye...uneasily resisting the seduction of the undisciplined, unashamed opulence" (EHT, pp. 450-451). From his Gothic outpost in Lady Nelly's palazzo, and from his modest 'Gothic' sensibility, Eustace gazes upon the Baroque and at a "huge square palace opposite, with its deep windows like eye-sockets in a skull"--like Venice's other bombardments, this sight greets Eustace with "a frontal attack" (EHT, p. 451).

In a way that recalls his secret admiration for the out-rush of sand in the walled ponds, however, Eustace, confronted by such Baroque "defiance", is "extraordinarily stimulated and renewed. Watching, taking in, was an arduous exercise, but it loosened the spirit, and discovered delicious new sensations" (EHT, p. 452). Reiterated is the fact that Eustace's "rhythm" is "determined by the rhythm outside him" (EHT, p. 451).

As Eustace eases himself into the Venetian environment, Lady Nelly invites him to a picnic at Santa Rosa. The excursion symbolically expresses Eustace's increased exposure to self-

understanding in these new circumstances. The return journey is marked by several experiences of Venetian chaos that lead, initially, to Eustace's distress:

Stung by mortification into wakefulness, Eustace looked up. They were following a serpentine channel marked by rough wooden posts tipped with pitch, visible, if one stood up, as a dark blue streak in the paler water of the lagoon. Already, to Eustace's distress--for he disliked estuaries--the mud flats were peeping through in places. Soon they were crossing a much wider channel, too deep for posts, almost a river; he could hear the current gurgling against the boat, carrying it out of its course. Then the posts wound into view again, and the gondola followed under the long wall of the Arsenal, a huge pink rampart stained white with salty sweat.

(EHT, p. 476)

Reminiscent of the "ruinous curves" that had sketched an "imposing delta" in "low relief upon the sand" (EHT, p. 279) in Norfolk, curves that Eustace had admired for their implied daring in front of Hilda, the "serpentine channel" of the lagoon is likewise associated with the unpredictable and the daring. There is no Hilda to stick a spade into this channel, and no Minney to manipulate any taps. As the line of the boat's course bends slightly, Eustace is effectively riding one of the "ruinous curves" that had so arrested his attention as a child; the curve has become the danger of "crossing a wider channel" too deep for the serpentine line of posts.

Returning from Santa Rosa, Eustace is literally at sea, and is even under threat of getting his feet wet. The experience also more fully explores Eustace's fantasy of surrendering, by boat, to the flow of a current; the scenario recalls his dream at the Staveleys' of drifting "downstream...until he came out into the open sea" (EHT, p. 384). And in being so "borne away" he would be living Emily Brontë's line, "'Eternally, entirely free'" (EHT, p. 384). The glimpse of "freedom", however, is a momentary one before the serpentine line of posts again comes into view.

In the company of Lady Nelly, Silvestro and Erminio, Eustace, while he is still returning from the picnic at Santa Rosa, is "drawn by the sunlight at the end of the canal" as they pass into an "opening" away from the lagoon, which is "framed in the aperture" (EHT, p. 476). The company then "shoots through" into the water of the basin--Eustace notices the radiance of a bridge around which

...the sunshine was at its glorious and
exciting game, playing with the blue and
white in the water and the blue and
white in the sky, gathering into itself
and giving out again all the confused
movement of the two elements.

(EHT, p. 477)

Bombarded by these impressions that link the sea and sky, Eustace has been safely navigated through the "retaining wall" of Venice, to reach the sea and to return to "the great basin"--on the company's return, the basin is "heaving under them with a

deep-sea strength of purpose" (EHT, p. 477). The swelling of the "safe" water within the pool suggests a reciprocity between it and the "distress" of the sea. We recall how at Anchorstone, and under Hilda's supervision, Eustace had tried to protect the "borrowed water" of the "safe" pools from the ravages of the sea (EHT, p. 29). And in his bathtub at Cambo, Eustace had been utterly possessed by the "spirit of the tidal wave" when it jostled toward the "Death-Spot", "just above Rome" (EHT, p. 33). Both scenes symbolically suggest how Eustace is threatened by the "outside", by the prospect of asserting himself independently of Hilda. Just as more turbulent water, particularly sea water, menaces the tranquility of the pool or bath, so an independent life would menace Eustace's present tie to Hilda's repressive influence. After the trip to Santa Rosa, the correspondence between pool water and sea water in the Venetian basin hints at the possibility, soon to emerge at the Redentore, that Eustace may be able to contend with the wall that Hilda has placed around him. The experience is an illumination to Eustace which pierces him "like a pang".

Later, at tea, Eustace is significantly impressed by a unique architectural feature of the L-shaped salone--an angularity with which he had first been confronted at Anchorstone Hall:

They had tea in the lower gallery, now known to Eustace as the salone. It had the distinction, unique in Venice, of being

L-shaped, the L being made structurally possible by a column supporting an arch.

Eustace had not lost the sense of borrowed glory which he had always felt when in the presence of a record; and he gazed at the column with an awe disproportionate to its intrinsic interest.

(EHT, p. 477)

The incident reveals to us how Eustace's "mathematical relationship with his surroundings", that "sense of squareness" which he associates with stability of mind, is yielding to the visual force of his Venetian surroundings (EHT, p. 451). In Venice where, as we recall, "every angle" is "out of true", and where Baroque extravagance banishes thoughts of squareness, Eustace typically finds himself contemplating the curve of an arch. Yet at the same time he is viewing a column--a form one does not normally associate with "true right angles". As these elements intersect and coalesce, such a scene points to the way in which Venice furnishes Eustace with locales and experiences that challenge him to reconsider the "Gothic past", represented principally by Hilda, from which he has so uneasily emerged.

Each year in Venice, on the third Sunday in July,²¹ the Festa del Redentore is celebrated. Traditionally, after watching the firework display, the people of Venice take a ritual bathe in the Lido. The same sort of hesitation over whether to go to Miss Fothergill's tea or on the chase again

causes Eustace to pause in perplexity over the issue of this lustral dip in the sea. He is beset with "the familiar ferment of indecision", which "threatened mental stoppage" (EHT, p. 518).

While his discomfort is not as protracted as that which he had experienced before the paper-chase, Eustace awkwardly puts it to the company: "'Perhaps I ought to go'". After showing further interest in the bathing ("'If you think they [the gondoliers] wouldn't mind taking me--'"), Eustace is precipitated into the trip by Lord Morecambe's immediate approval, and by Lady Nelly's explanation of Eustace's "plan" to Silvestro.

Eustace's concern, during the paper-chase, that his family might have been "'worried'" (EHT, p. 89), and his growing "sense of defeat" (EHT, p. 92) as the weather worsened, are echoed in Venice; Eustace experiences a "revulsion of feeling" once he is seated in the gondola--"Why had he acted as he did?" (EHT, p. 519). Eustace considers it "folly" to be going to bathe at nearly three o'clock in the morning. In the manner of his childhood prosecutor, Eustace builds a case against himself. "Shall I go back?", he asks himself later "in a panic" (EHT, p. 522). Despite his apparent solitude, Eustace recognises, in his imagination, that his sister is accompanying him--it is, after all, in the area of his unconscious that Hilda has an effective hold on him;²² his sister also plays an important role in his mind, when Eustace's thoughts turn to his destiny and to God:

The year of my redeemed has come, thought Eustace. He did not know what the phrase meant, or why it moved him; but it returned again and again to his mind, fortifying and lulling it. He dozed and dreamed.

Hilda was with him.

(EHT, p. 519)

Eustace contemplates death as he travels to the Lido. It is suggested that Eustace's "redemption" for the sins he has committed has perhaps arrived, but it is also suggested that the year for His redeemed to join Him has arrived--an idea prophetic of Eustace's death. Either way, the solace Eustace derives from the phrase points to his intuition that he will be "saved" by his experience, and will, in death, go to heaven. Eustace may also feel secure in the knowledge that if he is to die, then, as his deathbed dream suggests, his righteous soul is in the hands of God:

"'...there shall no torment touch them.... they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality. And having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded: for God proved them, and found them worthy for Himself.'"

(EHT, p. 734)

Inextricably connected with Eustace's contemplation of his destiny and of his redemption, though, is the influence of Hilda, with which he must also reckon before he dies.

On his way to bathe, Eustace is presented with a number of experiences that symbolically suggest he is undergoing a rite of passage; he passes through a series of gaps or walls

that recall the pond-making events of his childhood:

Eustace stopped for a moment, floodlit by the effulgence of gilt from the gondola, and then, the golden link broken, he turned into the crowd.

He was one of them now, he no longer commanded awe.

(EHT, p. 520)

As Eustace steps out of the gondola he breaks through what we can see as its "golden" "retaining wall" of floodlit and shining gilt. Once he is walking with the crowd, Eustace comes upon difficulties, however:

At the end of the street they came up against an obstacle, he could not quite see what it was--some kind of fence or palisade; no doubt, beyond which lay the sea. The crowd divided to right and left....He found he could make out the shapes of the hotels and houses that bordered one side of the road--the night must be passing.

Suddenly he was aware that the throng was bending outwards; the palisade ended here, and they were pouring through the gap. The clatter of shoes stopped too, and Eustace felt sand soft under his feet. Ahead lay a dark but transparent luminousness that must be the sea. He heard the soft splash of a wave and his heart quickened its beat.

(EHT, p. 521)

We remember here, as Eustace walks towards the Adriatic, the sands of Anchorstone; Eustace is walking from the pools, basins and lagoons of Venice to the sea, by "pouring through a gap". Here is yet another "retaining wall" exposed to the sea:

He was in a rectangle framed on two sides by anomalous structures of glass, wood and

wire, the flimsy but sufficient barricades of the seaside; and behind lay the line of hotels, each sleepily aspiring to grandeur, cutting off his retreat. Only the way in front lay open, and that was boundless, for there was no dividing line between the sea and sky.

(EHT, p. 522)

Eustace stands in the "squareness" to which he had said "Good-bye" on his arrival in Venice (EHT, p. 451). With only one "way in front...open", Eustace feels he has little choice but to go on.

The significance of the bathe for Eustace is that, more fully than before, he participates in life and is "jostled like anyone else" (EHT, p. 521). Surrounded by "couples" talking in "low tones" with the "clatter of their feet on wood and pavement", Eustace discovers a place for himself amongst them. He joins the everyday world from which he has been sheltered by his family, his education and, of late, by Lady Nelly's dominance:

The effect of being with people without really seeing them was to make him feel separate but not lonely: sharing their purpose and their destination relieved him of the burden of himself.

(EHT, p. 521)

Sitting on his overcoat on the sands, Eustace muses about his condition, "lonely and naked in this crowd of strangers":

How meaningless and far away now seemed the interests of his life in Venice! Indeed, all his interests. They had brought him thus far, to the sands of the Lido....He felt his identity flowing out of him, to be soaked up heedlessly by the grains of sand

or parcelled out in fragments of a thousandth among all the figures standing or sprawling round him.

(EHT, p. 522)

Eustace's sad conclusion is that the sum of his existence is merely his present geographical location. On recognising a nothingness within him, Eustace scrambles to retrieve what little sense of identity he feels he has possessed in the past:

...he fumbled frantically for his lost identity, his sense of what he, Eustace, was doing here and now. But it had passed into the keeping of another, and he was aware only of an immense reluctance, a limitless spiritual fatigue.

(EHT, p. 523)

Eustace's identity may have passed into the hands of God, but more likely it is resting with Hilda, who has, so far, determined the nature of Eustace's being--it is she who has triumphed over Eustace's inner life and who ultimately exerts the greatest control over him of all his "women".

In spite of Eustace's awareness of his inner hollowness, and of his being in the hands of "another", he manages to overcome what Peter Coveney has termed his "psychic tragedy",²³ and the effects of such a realisation. More successfully than at the paper-chase, Eustace acts with what remains of his "whole being". He defies, once again, the constraints that have been placed upon him, this time by his insights into himself; bravely and spontaneously, together with the crowd, Eustace enters the redemptive waters of the Lido:

He never knew at what moment his dread of the ordeal left him, but suddenly like a ball that finds an incline and begins to roll, he found himself starting to undress. He could not join in the laughter and talking, but he could feel the common impulse--indeed, he could feel nothing else; it seemed to be the first time he had ever acted with his whole being.

(EHT, p. 523)

Indistinguishable from everyone else, Eustace is held in the "intimate embrace" of the sea (EHT, p. 524). As Bien suggests, this action is Eustace's "closest touch with life",²⁴ and the bathe rebukes Eustace's childhood fear of getting his feet wet. The experience, however, is a brief and soon regretted one, for Eustace cannot fully benefit from the liberation that the Redentore proffers.

Lord Morecambe had considered Eustace a "Stout fellow!" for deciding to go for the bathe (EHT, p. 518)--his remark reminds of us Major Steptoe's praise of the "plucky" boy who had accompanied his daughter in hare and hounds. Nevertheless, after the bathe, as after the tobogganing and after the paper-chase, Eustace becomes sick; another "deflation" that typically follows an act of "whole being". Eustace suffers from feelings of sea-sickness (EHT, p. 526) and, later, of tiredness (EHT, p. 529). Erminio tells him that his face looks grey-green, and Eustace begins to feel "exceedingly unwell" (EHT, p. 529). Just as he had done after the picnic on the Downs, Eustace rests in bed, "most of the day" (EHT, p. 530).

Much of Eustace's fatigue, however, is engendered by his melancholy reflections as he returns to the Palazzo Contarini Falier. Peter Bien takes Eustace to task for his thoughts after the Redentore: he feels that Eustace is at "his Victorian, bourgeois worst: too prudish to partake in the pleasures of the rich, too snobbish to enjoy the vulgar gratifications of the poor".²⁵ But Eustace is thinking this way because of what he has learnt as a child: he is feeling as his father has instructed him to feel after such a liberating experience. Just as the exhilaration of the paper-chase had been negated by the Cherringtons, particularly by Alfred and Hilda, so Eustace himself proceeds to invalidate the substantial revelations gained at the Redentore; Eustace stresses the ephemeral and deluding aspects of the bathe, on his way back to Lady Nelly's home. He can read "no poetry in the daylight's cynical acceptance of everything it revealed", for example:

Nothing stood out, nothing asserted itself. Beholding these sorry stage properties, Eustace could not recall the glamour of the night.

(EHT, p. 524)

The prospect of Venice, the Dogana, the Salute, the islands, all look "spiritless and ordinary" to him (EHT, p. 524). Only by looking across the Giudecca Canal at the Redentore Church can he revive his deflated spirits. The church is symbolic of what is still, after the paper-chase, Eustace's need to be

governed by someone else:

It still drew his eyes with its mysterious apartness, its proud isolation....it had not suffered a sea-change, it had not shed its glory of the night before. The controlled strength and the call to discipline in that stern regard were just the tonic he needed.

(EHT, p. 527)

The church gives the appearance of standing in judgment of Eustace, and like Hilda's and Alfred Cherrington's subjecting Eustace to disciplinary admonishments, it expresses the stern criticism that Eustace has always faced after his acts of self-assertiveness. Masochistically, Eustace is revived by the severity of the church's demeanour. Similarly, he is gratified by Lady Nelly's chiding reaction to him after his nocturnal experience. Discussing the coming year's Redentore bathe, she says that "she might go if she liked, but that Eustace wouldn't be allowed to. The implication in this sent Eustace very happy to bed" (EHT, p. 531). Lady Nelly will, as Eustace is delighted to surmise, be keeping Eustace in tow until next year, but even then she will still be controlling his behaviour.

In spite of Eustace's attempts to disguise the effect upon him of the events at the Lido, he does make observations that indicate a growth in his understanding of life. Even though he considers that he has joined "the refuse of the Venetian populace" (EHT, p. 527), and that doing as everyone else does is a "blow" (EHT, p. 525), Eustace gains insight into the nature of his own place amongst other human beings. While

waving farewell to the occupants of "Charon's boat" from the Piazzetta, Eustace begins to understand the fickleness of human behaviour and how to respond to it:

...this morning he thought, people are like that: happy and pleasant one moment, cross and disagreeable the next. One must accept it, and like them in moderation all the time--not so much as when they are smiling, or so little as when they are quarrelling....The great thing was to be interested, and not to let interest be affected too much by one's joys and desires. 'Binding with briars my joys and desires.' The fact that Venice could be ugly was interesting; the fact that people could be unpleasant was interesting; let us leave it at that.

(EHT, p. 528)

Returned to a more private, interior world, nevertheless, Eustace, the writer, is more fully able to live in his imagination; the experience of the Redentore has stimulated his creative mind, and he gets on much faster with his book:

The ritual bath had reconciled him to those aspects of the story which conflicted with his wishes for his characters and their wishes for themselves. This objectivity of view visited him when he took up his pen, and deserted him as soon as he put it down; in the moment of creation, his creatures lived in a world more real than his.

(EHT, pp. 536-537)

Feeling that he is "wearing off" as a novelty for Lady Nelly, Eustace is able to write his novel with more concentration. He acknowledges "the unfriendly aspect of the world outside his room", and retreats to the security of his desk:

He was astonished by his facility; he got on faster now that things were turning against him than he had when his star was in the ascendent. The rasp of circumstance did not matter if it left the nerves of his mind more sensitive....How enviable to be a novelist, independent of other people's favour and disfavour, their times and conveniences; using them merely as the oyster its grain of grit, for the sake of the salutary irritation they produce. The world well lost that another world more satisfying and more lasting might be found.
(EHT, pp. 574-575)

The lustral bathe has also prepared Eustace for the death towards which he will now unwittingly precipitate himself, by returning to Hilda in England. Eustace feels better after the bathe at the Lido, and explains to Jasper the reasons for his improved condition:

"Well, I don't mind the thought of dying so much as I did."

Jasper looked at Eustace as though he had mentioned something improper.

"Do you attribute that to the bathe?"

"In a way I do," said Eustace. "You see, I dreaded it, quite unreasonably, but when I came to the point it wasn't so very unpleasant. You see, there were so many other people doing it, and they didn't seem to mind."

(EHT, p. 540)

Recalling the moment for Jasper stimulates Eustace, and he has a vision of the Assumption; further evidence that included in Eustace's feelings of renewal is a glimpse of his own death and of an after-life.

The fear of being tugged in two that had once come to the young Eustace in his bathtub forcefully recurs to him during his predicament at the Redentore; the knowledge, confirmed by the effect of the night upon him, that Hilda has claimed him, reinforces the tension with his need to be free, and to grow. With this exposure to self-understanding at the Redentore, Eustace, as we have seen, reaches an unprecedented understanding of his nature and of the outside world. Learning how to like people "in moderation all the time" (EHT, p. 528) and to be "interested" in the varieties of human behaviour, Eustace is also able to feel "separate but not lonely" (EHT, p. 521). He establishes for himself a new "objectivity of view" both in his writing and in his attitude to life.

Choosing a retreat to an inner world, however, Eustace temporarily evades the disquieting process of considering his sense of self; he retains his fantasies about Hilda and thus perpetuates her control over him. In Part Three of this chapter, we will examine how the fulfilment Eustace gains after the Redentore is eroded once he returns to Anchorstone. Even there, however, he is gradually confronted, once more, with the issue of his identity.

PART THREE

THE RETURN TO ANCHORSTONE: THE DRIFT TOWARDS DEATH

I. Uncomfortable security with Hilda

By returning to Anchorstone, and to Hilda, Eustace effectively turns away from the prospect of facing the world alone--he may have gained "a measure of common sense" and have learned "how to be more at one with himself and others"²⁶ after the Redentore experience, but his return to Cambo is a return to a childhood fantasy of harmony between himself and Hilda (EHT, p. 194, "One Heart or Two"). His goal of facing the exigencies of life back in England, "without fantasy", is an illusory one. Eustace decides that "there was only Hilda to consider. His task, his life, lay with her. Care of her was to be his expiation" (EHT, p. 662). With gratitude, he seizes upon the opportunity to retreat from the issues that had confronted him at the bathe in Venice. Eustace feels guilty about his previous treatment of Hilda, in persuading her to go to Anchorstone Hall. Rather than consider himself wicked, however, he tries to persuade himself that his mistakes are the result of "turning all experience into fantasy":

He had made her the victim of his size-snobbery; and what better cure for snobbery than to study Hilda as she was, try to accommodate himself to her moods, wait on her, and think of things to say to her?
(EHT, p. 662)

There is sad irony in Eustace's delusion that by devoting

himself to Hilda, by studying her, he is being realistic. Eustace fails to divest himself of his propensity to turn Hilda into a figure larger than life:

He must prepare her for her return to normal living, forge new links with the outside world, rather than dissolve the old, prevent her from seeing external reality in a mirror set in an ivory tower, like the Lady of Shalott. And in doing so he would cure himself of day-dreaming.

(EHT, p. 668)

Eustace's altruism allows him to believe that he is protecting Hilda from a paralysis of perception as well as of body. Ironically, Eustace's view of external reality is through the "mirror" of Hilda. Her power over Eustace is still sufficient to absorb him, and to make her the aggrandised figure he claims to have deflated after he was cured of "size-snobbery":

The immense simplification of aim that Hilda's illness had brought him lapped him round like a hot bath; the conviction that he was delivering himself of a declaration that no one could gainsay, that needed no apology, only a conventional expression of regret...

(EHT, p. 672)

In spite of the delusions attendant upon his confinement with Hilda, Eustace believes that he is "a plant bedded out but beginning to thrive" (EHT, p. 673). To increase his sense of security, Eustace tears up his mail from Anthony, Jasper and Nelly, all still in Venice, and

from his college tutor--"Now only Aunt Sarah's was left, and he could read that as often as he liked without doing himself harm" (EHT, p. 679). As "part of his penance" he will not go to Whaplode, by "way of expiation" he will not spend Christmas in Rome, but he vows to "decide something" about his situation at Oxford (EHT, p. 683). Eustace's retreat from the world is almost entirely complete, but he cannot for long sustain the self-deception.

The letters are directed to a Eustace who is "a glorious, free creature, not the poor drudge who pushed his sister's bath-chair" (EHT, p. 678):

But surely something could be done.
Eustace had lost the singleness of purpose
he had enjoyed before the letters came.
Then he had acquiesced in Hilda's illness;
now he rebelled against it. He reviewed
his relationship with Hilda.

(EHT, p. 684)

Eustace's feelings now begin to resemble those of Timothy Casson when the writer recognises the truth about his life at Upton-on-Swirrel:

I know now why my life here has been a
failure; it's all because I never had the
courage to put my boat on the river.

(B, p. 415)

Eustace, like Timothy, has lost direction in his life; he must find a purpose that will lead him beyond the needs of his sister. The simplicity and apparent security of Eustace's life are now upset; in their place, the destroyer of his childhood fantasies is rekindled in his imagination as a "shadowy third". The image

is associated with Eustace's fantasy of a "person under a railway arch". Both figures challenge Eustace; the first, to destroy Hilda, the second, to embrace the demands of manhood.

Whereas before he had looked forward to their evening outings as something that he did, unquestioningly, for her good, now he dreaded them; he could not reconcile the two voices, one accusing him of cowardice, the other of foolhardiness and cruelty--yes, and of something worse than those. The bath-chair, this mentor told him, would not stop at the cliff's edge; he had a subconscious wish to get rid of Hilda, the albatross that was hung around his neck. A sinister shape, a shadowy third, walked at his side as he took her for her nightly airing, prompting him with evil promptings. He would not listen, of course not; but what if the insidious whisper should somehow pierce the ears he was stopping against it, and start some impulse over which he had no control? The vision of himself as a destroyer came back to him.

(EHT, pp. 685-686)

The presence of the haunting figure underlines Eustace's anxiety on his evening walks with Hilda. It suggests to him that in order to be free, he must in fact destroy his sister.

The "shadowy third" is similar to the figure that has haunted Eustace for some time.²⁷ Like the shadow, it challenges him to act. When Eustace is newly-arrived at the Palazzo Contarini Falier, we learn of the menacing image thus:

His imagination was haunted by a person under a railway arch who had come to this uninviting rendezvous specially at Eustace's request to keep an appointment with him. Eustace had failed to turn up and the man was pacing to and fro, wringing his hands, while the rain poured down outside and the opportunities of a lifetime slipped by him.

(EHT, p. 458)

The presence of the haunting figure under an arch is prompted, on this occasion, by Eustace's discovery that Lady Nelly is awaiting him. The necessity to act, responding to someone's bidding, provokes Eustace's mental picture of the waiting man. This figure standing in the rain represents Eustace as a grown man, and symbolises the younger Eustace's subconscious desire to escape the duties of fulfilling others' needs.

On his return to Anchorstone from Venice, having devoted himself to Hilda, Eustace turns his back on the world, and on growth, and so the effect of the waiting figure temporarily diminishes:

And since he came back from Venice, the person under the railway-arch who was always kept waiting by Eustace, and growing ever more angry and grieved and impatient and uncomfortable, yes, and falling seriously ill because he did not come, had dwindled to a speck, a dead fly in the petrifying amber of his conscience.

(EHT, p. 670)

Eustace is not disturbed by the tormenting image now, and confidently asserts, "If he [Eustace] were late for tea what matter?" In the false security that aiding Hilda has given him, he is now not troubled by demands that recall those of Lady Nelly--"Grown-up people were not scolded for being late for tea", he confides to himself (EHT, p. 670).

When Eustace reads the letters, however, particularly Aunt Sarah's which criticises him for leaving his watch in Venice, the image of the waiting man re-appears in Eustace's

imagination. What Eustace had been happy to call a speck, has swollen:

Back in his boyhood, Eustace struggled vainly with his conception of himself as someone who was always giving trouble; again the railway-arch spanned his horizon, and the person who was waiting there, now grown to more than life-size, paced up and down, muttering to himself, glancing at his watch, and cursing the rain which was coming down in sheets. Cursing Eustace, too.

(EHT, p. 675)

The impatient figure again urges Eustace to meet his destiny as a grown man, to be free, rather than continue to answer to others' bidding. The railway-arch person, combined with Eustace's mental image of the "shadowy third", symbolically represents the source of Eustace's powerful temptation to break free from the restraints that Hilda represents.

II. Hilda's fatal cure: Eustace's final acts of assertiveness

By the time Barbara Cherrington leaves to give birth to her first child, Eustace acknowledges that during his "Time of travail for Hilda...all the processes of his being were distorted or reversed" (EHT, pp. 690-691). Eustace feels the need to celebrate the birth, but believes that he has severed connections with his social milieu:

His friends were far away; they stretched out their hands to him in vain; they were divided from him by much more than distance, by the barrier of his will, by the thick rampart of denials and inhibitions with which he kept them out. Barbara's friends, the Gang, were coming to-morrow, but he

wanted to do something to-day. The only opportunities for celebrating that Anchorstone offered him were the celebrations of the past which he had forbidden himself.... If he could ride up Frontisham Hill it would be a sign, almost a proof, that there was nothing wrong with him, and that the Eustace of the past, ailing and in need of guidance, was a myth created by his own fears.

(EHT, p. 690)

Eustace's bicycle journey is fraught with indications that he will suffer for the exertion upon his weak and "shifted" heart. The ride begins "a little sooner after luncheon than Miss Cherrington would have deemed quite wise--but what did a touch of indigestion matter to someone as strong as he was?" (EHT, p. 692). Eustace imagines a conversation between himself and Dr. Speedwell, and so launches into an interior dialogue--an habitual activity that he has been trying to avoid:

"No, Dr. Speedwell," he heard himself saying, "there's nothing the matter with me at all. I'm as sound as a bell, as fit as a fiddle, as right as a trivet. You can put your stethoscope away, old chap. Why, yesterday I cycled up Frontisham Hill." "Frontisham Hill? My dear boy, you must be a Hercules." "Well, not quite that, Dr. Speedwell, but pretty good for a C3 man."

(EHT, p. 703)

The dialogue reveals that Eustace is aware of the risk he is running in the attempt to cycle so far. "Breathing hard", however, Eustace successfully achieves his goal and returns to Cambo, after re-acquainting himself with the Staveleys:

Late as he was, he could not possibly let Hilda see him like this, steaming and sweating and not quite able to get his

breath. But not only with exertion, with triumph; for he had scaled the hill, he had proved himself. Many times he had been on the point of giving up. He had been reduced to subterfuges: to husbanding his strength from one telegraph pole to the next; to tacking this way and that across the road; finally, to counting by tens the revolutions of his pedals. But he had done it, and in the doing the incapacities of a lifetime seemed to have slipped from him.

....

Washing was the crown of athletic effort, but how heavily the bath towel pressed upon his shoulders, and how long it took him to get dry. The new vest would soon be as sticky as the old.

(EHT, p. 705)

Wet, as usual, after such an experience, Eustace begins to resemble the man who he has imagined waits for him in the rain, under the railway arch; Eustace's "incapacities of a lifetime seemed to have slipped from him" after Frontisham Hill, as "the opportunities of a lifetime slipped by him" in the past (EHT, p. 458). Yet Eustace is considerably weakened by the exertion of the ride, and Hartley draws our attention to his ominous perspiration.

The bicycle journey recalls features of the boyhood paper-chase which had irreparably damaged Eustace's heart. Minney refers directly to the incident when Eustace arrives home an hour late for tea:

"You gave me such a fright, it was almost like that time you ran away on the paper-chase. I went all the way to the water-tower looking for you. I've only just got in."

(EHT, p. 706)

The route that Eustace takes evokes scenes from his childhood which are associated with his being courageous and assertive. He travels "'through the Downs, where we used to have such fun tobogganning'" (EHT, p. 709), and now "the place where he and Nancy broke away from the road and got lost in the undergrowth, that looked impenetrable still" (EHT, p. 702). These two events culminated in Eustace's ill health, as the bicycle ride now culminates in his death.

The prospect of shocking Hilda into a cure on the cliff-top walk, the exertion of the bicycle trip, and the presence of the shadowy third complicating Eustace's motives with Hilda, all contribute to the strain on Eustace during his final day. After having tea with his sister, during which his hand "trembled as he held the cup to Hilda's lips" (EHT, p. 708), Eustace, in great perturbation, executes his plan:

He began to tremble as his will strove for mastery with his increasing physical weakness. He tried to get the message down into his hands, but they would not obey him; they would not turn the bath-chair towards the edge. A sudden sharp run to within a foot or two of the brink; then a pause for Hilda to realise all that threatened her; then a quick recoil, and then--how often had he rehearsed it--the miracle. No one could do it but him; and he must do it now, now, or spend his life in vain regret, tormented every time he took Hilda out, every time he brought her in, every time he saw her or thought of her, by the knowledge that there was something he could have done to cure her and he did not do it. But he had reckoned without himself. All his other

faculties revolted against the act that his will was forcing on them and only when they were darkened by the shadow that was rising in him did he turn the wheels of the chair towards the abyss.

Too late. His fingers were slipping from the handle: the chair was moving of itself.

(EHT, p. 713)

Eustace is motivated principally by his desire to cure Hilda of her paralysis. It is "the shadow that was rising in him", however, that finally precipitates Eustace into action. This is the blackness that greets Eustace during the paper-chase²⁸ ("the darkness suddenly turned black, only this time it was not outside him, he felt it rushing up from within" (EHT, p. 93)). It is also the "shadowy third" that has recently troubled him. Eustace must act before he faints away, but he must also act to satisfy the presence that has tempted him with the advantage to him of Hilda's death. Minney's lightly-intended rebuke, prior to the experiment, that if the bath-chair were to run away Eustace would be glad, is all the more ominous in view of Eustace's present mental condition-- "'That would save you a lot of trouble'" says Minney, unwittingly joining forces with the figure that accompanies Eustace to the cliffs (EHT, p. 706).

Peter Bien has suggested that the paper-chase has left in its wake Eustace's sense of guilt, which, even now on the cliff-tops, prevents him from admitting to himself that he

wants to escape Hilda--"His subconscious, however, cannot be changed so easily".²⁹ One would add to his comment that Eustace has not fully considered his subconscious wish to escape Hilda--by killing her. Bien is also correct in pointing out that "True feelings are now increasingly hidden, and are treated more in symbol and dream than in statement"³⁰--a typical Hartleian technique which I will explore more thoroughly in Chapter Three.

Eustace is physically injured by the experiment that nearly culminates in Hilda's death, but his sister is miraculously cured. Eustace has by now lost his strength, and his consciousness; he lies on the ground with spots of blood on his wrists, from the chafing of the spokes of the bath-chair. By contrast, "the release of movement" spreads through Hilda, she feels "the weakness flow out of her and the strength return" (EHT, p. 714). The imbalance of their relationship swings back to what it had been years earlier, and Eustace is lifted into Hilda's wheelchair. Their roles are now reversed; Hilda wheels her brother home.

Eustace does not, however, all at once accept emasculation. Even now, as after Eustace's monumental childhood act of assertiveness in hare and hounds, his potency as a male becomes a topic of conversation. A discussion arises between Hilda and Minney concerning Eustace's newly-acquired moustache:

"I say it makes him look more of a man,
and Miss Cherrington says so too."

Eustace began to feel uncomfortable under the intensity of their feminine regard.

"More of a man?" said Hilda, "more of a man?" She repeated the phrase with growing distaste. "I should have thought he could have left that sort of thing to other people. There are quite enough men already....Promise me you'll take it off, Eustace."

"I'll think about it," said Eustace evasively.

(EHT, p. 724)

Following the pattern of the paper-chase, however, when he decides to accept Alfred Cherrington's stern advice, Eustace capitulates to Hilda, and finally agrees to shave off the offending moustache.

Together with a compromised sense of his masculinity, Eustace suffers ill health. The day's experiences surrounding the cliff-top experiment have exacerbated his heart condition:

...he was aware of a curious sensation in the region of his heart, not a pain, not a fluttering, nothing you could put a name to, but a feeling of powerlessness.

(EHT, p. 730)

Eustace's condition recalls the "limitless spiritual fatigue" he had experienced at the Redentore (EHT, p. 523). Combined with his physical state of health is Eustace's recognition that his life is in someone else's hands. Eustace's feelings of powerlessness are emphasised by their contrast with Hilda's growing strength. In a predatory, anemone-like manner, she flexes her newly-awakened body. As Eustace and Hilda discuss

his motives for the experiment and Eustace defends himself against Hilda's suspicions, Hartley develops a threatening atmosphere by stressing Hilda's physical movements:

"Was what an accident, darling?" asked Eustace, his heart and mind engaged in the play of Hilda's fingers, clenching and unclenching in her lap.

"Didn't you hear what the man said?"

She could curl her little finger right up.

"What man, Hilda dear?"

"The man on the cliffs."

Her foot was swivelling round on her ankle, this way and that, in an impatient circle, and under the thin stuff of her shoes each of her toes seemed to have a life of its own.

(EHT, p. 717)

Eustace successfully persuades Hilda of his honourable intentions, and she forgives him. Eustace, however, is mesmerised, and asks "nothing better than to sit and look at her" (EHT, p. 716). She is swift to re-instate herself as Eustace's mentor, and berates him for his cruel behaviour in assisting Dick, as she believes, to cultivate a relationship with her (EHT, p. 721). She also informs Eustace that writing novels "'isn't a life's work. You'll have to do more than that, and better than that, if I am to be as proud of you as I want to be'" (EHT, p. 722).

An appropriate accompaniment to Hilda's demands, which points to her renewed subjugation of Eustace, is provided by

her yawn that "rippled through all her pleats", an action again suggestive of the movements of an underwater creature (EHT, p. 723). As she rises to leave Eustace to his assignment of writing a letter to Oxford, Hilda criticises Minney for spoiling him:

Hilda rose with a superb swish and put her arm affectionately round Minney's neck. "I shall have to begin all over again."

Eustace got up and joined them, and she put an arm round him too.

"Isn't it nice to think you're all within my reach?" she said. A spasm seized her; she dropped her arms and yawned again, luxuriously and without concealment. "You can't imagine what fun it is to yawn," she said.

(EHT, p. 723)

Her final contact with Eustace is a prophetic "long embrace on the lips" (EHT, p. 724), which foreshadows, in his final dream, her devouring of Eustace--"the lips of the anemone...closed around his finger" (EHT, p. 736). Hilda's resumption of control over Eustace has been crowned by her final act, which signifies both the intensity and the voracity of the relationship between them. Hilda quite literally draws the life from his already ailing body--Eustace is "breathless" afterwards. Vacantly, he watches her climb the stairs, "her billowy dress mounting the mean and narrow stairway" (EHT, p. 724). Moving, appropriately enough, like a floating sea-creature, Hilda thus leaves the drawing-room to take her place in Eustace's subconscious death scene.

It is clear that Eustace's final decisions about himself and Hilda testify to his newly-discovered sense of self. In contrast to his drastic life-denying attitude after the paper-chase and the Redentore, Eustace resolves, on this occasion, to determine his own future, despite his preliminary concessions to Hilda:

...in her joy at her deliverance from this new danger, he had not protested, even inwardly, when she resumed her habit of lordship over him. He had given way on every front, only too glad that things should be as they had always been. But this must not go on. To-morrow, when she was fit to bear it, the bloodless revolution would begin.

(EHT, p. 727)

As Eustace imagines a future where a relationship develops between Stephen Hilliard and Hilda, so does he envisage a future in which he himself is confident and assertive. Unfortunately, Eustace does not live to put his purpose into action, but in having recognised and articulated it he has achieved inner growth. Eustace can now acknowledge the ambiguous and intense feelings he has for Hilda, and at the same time can recognise his need to be independent of her, and to enjoy contact with the world--hence, the telegrams, proposed visits and invitations (EHT, pp. 725-726). If in the past Eustace has been defeated by Hilda as he has attempted to assert himself in life, at least he has now come to the verge of realising that sense of self towards which he has

been uncertainly exposed throughout the trilogy.

In the next chapter we will see how, like Eustace Cherrington, two other Hartleian protagonists--Leo Colston and Stephen Leadbitter--move towards self-understanding, and how all three, through the workings of their imaginations, are both stimulated and victimised by the women in their lives.

NOTES

¹Mulkeen, Wild, 42.

²As Bien informs us, Hartley had begun writing The Shrimp and the Anemone "in the early 'twenties and had at least half finished it by the mid-'thirties. At this point, however, he abandoned it because he feared it might be considered more autobiographical than it really was." (Bien, Hartley, 271).

³Eustace and Hilda won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1948.

⁴Petersen, however, criticises the trilogy:

...carefully worked out symbolic sub-structure to which the question of psychological probability has been subordinated. The problem in characterization which the book demonstrates surfaces in The Boat (1949), The Go-Between (1953), and Facial Justice (1960): the reader wonders if the characters in these books indeed grasp the moral significance of what Hartley has so carefully constructed.

(Petersen, "Common Sinner," 75).

Philip Toynbee has found fault with the trilogy:

The book is far too long, which...is a fault of texture rather than of structure. Everything is explained; everything is described; we almost feel that every conversation has been recorded in full. Charm, of which there is a great deal, is not enough, and "Eustace and Hilda" is surely not a masterpiece.

(Philip Toynbee, "Misgivings About Mr. Hartley," The Observer (Sunday, May 11, 1958): 16).

⁵David Cecil, Introduction, 13.

Frederick Karl believes that David Cecil:

...over-rates Hartley's accomplishment, claiming that some of his pages are among the most beautiful in all modern English literature. A great deal depends on how one defines beauty, but if the word includes a response that is more than what we mean by memorable, striking, or in good taste, then Hartley is less than a "beautiful writer." There is no doubt that he can evoke tones and colors, but he almost completely misses the world of deeper feeling and action.

(Karl, Contemporary English, 277-278).

⁶ Jones, Hartley, 59.

⁷ Allen, Tradition, 254.

⁸ Jones discusses Hartley's "portrayal of the passive Eustace whose inability to make connections with the world outside himself except through his own fantasy provide[s] a pattern and a tone which become characteristic of much of Hartley's subsequent fiction".

(Jones, Hartley, 59).

⁹ Bien, Hartley, 74.

¹⁰ Ibid., 27.

¹¹ Mulkeen, Wild, 42.

¹² Jones, Hartley, 60.

¹³ Petersen, "Common Sinner," 74.

¹⁴ Allen, Tradition, 256.

¹⁵ Bien, Hartley, 46.

¹⁶ Patricia D'Arcy notes that Eustace "though outwardly weak...enjoys fantasies of Power and Destruction".

(Patricia D'Arcy, Notes and Commentary to The Shrimp and the Anemone (London: Bodley Head, 1967) 214.

Francis King says about Hartley: "underneath all the teddy-bear charm, [he] had a streak of ruthlessness and a tremendous sense of self-preservation".

(Michael Mason and Peter Burton, "A Domestic Animal? An Interview with Francis King," Gay News 100 (July 29, 1976): 24.

¹⁷Reynolds, "L.P. Hartley," 29.

¹⁸Bien, Hartley, 51.

¹⁹Ibid., 53.

²⁰Webster, Trauma, 159-160.

²¹In spite of Lady Nelly's and Silvestro's uncertainty about the date of the festival, it is, as Erminio indicates, "'always held on the third Sunday in July'" (EHT, p. 471):

On July 13, 1577, the Senate had arranged a "publicar sena, et libera da contagio essa Citta," (Archivio di Stato, Venice--Senato Terra, R.51.) and in the same sitting it was established that a procession to the votive church should be held on the third Sunday in July. The first procession--the first "Festa del Redentore"--took place on the 21st of the same month (Archivio de Stato, Venice--Cerimoniali, I).

(Wladimir Timofiewitsch, "The Chiesa Del Redentore," Corpus Palladianum, III (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State UP, 1971) 18).

²²Bien, Hartley, 46.

²³Peter Coveney, The Image of Childhood--The Individual and Society: a study of the theme in English Literature (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967) 338.

²⁴Bien, Hartley, 49-50.

²⁵Ibid., 49.

²⁶Jones, Hartley, 68.

²⁷Petersen, "Common Sinner," 58.

Petersen has identified the image with Christ:

...under the arches formed by the fireworks, Eustace learns the identity of the stranger he frequently fancies awaits him under a railway bridge, a stranger who presents him with the opportunity of a lifetime.

The circumstances that precipitate Eustace's imagining this figure, however, would indicate that the man under the arch is a more secular symbol, concerned with Eustace's proximity to achieving a sense of identity.

- ²⁸ He had forgotten Cambo and Miss Fothergill; the pleasure of the hour absorbed him. He watched the pattern made by the shadows of the trees, rounded shapes like clouds, that pressed on his path like an advancing army. He found himself thinking that it would be unlucky if one of these shadows over-topped his. Twice, when a threatening dome of darkness soared into the green, he ran out towards the sunlight to avoid being engulfed. Nancy watched his manoeuvres and laughed. But the third time he tried to outwit Fate he failed. The shadow not only overtook him, it galloped across the glade, swallowing light and colour as it went. The very air seemed darker.

(EHT, p. 90)

- ²⁹ Bien, Hartley, 54.

- ³⁰ Bien has justified a novelist's use of symbolism thus:

Part of the justification for using symbols and dreams as technical means to introduce unconscious levels of thought into a novel is to reproduce the vagueness and ultimate impenetrability of our inner, hidden selves, a region which by its very nature defies logic and scientific analysis, or whose interrelationships are so numerous that we can never hope to understand them fully.

(Bien, Hartley, 58-59).

CHAPTER II

THE IMAGINATIVE MALE PROTAGONIST, AND THE DESIGNING WOMAN

I. Complaisance as a Modus Vivendi

Timothy Casson in The Boat is, as Tyro puts it, "'stultified by that fatal desire to be a general favourite'" (B, p. 537), and Basil Hancock in My Sisters' Keeper is someone who "could see himself, could realize himself, more easily in terms of other people's happiness than in his own" (MSK, p. 110). The tendency to invest oneself in another person is typical behaviour in Hartley's male protagonists. Leo, Eustace and Leadbitter, because of their personal circumstances, are all inclined towards such an investment, by pleasing others. Leo is a guest at Brandham Hall, and to a certain extent must please his hosts by presenting himself in an appropriate manner. He is also a twelve-year-old boy who must comply with the dictates of his mother. Eustace is by nature a complaisant character, and Leadbitter is a car-hire driver who must please others in order to sustain business.

As a child, Leo swiftly learns of the advantages that can accrue from having rid a schoolboy community of its bullies, for example. After he is set upon by "a mob of grinning urchins" for having written "vanquished" in his diary, Leo prepares his revenge (GB, p. 12). He composes three curses

and directs them against Jenkins and Strode, two of his assailants. Leo becomes a hero, a "general favourite", amongst his schoolfriends when Jenkins and Strode subsequently fall from the roof and suffer "concussion of the brain" (GB, p. 16). As nobody much likes Jenkins and Strode anyway, Leo is congratulated by two of the boys in his dormitory, who "came up and shook hands" with him and "said 'Congrats' with respect in their faces" (GB, p. 16). Even the Head of the school approves:

I was the hero of the hour, and though my vogue did not last long at that high level, I never quite lost it. I became a recognized authority on two subjects dear to the hearts of most boys at that time: black magic and code-making, and I was frequently consulted on both these subjects. I even made a little out of it, charging threepence a time for my advice, which I gave only after certain necromantic formalities had been gone through, passwords exchanged, and so on. I also invented a language and had the delirious pleasure, for a few days, of hearing it used round me.

(GB, p. 17)

Whether by skill or luck, Leo "'overcame'" his adversaries, and so ingratiated himself into a community that had, in part, been hostile to him (GB, p. 20). When Leo visits his schoolfriend, Marcus Maudsley, the young necromancer must once again find his place within a social group. Leo takes with him, to Brandham Hall, the knowledge that by pleasing others he can protect himself, gain security and respect, and be acceptable.

As I have noted in Chapter One, avoiding conflict and pleasing others are also ways of life for Eustace, particularly as a child at Anchorstone. He is temperamentally disposed toward keeping the peace and maintaining happiness about him, particularly after the paper-chase. During the incident of the anemone devouring the shrimp, which opens the trilogy, Eustace states "the case for each with unflinching impartiality...forgetting, in his enthusiasm, that the well-being of the one depended on the misfortune of the other" (EHT, p. 18). His compromising approach to the difficulty displays his ignorance of natural animal appetites at work. Eustace also demonstrates the irresponsibility of an attitude that removes him from the "truth" of an experience. He resorts to the measured protections of language and "the case for each". His wordy method of maintaining happiness is at the expense of an honest investment in the events about him; and it is a strategy that he frequently employs in his dealings with other people and situations.

In order to survive in his environment, Eustace spends most of his time meeting the requirements of everyone around him, and in doing so loses control of his life. As E.T. Jones has commented:

His actions, such as they are, for inaction comes easily to him, are dictated by women who surround and smother him. Their solicitude becomes emasculation. Although his mother died giving birth to his younger

sister, Barbara, a host of women including Aunt Sarah, Hilda, and his old nurse, Minney, eagerly serve as maternal surrogates for Eustace...¹

Eustace's particular experience of living to please other people is not a way of life for the local children, as Eustace discovers when he goes to the dancing-class and recalls Nancy's taunts about his dependence on Hilda:

His lot was not, he saw in a flash of illumination, the common lot of children. Like him they were obedient, perhaps, and punished for disobedience, but obedience had not got into their blood, it was not a habit of mind, it was detachable, like the clothes they put on and off. As far as they could, they did what they liked; they were not haunted, as he was, with the fear of not giving satisfaction to someone else.

(EHT, p. 85)

Eustace's difficulty is that he constantly responds to demands for his obedience. Apart from the rather distant presence of his father, family life consists of the woman's voice, which constantly criticises him. Eustace feels that in pleasing Hilda, for example, he is being groomed for doing "right"--that through her guidance in morality and feeling he will reach something of her "supremacy", even though he may not equal her great beauty (EHT, p. 45). Eustace invests his entire personality in Hilda. His condition resembles that of Basil Hancock, with his three sisters, Amabel, Evelyn and Gwendolen: he "knew, dimly, that he had a sort of Orestes-complex, and that what happened to his sisters mattered more

than what happened to him" (MSK, p. 220). The difficulty for Eustace, however, is that he cannot exist without his sister, nor rest easy without her approval.

Similarly, Sarah Cherrington requires of Eustace duties within the community. The boy screams, "'I can't. I can't'", to his sister when he is reminded of a particularly undesirable duty--"'Remember what Aunt Sarah said. She said, 'Eustace, next time you see Miss Fothergill I want you to speak to her'" (EHT, p. 33). Eustace pleases his aunt and his father by undergoing Miss Fothergill's "civilising effect" (EHT, p. 125). In spite of shedding first-visit tears, Eustace discovers that tea with the old woman is a happy occasion after all. He feels "safe" in her cosy parlour (EHT, p. 118).

Minney, the maid at Cambo, also exercises control over the young Eustace in his domestic affairs, and is also a contributor to his expanding knowledge of the value of pleasing others. As Eustace is trying to spell some letters on a page, Minney begins to comment upon his untidy work:

"That's better," said Minney, coming and standing behind him, her sewing in her hand. "But what do you call that letter, a C? It looks more like an L."

"It's a capital C," explained Eustace. Oh dear! Here was the voice of criticism again, and coming, most disappointingly, from Minney's mouth. "Don't you make them like that?"

"No, I don't, but I dare say I'm old-fashioned."

"Then I like people to be old-fashioned," said Eustace placatingly.

"I always tell them you'll get on in the world, Eustace. You say such nice things to people."

"Dear Minney!"

It was delicious to be praised. A sense of luxury invaded Eustace's heart. Get on in the world...say nice things to people...he would remember that.

(EHT, p. 40)

Eustace's decision to remember her unsound advice is borne out by his behaviour on meeting people at university, and in Italy, before he dies.

Leadbitter's complaisance is a professional mode he adopts to ensure an adequate financial reward for his chauffeur-ing. He turns a special face to the world and calls it "his business personality" (H, p. 7). The posture includes faultless manners to match his faultless looks and brevity of speech. The impersonality of this mode appears in his eyes, which sometimes, like those of Mrs. Maudsley, "were steadier than a peaceful occasion warranted....'Keep off!' they seemed to say, 'Keep off'" (H, p. 7). This rigorous self-control, his punctuality and disciplined conversation are Leadbitter's methods of courting his customers:

...he studied their personalities and did everything he could to please them, short of gushing; for gushing, he maintained, they didn't like. He would say "my lord"

and "my lady" and even "sir" or "madam" in such a way that these titles conferred peculiar distinction.

(H, p. 10)

Through these varieties of solicitude, which so differ from his disarmingly impersonal manner, Leadbitter creates a formidable impression amongst his customers, who recommend him to others for his civility and reliability.

Much of Leadbitter's style has its foundation in his experience of Army life, which had appealed to almost every quality in him, including "his cynical acceptance of futility so long as it was clothed in the proper forms of discipline" (H, p. 13). The stiff professional manner protects Leadbitter from the despair that an acceptance of life's futility would bring. Such control further demonstrates to him the extent of a man's worth:

In the Army, he felt, a man was rated at his true value, he had nothing but himself to make him count. Recognition of his own value, by himself and others, was of paramount importance to the car-hire driver.

(H, p. 13)

This two-fold recognition that Army discipline had brought him, and which he had instilled in his recruits, could not, however, be imposed upon his business clients in the world at large--their "true value" is not easily ascertained. Leadbitter deals with these changed, less rigorously delineated circumstances with the only means remaining to him--complaisance:

Recruits could, must, be licked into shape, but not so customers. Customers had to be kept sweet; only in the physical sense were they a charge to him. Only by playing up to them could he hope to make them better customers. He did it but it went against the grain, and doing it he lost the sense of value that came from reciprocal obligations. For him these obligations didn't exist in the civilian world; there it was every man for himself and devil take the hindmost.

(H, p. 14)

Leadbitter pleases and keeps "sweet" those whom he knows to be fallible. His customers take his patience for granted: "They didn't seem aware that he had feelings to hurt or interests to injure" and they "talked together as freely in his presence as if he wasn't there" (H, p. 10). Leadbitter's passengers "prattle" in an "extremely silly" way; after "effusive thanks" (H, p. 10) on a doorstep, for example, they hypocritically berate their evening's hosts:

No wonder that his customers were "they" to him, beings of an alien if not hostile race, idle, capricious, prone to change their minds and destinations, wanting him to drive against the traffic in one-way streets. But in congenial society, commenting on their shortcomings, he did not let himself sound angry or personally involved in his own disgust; he sounded as if the only sane man left was making indulgent fun of a mad world.

(H, p. 11)

Leadbitter's reticence rests on the fact that "with all their faults [the customers] represented something that he himself was striving to attain" (H, p. 11). He goes so far as to exclude from his censure officers with whom he had

served in the war, and old ladies. Leadbitter's mellowing attitude to his customers and their social class has already begun when we first meet him. By pleasing "them" as he does, Leadbitter is protecting himself from what he does not understand.

Like Leadbitter, Leo is "aware of [his] social inferiority" (GB, p. 43) and of "the strain of adaptability" (GB, p. 40). He is more assertive than the chauffeur, however, as we see when the boy meets the "smart rich people" at Brandham Hall. Leo tries to "turn the tables on them", for example, when he is mocked for wearing unseasonable clothing (GB, p. 43). Eustace, by contrast, is, as Trevor Allen puts it, "social-climbing in an aristocratic world".²

II. The Male Protagonists' Imaginative Lives

During his visit to the Maudsley Norfolk estate, Leo confides to himself that "To be in tune with all that Brandham Hall meant, I must increase my stature, I must act on a grander scale" (GB, p. 76). To achieve this goal, Leo recognises that he must step from what has up to now constituted his reality into the dream world of the Zodiac. He is not reluctant to make such a move after his successful appeal for supernatural aid at school, which had shaken his hitherto very earthbound sense of reality:

I now felt that I belonged to the
Zodiac, not to Southdown Hill School;
and that my emotions and my behaviour

must illustrate this change. My dream
had become my reality: my old life was
a discarded husk.

(GB, p. 77)

In belonging to the Zodiac, Leo can satisfy his longing
"to be tested", and can leave the world of mere mortals for "a
race apart, super-adults" who are separate from other human
beings (GB, p. 70). These people enjoy "the conversation of
the gods!....star-talk", and between them, as Mercury, the
"smallest of the planets", Leo can wander about with their
messages (GB, p. 92)--in this way he can satisfy these gods.

By joining a fantasy world, the boy can come to terms
with the environment of Brandham Hall which confuses him. The
elderly Leo, in his blurred recollection of his boyhood arrival
at Marcus's home, cannot clearly recall the south-west prospect,
but does remember the "double" staircase (GB, p. 33). The
general impression, therefore, is of a "higgledy-piggledy and
rambling" place, and of "passages with sudden bends and con-
fusing identical doors". The older Colston partially recaptures
the boy's awed response to the new environment in which he is
to struggle for approval--young Leo must learn to negotiate what
is virtually a foreign country to him; a place, like the past,
where they do things differently. He must somehow find his
way and ingratiate himself into a higgledy-piggledy Georgian
mansion.

For all his alleged mastery of language at school, Leo

is hard-pressed to communicate with his hosts and their acquaintances. Even in the company of a friend, the pretentious Marcus, he has difficulty in mustering French repartee. Much of Leo's problem, however, is caused by the social inequality his visit has exposed:

...I was acutely aware of social inferiority. I felt utterly out of place among these smart rich people, and a misfit everywhere....If only I could think of some verbal quip...the sort of thing a grown-up might say! "I may look hot," I said defiantly, "but I'm quite cool underneath, I'm a chilly mortal, really."

(GB, p. 43)

Au fond, the Maudsley family is trying to draw out the young visitor by showing interest in his perspiring face and inappropriate clothing. Leo, however, in his anxiety to fit into the society of adults, magnifies the gentle raillery of tea-time into a more serious exchange. Leo makes an earnest attempt to gain the aristocrats' respect, in spite of his tendency to wear slippers to breakfast; "'the sort of thing that bank clerks do'" (GB, p. 41).

When the guests laugh at Leo's comment, they display their amusement at the boy's efforts to talk like an adult. The laughter also mocks the "chilly" aspect of Leo's character that at least the superstitious Mrs. Maudsley has noted. Some of her preliminary remarks to Leo betray her suspicions of the boy, who is both necromancer and, in his abetting Marian's affair, a problem for Mrs. Maudsley's social aspirations:

"'And so you are a magician?'"', "'You're not going to bewitch us here?'" (GB, p. 35), and later, "'If you don't take them [messages] to Nannie Robson, to whom do you take them?'" (GB, p. 256). Leo is "chilly" to her in his behaviour, with his seeming insight into matters that are at present beyond her reach.

If by promoting himself to "the ampler ether, the diviner air", Leo feels more acceptable to the community, then he has also increased his vulnerability to Marian's designing ways, as well as to those of Mrs. Maudsley (GB, p. 95). Mercury is a messenger for all the gods, indeed, but it is Marian, "the Virgin", who is

...the key to the whole pattern, the climax, the coping-stone, the goddess-- for my imagination was then, though it is no longer, passionately hierarchical; it envisaged things in an ascending scale, circle on circle, tier on tier, and the annual, mechanical revolution of the months did not disturb this notion. I knew that the year must return to winter and begin again; but to my apprehensions the zodiacal company were subject to no such limitations: they soared in an ascending spiral towards infinity.

(GB, p. 9)

By living in a fantasy world, Leo has become weak; a weakness that is characterised by his sense of having been re-created by Marian. Marian, the goddess, has given the boy a charmed life, and he now owes her his allegiance. This, combined with Trimingham's naming Leo "Mercury", makes the boy a willing participant in Marian's affair with Ted; he is flattered by

being asked to carry notes between her and the farmer. Leo is easily manipulated by the gods he serves; "every smile and kindness from Marian pulls him deeper into a fantasy world".³

...if in the realm of experience I was fairly tough, in the realm of the imagination I was not. Marian inhabited that realm, she was indeed its chiefest ornament, the Virgin of the Zodiac; she was as real to my contemplation as she was to my experience--more real. Until I came to Brandham Hall the world of my imagination had been peopled by fictitious beings who behaved as I wanted them to behave; at Brandham Hall it was inhabited by real people who had the freedom of both worlds; in the flesh they could give my imagination what it needed and in my solitary musings I endowed them with certain magical qualities but did not otherwise idealize them. I did not need to. Marian was many things to me besides Maid Marian of the greenwood. She was a fairy princess who had taken a fancy to a little boy, clothed him, petted him, turned him from a laughing stock into an accepted member of her society, from an ugly duckling into a swan. With one wave of her wand she had transformed him....The transfigured Leo of the last twenty-four hours was her creation; and she had created him, I felt, because she loved him.

(GB, pp. 167-168)

Leo, who would "'do anything for her'" (GB, p. 72), is committed to Marian until he comes to feel "that everything she had done for me had been done with an ulterior motive.... It was all a put-up job" (GB, p. 168). Rejected by Marian, having rejected his own "mortal" mother in whose letters he "could not feel really interested" (GB, p. 95), Leo finally faces the wrath of Mrs. Maudsley. At the outhouse, Mrs.

Maudsley's screams are implanted in the boy's subconscious: "I see her in dreams (for I have not been able to keep her out of them)" (GB, p. 34). Leo, then, becomes a victim of the goals of Marian and Mrs. Maudsley; a condition that he himself has heightened by having become "another person", by living in a fantasy, zodiacal world.

Eustace, too, possesses the ability to live imaginatively, in "other worlds". As E.T. Jones states, Eustace is unable "to make connections with the world outside himself except through his own fantasy".⁴ When Jimmy Crankshaw says of Eustace that he is "'a bit of a dreamer'", Aunt Sarah delivers the understatement that "'Eustace often needs direction, and we have all helped him with advice from time to time in a friendly way'" (EHT, p. 276). As Anne Mulkeen has noted, Eustace is "by nature pliant, receptive, imaginative, able to escape mentally from the harder facts of life".⁵ It is because of his capacity for flights of imagination that Eustace increases his vulnerability to the women "who smother and surround him",⁶ and who have taken an interest in directing his life. Eustace cannot easily separate his imaginative and "real" experience of the world; as he realises, all too late,

The temptation to see things larger
than life, to invest them with grandeur
and glamour and glory--that had been his
downfall. Everything...could be traced
to that....

(EHT, p. 662)

Hilda is by far the most penetrating of Eustace's "advisers"--she has the ability to involve Eustace in an everyday world, and so keep him from the day-dreams he inevitably falls into when "Left to himself" (EHT, p. 25). The boy's capacity for mythologising people is also a significant feature of his attraction to her--"Drawing near to Hilda", for example, "was a ritual" (EHT, p. 318). On Eustace's visit to her celebrated clinic, Hilda becomes his "memorial; she is making her mark in the world, she is my justification; she, the Lady Godiva of Highcross Hill" (EHT, p. 323). And when Eustace discusses Hilda with Dick Staveley in Venice, his imagination transforms Hilda thus:

Appalled, he seemed to see Venus with
the face of Hilda clinging to her prey;
and look, where she relaxed her grip,
the victim's skin was wrinkled and old
from the long pressure of her ageless
flesh.

(EHT, pp. 642-643)

Hilda is the magnificent figure of Eustace's imaginative life, who at one point becomes "the Scarlet Woman, or even...the wearer of the Scarlet Letter" (EHT, p. 489). She is also the woman who most attempts to draw the boy away from the distractions caused him by his ponderous imagination. As Mulkeen has stated of Eustace,

He has begun to be caught up in a more
romantic, unreal vision of the world...a
world more and more removed from the
excessively "real" one where [Hilda] has
tried to confine him.⁷

Hilda adopts a method of control based upon the everyday life of morals and manners; Hilda is "the ruling force" in Eustace's life. "He had to live up to her idea of him, to fulfil the ambitions she entertained on his behalf" (EHT, p. 35).

Because she keeps him "up to the scratch" (EHT, p. 25), Eustace feels that Hilda is "wonderful; everything she did was right; Eustace could not exist without her, could not long be happy without her good opinion" (EHT, p. 45). So intent is Eustace upon obeying the glorious Hilda, that he coerces himself into a form of self-denial. In his extreme repression, Eustace declines to give even the formidable Aunt Sarah the answer to a question on the counties of England. If Hilda does not know the answer to "Rutland", then he cannot utter it:

It was painful to him, in cold blood,
to expose her to humiliation even in
his thoughts, so with a sigh he checked
his pen in mid-career and refrained from
writing Oakham.

(EHT, p. 36)

In spite of Hilda's attempts to involve Eustace in an everyday world of moral acts, he still tends to create exaggerated impressions of those whom he meets in later life. Describing Eustace's first meeting with Lady Nelly, for example, Hartley deftly presents us with the impact of her "mystery" upon the young man:

...Lady Nelly advanced into the room. You
could not call it walking, for she seemed
to get nearer without moving. She was a
tall woman and upright, except that her head

drooped slightly in perpetual acknowledgment (it seemed afterwards to Eustace) of the qualities she had which made people love her, and of the qualities she loved in them. Her smile seemed to have arrived at no special moment, it was there; and as she came towards them it moved from face to face, changing its nature in a way that was perceptible to each recipient, but perhaps to no one else.

(EHT, pp. 358-359)

This is the presence of a "queen" (EHT, p. 556), who later appears to Eustace as both a regal hostess, and as a mother-figure:

Inside by the column under the arch, on a tall crimson chair with finials carved like a crown, sat Lady Nelly, her soft white hands folded in her lap, her figure all curves and comfort, her amethyst eyes shining mistily, her voice warm with welcome.

(EHT, p. 633)

As "an everyday embodiment of the goddess Fortune",⁸ Lady Nelly, like Hilda, assumes what Mulkeen has termed a "real and obviously archetypal"⁹ function for Eustace; and because Lady Nelly becomes so elevated through Eustace's imagination, he cannot but be perpetually at her service. As Leo, confronted by the zodiacal grandeur of the Virgin "can scarcely say what she meant" to him (GB, p. 9), so Eustace is awed by Lady Nelly. When Nelly leaves the palazzo to join Eustace, he describes her as a floating presence, using images with which he will also describe Hilda on the night of his death. Lady Nelly's clothes "seemed to float in the air, and she herself... seemed to float with them. Eustace went forward to meet her"

(EHT, p. 463). Just as Eustace has earlier been identified with a dog at Anchorstone (EHT, p. 404), so now is the solicitous young man described as "turning round and round like a dog before he ventured to sit down beside her" (EHT, p. 464).

When Eustace meets Nancy in Venice, his need of Lady Nelly's domination is made clear:

"Does she keep you on a string?"

Eustace knew that his grievance against Lady Nelly was that she wasn't holding the string tightly enough. But he answered:

"She is rather inclined to."
(EHT, p. 563)

As long as Lady Nelly is displaying an interest in Count Andrea di Montfalcone, and not in him, Eustace cannot play the deferential role with Lady Nelly, with which his imagination has furnished him.

In Eustace's perception of Miss Fothergill, his imagination also plays an influential part:

Miss Fothergill's face was swathed in a thick veil, made yet more opaque by a plentiful sprinkling of large black spots. But even through this protection one could not but see her mouth--that dreadful wine-coloured mouth that went up sideways and, meeting a wrinkle half-way up her cheek, seemed to reach to her right eye. The eye was half closed, so she seemed to be winking at Eustace....Feeling that there was no part of Miss Fothergill he could safely look at, he made his gaze describe a half-circle. Now it rested on her companion....
(EHT, p. 63)

For all his horror of her and of the ghoulish coquetry of her

appearance, Eustace is as much affected by Miss Fothergill, another Goddess Fortune, as he will later be by Lady Nelly-- "a suitable replacement for Miss Fothergill".¹⁰ With Miss Fothergill, Eustace is able to qualify the unkindly attitude he had displayed at their first meeting, by visiting her at Laburnum Lodge:

Bewildered by the complexity of his sensations, Eustace came to a halt. There was a stirring at the far end of the room, between the window and the fireplace... came a voice that, like the singing tea-kettle, bubbled a little.

"Well," it said, "here comes the hero of the paper-chase. This is nice! I'm sorry I can't get up to greet you. Can you find me over here?"

...What would he see? The hat, the veil, the gloves? Eustace faltered, then, rounding the table-leg, he found himself looking straight at the subject of so many waking nightmares.

It certainly was a shock. Neither the hat nor the veil was there. All the same in that moment Eustace lost his terror of Miss Fothergill, and only once did it return. Before tea was over he could look squarely and without shrinking at her brick-red face, her long nose which was not quite straight, her mouth that went up sideways and had a round hole left in it as though for ventilation, even when her lips were meant to be closed. Most surprising of all, he did not mind her hands, the fingers of which were now visible, peeping out of black mittens curiously humped. That afternoon marked more than one change in Eustace's attitude towards life. Physical ugliness ceased to repel him and conversely physical beauty lost some of its appeal.

(EHT, p. 117)

The experiment of visiting Miss Fothergill initially causes a collision in Eustace between his fantasy and real-world views of her. The excitement and "shock" of this event persuade Eustace to see the old lady as representative of the "outside world", where life is not so terrifying as it has seemed from Cambo (EHT, p. 136). The boy thus falls under Miss Fothergill's spell:

...Miss Fothergill, who sweetened life by taking away its rough surfaces and harsh pressures, who collected in her drawing-room where they could be enjoyed without effort, without competition and without risk, treasures that one side of Eustace's nature prized more dearly than the headier excitements of physical experience. Indeed, she had come to mean to him all those aspirations that overflowed the established affection and routine employments of his life at Cambo; she was the outside world to him and the friends he had in it; his pioneering eye looked no further than Laburnum Lodge, the magnetic needle of his being fixed itself on Miss Fothergill.

(EHT, pp. 135-136)

Ironically, Miss Fothergill remains as an image for Eustace, but now one that is pleasant to the boy. But his behaviour still justifies Stephen's criticism, which Eustace recalls all too late in his life:

Stephen had been right to warn him against his trick of idealisation, of preferring an image to reality, yes, and sometimes the image of an image.

(EHT, p. 665)

As in all his dealings with the women around him, Eustace sees Miss Fothergill as representing more than she actually is.

By allowing his imagination to cloud his perception of her, he becomes easy prey to her urgent and very real needs.

When Leadbitter meets Lady Franklin, he is compelled to deal with two issues: his conflicted attitude to people of her class, and his dislike of women. We recall that Leadbitter also feels that no one has ever been of any help to him in his life, "least of all women" (H, p. 16):

...for women as a whole the driver had no use whatever. He had lived with more than one but he regarded them as a disagreeable necessity. Women were cruel, he said; surprisingly that was his main charge against them.

(H, p. 12)

With such attitudes behind him, this "Ulysses" with "no Penelope waiting for him" (H, p. 16) meets Lady Franklin, who is intent upon penetrating Leadbitter's "dream", in order to enter his world.

When her ladyship asks Leadbitter to tell her about his circumstances, he gradually overcomes his prejudices but invents his family life; he tells her "a great many lies" (H, p. 51). From the beginning of the fictional Leadbitter chronicle, however, it is Lady Franklin herself who is woven into the fabric of the chauffeur's fantasy world. He tries "to think of the kind of wife that Lady Franklin would like him to have" (H, p. 37), for example, and then explains that "'she's a little like you,'" (H, p. 38). Leadbitter then develops his tale, trying "to imagine what she would be like

as a wife" (H, p. 39). He even names his wife Frances because it is "the nearest sound to Franklin" (H, p. 40). As Leadbitter continues his creative work, he discovers in himself a quality that is not unlike the day-dreaming capabilities of Eustace or the fantasy-making of Leo Colston. As an "unlikely 'crypto-novelist'",¹¹ Leadbitter learns that

...underneath that stern, correct exterior there lurked, unknown to Leadbitter, the temperament and the imagination of an artist....He who had had no emotional life for years, who had felt it an encumbrance and deliberately banished it...found a perverse delight in inventing a personal life for Lady Franklin's benefit. Instalment by instalment, as if composing it for the wireless, he built up a serial story of himself and his wife and their children, the story of an ideally happy family.

(H, p. 51)

Leadbitter's dream, however, does not "hold" for him, because of his hungry emotions and his need of a female companion. By creating a fictional spouse and children, Leadbitter simply draws attention to his own urgent needs:

...the whole fantasy owed its imaginative impulse to his dream--that dream in which someone rather like Lady Franklin was his wife.

By fixing his mind on it at bedtime he tried to make the dream come back. But the dream would not play, would not come to help him out, and the odd thing was that though while he was alone he could remember all the past incidents of the saga, he could not add to them; the traffic of his imagination was jammed, he was, as he would have said, in stuck-street. But no sooner was Lady Franklin by his side than the light turned to green and he glided forward into the world of fantasy.

(H, pp. 51-52)

Leadbitter has not realised that "it was her presence that inspired him" (H, p. 42), and he continues with his fiction, not appreciating "that his wish to tell her something was a sign he liked her" (H, p. 52). Dammed up within Leadbitter, now Lady Franklin's "Chaucer", are long-neglected feelings, which

...were something to keep hidden, something of which, if people knew, they would take advantage, and the deeper the feeling, the more closely he guarded it.

(H, p. 150)

When Leadbitter asks Lady Franklin for some financial assistance in order that he may protect his business, she is exceedingly generous. Leadbitter mistakenly interprets her generosity as a sign of her love for him:

...she had a tender feeling for him; she wouldn't have parted with so much money unless she had. But strangely enough, the idea that Lady Franklin was in love with him didn't bore and exasperate him as it would have in the case of other women.

(H, p. 85)

As Leadbitter's feelings increase for Lady Franklin, he attributes them to her ladyship rather than to himself, and in this way he temporarily protects himself from a powerful emotion. But when Leadbitter reveals to Lady Franklin that his family life is a fiction, he allows the "naked, nameless need" in him to shine in his eyes--"It might have been a cry for help, it was so urgent". Leadbitter kisses Lady Franklin, and although she "had closed her eyes in rapture before she

opened them in outrage", the moment is never repeated (H, p. 107).

In spite of Leadbitter's exposing his fraudulent tale, hereafter his dream life overwhelms him as it had never done before. When, for example, after a hiatus in their meetings, the image of Lady Franklin returns to plague him, "she did not return as Lady Franklin, she returned as Mrs. Leadbitter" (H, p. 123). Leadbitter has, in effect, become paralysed within the fiction that he has created and that Lady Franklin has nurtured:

In thought their relationship had been re-established at its highest level, the level of the return journey from Winchester before the debacle; higher than that indeed, for being imaginary it was also ideal, untouched by the imperfections, the conflict of wills, that for Leadbitter spoilt every human relationship. Tampering with reality as a day-dreamer must, he pictured her as his wife....His wife was Lady Franklin now, not Frances.

(H, p. 168)

It is when his fantasy is compelled to meet reality, in the form of Lady Franklin's proposed marriage to Hughie, that Leadbitter faces a crisis:

Between the idea and the fact of Lady Franklin's marriage, what a difference!

His fantasy could ignore the idea, but the fact (albeit without a date assigned), it couldn't. Feeling it wither, perish in his heart, he tried the desperate expedient known to other lovers: He tried to make his single love suffice for two. Surely it would return to him, reflected from her? But it didn't; like traffic in a one-way street it didn't come to meet him.

Nothing is so remote and unrecoverable as a lost fantasy. Deprived of his dream-life, Leadbitter was desolate.

(H, p. 172)

In his despair, Leadbitter tries to retain some vestige of his imagined relationship with Lady Franklin by dreaming that she accepts the gift of a car from him. The experience, however, bound up as it is with Leadbitter's strained emotions, carries an overtone of violent death:

At last she yielded. As she did so an extraordinary sensation of peace came over him, and at the same moment he drew out of his body a long nail, a foot long it must have been, and red and dripping with his blood. He was terrified and thought, "Now I'm away", but to his astonishment he felt no pain at all, only an enormous relief and a still deeper peace; and when he looked at the place it had already healed up, and instead of torn flesh there was a tiny dry scar like a pearl.

He clung to the dream as long as he could....

(H, p. 189)

The scene suggests that if Leadbitter's gift is to be accepted, he must pay with his life. The dream, with its Christ-like overtones of crucifixion and resurrection, also anticipates the circumstances of Leadbitter's suicide at the very moment of offering her ladyship the gift of his love:

Later it was found that a strut broken off the driving wheel had run into his chest, a chromium-plated spike of metal, so thin that when they pulled it out the wound was scarcely visible.

(H, p. 220)

In pursuing an imaginary relationship with Lady Franklin,

Leadbitter has discovered that "She was an indulgence, an obsession, a walking day-dream, who offered for reality a fairy-tale version of life" (H, p. 178). Leadbitter becomes easy prey to Lady Franklin's own need for self-discovery. As he sees more of her, in the manner of Leo and particularly of Eustace, he sees someone who she is not. He finally becomes a victim of Lady Franklin and of himself--"...unknowingly he had stabbed himself and with a weapon soft as thistle-down--a dream" (H, p. 129).

III. Designing Women

When the young Eustace visits Miss Fothergill for tea, the old lady warns the boy to be wary of her kind--"'We are all designing women'", she tells Eustace, "'You mustn't let yourself be sucked in by us'" (EHT, p. 127). The advice would also well serve Leo and Leadbitter, for they, too, are confronted by women's designing ways. In the following analysis I will concentrate attention upon the various socially-oriented goals of Mrs. Colston, Lady Franklin, Mrs. Maudsley and Lady Nelly, the enjoyment of sexual satisfaction by Miss Fothergill and Marian Maudsley, and the moral and spiritual objectives of Aunt Sarah and Hilda Cherrington. While certain characters could be discussed under more than one of the categories, the purpose of the classification is to underline only the principal objectives of the female characters: goals that significantly influence their behaviour.

The goals pursued by Mrs. Colston and Lady Franklin derive from their unfortunate experiences during their respective marriages. As widows, both women become involved with people of a significantly different level of society from their own.

Many of Mrs. Colston's objectives are of a social nature, but, married as she has been to "a crank", these goals have been somewhat thwarted (GB, p. 23). Before his death, she had fretted at her husband's unenterprising way of life which, she believed, "got him nowhere" (GB, p. 23). The man had increased his collection of valuable books, but socially the couple's gains had been more modest. In retrospect, according to the older Leo, Mrs. Colston clearly understood that her beloved's sedentary interests conflicted with her more outgoing tendencies:

My mother, though unworldly, was always attracted by the things of the world; she felt that if circumstances had been different she could have taken her place in it; but thanks to my father's preferring objects to people she had very little chance....To mix with well-dressed people on some smooth lawn, with the spire of the Cathedral soaring above, to greet and be greeted by them, to exchange items of family news and make timid contributions to political discussions--all this gave her a tremulous pleasure; she felt supported by the presence of acquaintances, she needed a social frame. When the landau arrived... she stepped into it with a little air of pride and self-fulfilment very different from her usual diffident and anxious manner. And if she had persuaded my father to go with her, she looked almost triumphant.

After he died what little social
consequence we had diminished....

(GB, pp. 23-24)

Mrs. Colston was happier when accompanied by her husband, but, notably, it appears that she would still attend these functions without him.

When young Leo is invited to spend a July holiday at the Maudsley family's five-hundred-acre park, Mrs. Colston initially seems reluctant to allow Leo to accept the invitation. Yet in spite of her hesitation, Leo later recognises in his mother a wistful expression indicating that "she wished she was going with me" (GB, p. 30). Leo, after all, is stepping into a social frame of much consequence. On smooth croquet lawns he will be spending "the season" in the company of consequential people, who will be dressed in a smart and seasonable manner. Leo, therefore, is preparing to take his place in a milieu where life will be a series of those "social occasions" that Mrs. Colston so much enjoys.

Mrs. Colston's fluttering temperament and tremulous pleasure in social matters, however, do not fully emerge until she writes her flat refusal to Leo's plea to be rescued from the Norfolk estate. In spite of the letter's reasonable tone, it exposes a conflict within Mrs. Colston between long-starved social aspirations and the responsibility she should take for her son's happiness. She suggests, for example, in spite of her ignorance of the facts, that Leo do what is asked of him--

"'we can't always do what we like. I think it would be ungrateful to Mrs. Maudsley after all her kindness to you if you were to grudge her this small service'" (GB, p. 219). And yet she later advises him:

"...I am sure that if you went to Mrs. Maudsley and explained things to her, and asked her very nicely if someone else could take the messages, she would say yes. You told me more than once that there are twelve servants in the house: surely she could spare one of them to go? But I expect she has no idea that you don't like going--indeed, I rather hope she hasn't."

(GB, pp. 219-220)

The object of Mrs. Colston's concern is, indeed, Leo, but the focus of her concern is misplaced and overworldly:

"From what you have told me about them they would be very nice friends for you in after life. I hope this doesn't sound worldly, but we have to be worldly sometimes; your father didn't care about social life but I think he made a mistake, and since he died I haven't been able to do much in the way of making friends for you. I should like to ask Marcus here--but I don't know how we should entertain him--he must be used to such grand ways!"

(GB, p. 220)

As she continues her rambling advice to her son, she achieves little but a fuller disclosure of her barely concealed social aspirations, and her quite unconcealed naiveté:

"You said that what you were doing might be wrong, but, my darling, how could it be? You told me Mrs. Maudsley never misses going to church and all the family and the visitors go too, and that you have family prayers every day which isn't the case in all large houses, I feel quite

sure (or even in small ones!) so I can't think she would want you to do anything wrong--besides, what can be wrong in taking a message?"

(GB, p. 219)

Ironically again, Mrs. Colston has also commented upon her own treatment of Leo at the small house of Court Place, where no prayers are said. There is "wrongdoing" in Mrs. Colston's method of expressing concern for Leo's welfare. In the beginning she had "tried to foresee the kind of life I should lead" (GB, p. 30), but through corresponding with her son, she has more fully developed her special interest in the ways of the higher social station into which Leo has been thrust.

When Mrs. Colston adds in a postscript that "'All this will be an experience for you, my darling'" (GB, p. 220), she is also describing her own feelings. It is this afflatus of spirit that inspires her general attitude to Leo in his predicament. The nature of her comment recalls the "little air of pride and self-fulfilment" we are told she used to feel when stepping into a landau (GB, p. 24); but these emotions, like her advice to Leo, have an insubstantial base. Mrs. Colston is stimulated by the appearance of stepping into a grand landau; her demeanour is "very different from her usual diffident and anxious manner" (GB, p. 24). But the experience is an ephemeral one. Similarly, her treatment of Leo stems from her need for the stimulation of being associated with a "social frame", as much as it derives from her concern about

Leo's unhappiness:

"But I do think it would be rather wrong, though of course not very wrong (you are a funny old thing!) if you ever showed her that you didn't want to go. She wouldn't be angry, I feel sure, but she'd be puzzled and wonder what sort of a home life you had had."

(GB, p. 219)

All that Leo has to do is to keep Mrs. Maudsley and her household unpuzzled, make social contacts, and communicate his way of life to his earnest mother. In this way, no one will question the home life Leo has had, nor will anyone interfere with Mrs. Colston's vicarious "experience", sustained by Leo, who becomes her go-between too. Acknowledging a friend's comment, Hartley pointed out that "Leo [is] a natural go-between, it [is] his function in life".¹² Leo, like the name of her house, is Mrs. Colston's "front", behind which lies her vigorous and unfulfilled need for social contact and for a sense of being "supported by the presence of acquaintances" (GB, p. 24).

Rather like Mrs. Colston's unfulfilling experience with her husband, Lady Franklin's marriage ends unsatisfactorily--somehow she must absolve herself of the guilt she feels in connection with Philip's death:

"Oh well. You see I couldn't help thinking about it, thinking if only I'd been there, instead of at that stupid cocktail party, I couldn't bear the thought of him dying alone. He hated being alone at any time. If I could just have been with him, to hold his hand and say, well...something...anything. If he'd had just a short illness, some kind

of preparation, for both of us, if there had been some last word between us, or only just a look--"

(H, p. 23)

Much of Lady Franklin's frustration is founded upon her belief that she and her husband had not made any significant contact in their relationship, and that the meaning of their marriage had yet to emerge:

"...you see it broke off something, in the way a tune is sometimes broken off. It was the tune of our lives, I suppose. We were singing it and listening to it at the same time....But the meaning hadn't revealed itself--it couldn't, unless we each told the other what we thought it meant....I never met him on the plane of our deepest feelings, not in the shadow of eternity."

(H, pp. 24-25)

Since Lady Franklin's recent history so much affects the present, her principal goals should be seen as her attempt to learn how to make better contact with others, and so develop meaning in relationships, wherein the deepest feeling may be touched. In order to achieve her goals, Ernestine has been provided with a clearly defined strategy which will be her "experiment":

"Otherness, otherness, that's what the man told me. A friend is no good, find somebody unlike yourself: a waiter, a porter, a taxi-driver. Button-hole him, victimize him, be an Ancient Mariner; pour your story into his ear, don't let him get away. Make him listen to every word, and see how he takes it. If he thinks you are a fool, so much the better. If he calls you a fool, better still."

(H, p. 32)

More wilful than Mrs. Colston's goals, then, Lady Franklin's attentions are directed to a specific social class. Once having made her "curious choice" of Leadbitter, her ladyship for the first time in her life becomes "a deliberate bore" (H, p. 32), and with some ruthlessness inflicts her life story upon him:

"What matter if he is bored? Lady Franklin thought. "I'm paying him." But her thoughts were bolder than her words. She couldn't tell him that she was talking to him, at somebody's suggestion, to cure herself of an obsession; but one must apologize to people for boring them. Aloud she said:

"If you don't mind me talking--"

"Oh no, my lady."

"Well, then."

(H, pp..35-36)

In pursuing her aim of curing herself of an obsession, she shows little regard for the chauffeur's feelings. Leadbitter is someone unlike her ladyship and of too lowly a social class to warrant her giving the man much consideration--or so her behaviour would indicate.

In her selfish desire to gain the therapeutic effects of her contact with Leadbitter, however, Lady Franklin initially neglects her friend's advice:

Suddenly she remembered what her friend had said: Make other people tell you their stories. They will, fast enough. Make them seem real to themselves, and then they'll seem real to you. Don't forget--what you need is the sense of

other people's reality. You mustn't go
on living in your dream.

(H, p. 36)

In her tormenting of Leadbitter, Lady Franklin overlooks the reciprocity that has been suggested to her, and then betrays a certain callousness as she prepares to listen to the chauffeur's story:

But that's only half of it. Going back I must ask him his story. Establish his identity as a person, absolutely apart from me. Functioning quite independently of me. What an insult! thought Lady Franklin, humorously. He actually dares to have a life of his own! He is no part of my dream, any more than I am part of his. Get it into your head, my dear, that he's a separate entity and that none of your woes, or joys (if I had any), could ever make him bat an eyelid.

I must remember to ask him his name. Or would that hurt his feelings? Oh, dear, I ought to know it. How good-looking he is: with a twist of rope round his neck he would be the Dying Gladiator. I had to ask him to come with me into the Cathedral, it was part of the cure: but I'm glad he didn't....Yet I mustn't be alone: never be alone, the man said, if you can help it.

(H, p. 32)

Leadbitter becomes the victim of Lady Franklin's need for a sense of other people's reality "outside the ring-fence of her grief" (H, p. 42). Leo suffers from his mother's more unconscious need for a social reality beyond what her own circumstances can achieve.

Lady Franklin enjoys greater insight into her own behaviour than Mrs. Colston, for example, because her ladyship's

goals are more conscious and better defined. Lady Franklin, aided by being cast in the role of client, recognises that Leadbitter is "a separate entity" untouched by her personal interests. She must work at gaining his confidence in order to achieve her goal. Mrs. Colston, as mother of a twelve-year-old boy, however, is less able to respect Leo's "separateness". She therefore resists his wish to "get out of going" to Brandham Hall; as far as the visit is concerned, Leo's mother "held [him] to it" (GB, p. 31). There is no evidence to indicate that Leo's mother ever fully realises the extent to which her social aspirations govern her attitude to the boy, even when, in effect, she "damages" Leo by keeping him at Brandham Hall. As Leo himself points out when comparing Marian with his mother:

I had no more imagined that she [Marian] could turn against me than that the good fairy of a fairy story could turn against the hero she protected. But she had, and so had my real mother: that was a betrayal, too. The difference was that mother did not know what she was doing and Marian did.
(GB, p. 222)

Mrs. Colston's treatment of Leo is inspired by a maternal instinct that has been compromised through many years of repression and confusion, by a firm social aspiration. Her actions may be less premeditated than those of Lady Franklin, but they are no less insidious in that they are achieved through the manipulation of an innocent person.

The social aspirations of Mrs. Maudsley and Lady Nelly do not invade such forbidden territory. Their manoeuverings are principally designed to keep up appearances, whereas the behaviour of Mrs. Colston and Lady Franklin stresses their urgent desire to improve themselves by entering a radically different social class. In spite of the distinction, Mrs. Maudsley and Lady Nelly pursue their objectives with steady, even ruthless, determination.

Mrs. Maudsley, with her stately and ample figure, is the dominating force at Brandham Hall, where she exercises Aunt Sarah's domestic brand of anxious and menacing control over everyone. With the young Leo we suffer her "fixed, unchanging regard" as she presides over meals, always taking up more space than is necessary to her (GB, p. 34). She is the presence that not even the older Leo can erase from his dreams.

Mrs. Maudsley, announcing her commands to go on picnics and on expeditions, has the entire family, visitors and staff, "on a string"; a thread that Leo associates with a light that comes from her "dark eye" (GB, p. 36). Sometimes, he feels "like a moth", caught in a beam of light from Mrs. Maudsley's eye (GB, p. 49). And her voice is like "a current of cold air" that occasionally blows towards him (GB, p. 43).

We witness Mrs. Maudsley's supreme wilfullness when she manipulates Leo over the matter of activities for his birthday. She successfully eliminates Denys', and any other, objections thus:

"I only meant, Mama, that on his birthday he ought to choose for himself."

"But hasn't he chosen?"

"Well, no, Mama, you've chosen for him."

His mother's face expressed a prayer for patience.

"He did not offer an alternative, so--"

"I know, Mama, but on his birthday--"

"Can you suggest anything yourself, Denys?"

"No, Mama, because it's not my birthday."

I saw Mrs. Maudsley's fingers clench.

"I think you'll find the arrangements are satisfactory," she said, evenly. "Now, for us grown-ups--"

(GB, pp. 249-250)

Such a reaction also occurs when she tries to cultivate Lord Trimingham as a suitor for Marian. As Marcus discloses:

"'Mama wants Marian to marry'" Lord Trimingham (GB, p. 52), and indeed Mrs. Maudsley's objective is one that she will achieve. From the moment Trimingham arrives, although Mrs. Maudsley still announces her plans each day after breakfast,

...her eye would flash an interrogation at Lord Trimingham as if he were a signal that must be consulted before the train went on.

"Suits me down to the ground," he would say, or, "Just what I was hoping we should do."

(GB, p. 90)

We know, again from Marcus, that Mrs. Maudsley is a snob

("'she feels like I do about the plebs....Did you notice the stink in that hall?'" (GB, p. 151)), and Marian's marrying Lord Trimingham would certainly guarantee her daughter, and the Maudsley family, increased social status. So concerned is Mrs. Maudsley with Lord Trimingham, that at the end of their first breakfast, she "hadn't even noticed" that her son Marcus had not been there "although he was such a favourite with her" (GB, p. 62). Similarly, Marcus' measles will not cause Mrs. Maudsley to cancel the ball. She looks forward to the ball as the setting in which Marian's engagement to Trimingham will be announced:

"If Marcus has got measles," said Marian carelessly, "I suppose we shall have to put the ball off?"

"I see no reason for that," said Mrs. Maudsley with decision. "We should disappoint so many people. And you wouldn't want to, Marian, would you?"

I didn't hear what Marian's reply was, but I was conscious of the clash of wills between them.

(GB, p. 91)

When Leo threatens the success of Mrs. Maudsley's objectives, he, like Denys or any other person who resists her intentions, becomes a victim, literally and metaphorically, of her "inscrutable, beeline glance" (GB, p. 62).¹³ The boy's lack of summer clothing provides Marian with a good reason for a trip to Norwich, and so with an escape from her mother's suspicious eye:

"Well, we'll go tomorrow," she said.

"Or would you," said her mother,
"rather wait till Monday, when Hugh will
be here, and make a party to go to Norwich?"

....

"...Marian, are you sure you wouldn't like
to wait till Monday?"

....

"Wouldn't you rather wait till Monday?"
Mrs. Maudsley repeated.

Marian answered at once, and it was
like two steel threads crossing each other.
(GB, pp. 44-45)

Unwittingly, Leo has created the opportunity for Marian
to meet Ted Burgess, and to defy her mother's match-making. As
a result of the conflict between Marian and her mother, Mrs.
Maudsley's subsequent interrogation is all the more ponderous:

"You didn't see anyone in Norwich, I
suppose?"

"Not a cat," said Marian. We were
hard at it all the time, weren't we, Leo?"
(GB, p. 49)

Fortunately for Marian, Leo agrees, and the boy forgets his hour
spent in Norwich Cathedral. Marian is spared any further inquiry.

The strain Mrs. Maudsley undergoes in attempting to
supervise Marian causes the mother to retreat, temporarily,
from social activity, as Marcus explains:

"Elle est très nerveuse! C'est un type
un peu hystérique," he said.... "En ce
moment elle est au lit avec forte

migraine, le résultat de tous ces jours de strain."

....

Il s'agit des fiançailles, vous savez.
Ma mère n'est pas sûre que Marianne--..."

....

"Will stick to her engagement...."
(GB, p. 187)

The cause of the forte migraine lies in Mrs. Maudsley's distrust of Marian, and in her rigid determination to have Marian marry Trimmingham. As Mrs. Maudsley increasingly suspects Marian of having an affair, so Leo increasingly becomes the object of the mother's interest. The boy, who is close to her daughter, must surely know something of Marian's activities. When Mrs. Maudsley interrupts Marian and Leo, and the boy attempts to conceal Marian's note to Ted Burgess, we see Mrs. Maudsley at her most incisive:

"Take your hands out of your pockets, please," said Mrs. Maudsley. "Has no one ever told you not to stand with your hands in your pockets?"

Silently I obeyed.

"I could ask you to turn your pockets out," she said, and at once my hands flew to cover them. "But I won't do that," she went on. "I'll just ask you one question. You say you have taken messages for Marian before."

"Well, I--"

"I think you said so. If you don't take them to Nannie Robson, to whom do you take them?"

(GB, p. 256)

When we next meet Mrs. Maudsley, in spite of her outward friendliness to Leo, "her hands were shaking" (GB, p. 258). At the boy's birthday party, Mrs. Maudsley manages to pull a cracker with Leo, and she "bent her head and compressed her lips (GB, p. 260); an expression that foreshadows her reaction to what Leo will "lead" her to at the outhouse. Finally certain that Marian is conducting an affair, Mrs. Maudsley turns upon the boy with a suppressed fury that surprises even her husband:

...all at once Mrs. Maudsley pushed her chair back and stood up. Her elbows were sticking out, her body was bent and trembling, and her face unrecognizable.

"No," she said. "We won't wait. I'm going to look for her. Leo, you know where she is; you shall show me the way."

Before I knew what was happening she had swept me from the room, as much by the authority of her voice and manner as by her hand.... "Madeleine!" her husband's voice called after her; it was the only time I ever heard him call her by name.
(GB, pp. 260-261)

It is Mrs. Maudsley "who was guiding me; she knew where we were going" (GB, p. 261). She mocks what had been the boy's efforts to conceal the truth, with his talk of "'poachers'" (GB, p. 262), and she drags the boy into their confrontation with the copulating bodies of her daughter and Ted Burgess. Mrs. Maudsley's "repeated screams" frighten Leo, and mark the beginning of his "breakdown" (GB, p. 263). She irreparably harms Leo, who has inadvertently helped Marian to subvert her

mother's social aspirations. Mrs. Maudsley, however, achieves her goal of marrying her daughter to Trimingham, while Leo is left a "foreigner in the world of the emotions" (GB, p. 280). Like Eustace and Leadbitter, Leo must suffer for his willingness to please others.

Lady Nelly is the magnificent, even exotic, grande dame that Mrs. Maudsley and Mrs. Colston are not. With her relaxed flexibility, Lady Nelly contrasts sharply with the rigid disposition of Mrs. Maudsley, and with the less directly expressed social aspirations of Mrs. Colston. Lady Nelly's goals are less insidious than those of Mrs. Maudsley, but they are still threatening to a complaisant male like Eustace. When Lady Nelly launches him into the sort of fashionable society "which has always captivated his youthful fancy",¹⁴ Eustace does not immediately suffer under her aspirations. In fact, Lady Nelly's social interests are initially satisfied simply by Eustace's presence at her palazzo in Venice. More than a guest, though, Eustace is practically adopted by her and receives her patronage, especially after she has cast him in the role of writer. Although he does not begin writing Little Athens for some time, Eustace's presumed occupation is a necessity if he is to be acceptable among Lady Nelly's friends.

While Lady Nelly is clearly satisfying many of her own desires by taking Eustace under her wing, she also furnishes

Eustace with some opportunity to escape Hilda's grasp. Lady Nelly, rather like Nancy at the tobogganning and in Venice, provides Eustace with the opportunity to find his "'own way'" and to make his "'own mistakes'" in life (EHT, p. 606). When he begins his "scare" of planning to leave Venice, however, Lady Nelly offers justification for his being of her coterie, and exposes her need of Eustace's company:

"What's this scare you've been getting up about going away?" said Lady Nelly. "The regatta's to be next week, and after that Grotrian's going to play. I can't possibly let you go. People will think we've quarrelled. Besides, I should be most unpopular if I let you slip through my fingers. Venice would be up in arms. Only this morning Grotrian was asking me about you and congratulating me on having such a charming, clever, diffident, upspoilt guest."

"Oh," said Eustace, "I thought--"

"That you had been overlooked in all the multiplicity of his self-interest? Well, you hadn't. But I own he is a little overwhelming sometimes, which is another reason for not leaving me in the lurch."
(EHT, p. 592)

Lady Nelly's existence in Venice consists of an endless series of social engagements which would make any guest's departure seem a premature one. In spite of the difficulty involved in evaluating the seriousness of her pretexts, it is evident that Lady Nelly is concerned about her social prestige; it will suffer if Eustace departs so abruptly.

If Eustace assists Lady Nelly in maintaining herself

as a popular figure in Venetian society, he also bears the brunt of her flirtatious interests. In conversation with Jasper Bentwich, prior to Eustace's arrival in Venice, Lady Nelly discloses how little she knows about her intended guest:

"I'm not sure if he's coming or not."

"Who is he? Do I know him?"

"I shouldn't think you would," said Lady Nelly, "but you might." She tried to place him for Jasper. "He's a friend of Antony Lachish's....He's quite harmless--you wouldn't notice he was there."

"Why do you ask someone to stay if you don't notice that he's there?"

"I meant, you wouldn't. I shall."

"That's just what I'm afraid of," said Jasper crossly.

(EHT, p. 438)

Eustace, with his retiring, harmless ways, is unlike others. Lady Nelly, however, intends to explore all facets of her guest, and Jasper's response would indicate that if she has not invited such an eligible young man before, then at some point she has certainly revealed a predilection for his kind.

If it is Lady Nelly's goal that Eustace be her lover, then her mode of attack is initially one of innuendo. Her short invitation notes to him, for example, are teasing and playful-- "'Can you tear yourself from your beloved book (which I'm getting quite jealous of)...?'" (EHT, p. 580). And after Eustace sends a thousand pounds to Hilda, and is late for a rendezvous with Lady Nelly, she transforms his lateness into

another means of playfully flirting with her innocent guest:

"You look as if someone had given you a present," said Lady Nelly, when, sweating and panting, Eustace breasted the rather steep staircase that led, abruptly and without preamble, into Fortuny's Aladdin's cave. "I never saw you look so cheerful. Who have you been talking to all the time I've been waiting here? Who was the counter-attraction?" Her questions seldom demanded an answer: they brushed the hard surface of interrogation as lightly as a butterfly's wing....

....

"Tell me," went on Lady Nelly, "for I must take a leaf out of her book."

"I just did an errand at the post office," said Eustace; "and I couldn't find me way at first. I'm so sorry."

"I never saw anyone look less so," said Lady Nelly. "Sorrow must be meat and drink to you. Every hour I must think of something to make you rue."

(EHT, p. 588)

In Lady Nelly's last sentence, she enters what she assumes is the race for Eustace's attentions by citing a line of Emily Brontë's. Hartley, after all, in his epigraph to The Shrimp and the Anemone, has shown in what context the word "rue" may be understood:

...a hundred kinds of love,
All made the loved one rue.

(EHT, p. 15)

Lady Nelly, then, is not clearly communicating her love for Eustace, for he does not even "rue"--in fact it is with a good deal of pleasure that he has been so late for the appointment with his hostess. In so lightly touching the surface of her

guest's sensibility, Lady Nelly has extended not even one of the hundred kinds of love that Brontë's narrator would have us believe made "the loved one rue". Her ladyship's relationship with Eustace is almost exclusively the product of her highly articulated imagination, for it has no substantial effect upon him; he is neither elated nor grieved by her prattle, whose questions "seldom demanded an answer".

During their rendezvous, Eustace explains that any gift given to Hilda is also given to him. Lady Nelly finds this confusion of identities as dubious as Eustace's reason for his lateness. If, however, Eustace wants a gift, she will buy him a dressing gown, and Hilda a dress. The difference is that Nelly selects bedroom clothes for Eustace, and this asserts her interest in Eustace's playing a "masculine" role that would disassociate him from Hilda-- "'put away these ideas of combined identities,'" she says, "'and help me to choose something for her'" (EHT, p. 589). Lady Nelly will not tolerate Eustace's view of the siblings' very particular kind of relationship, which is, itself, rather like one from Emily Brontë, because it interferes with her desire that Eustace be like a gondolier, available to her and avec qui on peut coucher. Her ladyship, however, very swiftly realises that the relationship between Eustace and his sister is a major obstacle to her own attempt to have Eustace for herself:

"Don't think me interfering," said Lady Nelly. "And I can't talk, can I, having kept you here against your will the

whole summer?...but I like to think of you both stepping out, not on identical or even on parallel courses, but each finding your own way and making your own mistakes and your own separate bargains with life. I believe this summer may have helped towards that." She gave him an interrogative look. "Your sister will find you a well-known author with a long, dubious Continental past to which she doesn't hold the key, and you will see her as a woman who has--who has--well, found an emotional outlet suited to her age, her beauty, her vitality, and put all her natural gifts to the use for which they were meant. Have I spoken too plainly?"
(EHT, pp. 606-607)

In some ways, as Paul Bloomfield suggests, Lady Nelly also demonstrates some consideration for Eustace.¹⁵ Intermingled with her remarks is her belief that it would benefit Eustace, regardless of her own interests, if he were to lead his own life. Ironical, though, in the light of her own interest in the youthful Eustace, is her suggestion that Hilda find "'an emotional outlet suited to her age...'".

Lady Nelly's interest that Eustace lead an independent life is soon halted by her fear of having become too much of a Hilda to him. She is astute enough to realise that in so plainly offering her suggestions for the siblings' futures, she may have been too "prosy", and that Eustace may have paid her too much attention. She is finally not even convinced of the accuracy or appropriateness of her opinion in the light of Eustace's unenthusiastic response to her ideas:

"I can't think what's come over me.
There's something about you, Eustace,
that makes people want to talk to you

for your good. You have a lecturable face. You pay too much attention. You must be a terrible temptation to any sister. Did you say to yourself, as you heard me droning on, the hands are Nelly's hands but the voice is the voice of Hilda?"
(EHT, p. 607)

Lady Nelly immediately capitalises on the connection she has made between herself and Hilda, and so qualifies her earlier statement that Eustace should separate from his sister. It can only be to Lady Nelly's advantage that Eustace finds such an association amusing; if he has indeed seen Lady Nelly as another Hilda, then for the moment at least, her ladyship is guaranteed to have retained his interest.

Ironically, however, in mentioning "hands", Lady Nelly is unwittingly recalling the "unbearable intimacy" Eustace had associated with hands on his last visit to Miss Fothergill-- "'shaking hands with Miss Fothergill'", we remember, was a common phrase in *Anchorstone*, used to describe "a fruitless undertaking" (EHT, p. 128). Lady Nelly may be partly like Hilda and therefore attractive to Eustace, but she is also representative of those "hands" which in his childhood had been so objectionable to him.

Miss Fothergill and Marian Maudsley are the two women of the *Hartleian* works under discussion who succeed in deriving sexual pleasure from their designs. Miss Fothergill's sedentary existence, enlivened somewhat by her use of a bath-chair, makes her a slave to regular habits, which are supervised by the

imperious Miss Grimshaw. The old lady's interest in being provided with some variation in her life is an objective she reveals on her first visit with Eustace:

"Supposing you took me out alone?"

A little frown collected between Miss Grimshaw's thick eyebrows, which Eustace did not fail to notice.

"Oh, I should ask her to join us in about...about a quarter of an hour."

"He's a tactful little boy," said Miss Grimshaw coldly.

"Yes, I'm afraid so. Now, Eustace, you've been very kind but you mustn't waste your time any longer with an old woman like me. He wants to go and play on the sands, doesn't he, Hilda?"

(EHT, p. 68)

Miss Fothergill imagines that the boy would be excited at being offered the possibility of taking her out alone. Her question is also an expression of her own turbulent feelings at the prospect of being escorted by a gallant male. The old lady is seeking a genuine interest on the boy's part, and ironically, it is Hilda who provides it by arranging that Eustace and Miss Fothergill meet for tea.

Janet Fothergill's desire to create a more interesting life for herself is significantly achieved when Eustace begins his visits to Laburnum Lodge--in his company, the elderly woman can indulge her interests in cards and gambling, but not in the poetry, music, walks and letters she would have Aunt Sarah believe they enjoy. More importantly, Miss Fothergill

derives a great deal of physical satisfaction when, in their game, a sexual "currency of kisses" is substituted for money, and they begin to "play for love" (EHT, p. 121). As Peter Bien comments:

Miss Fothergill is clearly in love with tiny, unsuspecting Eustace, who must forfeit a kiss every time he loses at piquet. But the sexual relation is intrinsically sterile and unnatural, just as is the relation between Eustace and his sister, of which the Fothergill episodes are a kind of parody.¹⁶

Sterile and unnatural as the sexual relationship is, the effect of it upon Miss Fothergill is of an extreme kind, as we witness during their discussion of the proposed game of piquet:

"I thought perhaps piquet was rather a grown-up game for you," she went on, "and it might make it more...more amusing if we each paid a forfeit when we lost--I sixpence a hundred and you--you--" Here Miss Fothergill's voice, which rarely failed her completely, dissolved into a bubbling.

"A kiss." Eustace finished her sentence for her. "It was a very good plan, for me, you know--and it's always worked beautifully."

Miss Fothergill smiled.

"Till now. I wonder why Helen didn't like it!" she added carelessly. "Perhaps she told you?"

Eustace stared at Miss Fothergill from under his lashes. He had not, he never would have, told her that it was Miss Grimshaw who had objected to the kisses. She had been helping him on with

his coat but really she was only pretending to, for when it was half on she gave him a little shake that startled him very much and whispered so unkindly in his ear: "They won't catch me kissing you--or giving you half-crowns either."

(EHT, pp. 121-122)

The game will satisfy Miss Fothergill's craving for a kiss, and this is so fundamental a need in her that she cannot say the word. She pouts helplessly, with a "bubbling" voice whose sound is reminiscent of a drowning--like a fish with smothered gills. Miss Fothergill's need is for a kiss that will revive her suffocated spirit.

The old woman soon realises, however, after discussing with the boy his plans for school and his lack of friends, that her interest in him extends beyond mere kisses. After, we assume, she has made some calculations about Eustace's age and education, Miss Fothergill, possibly considering the legacy for him, sheds a tear:

"You'll take the two shillings this time?" she said, and Eustace expected to see her get the money from her purse; but it was her handkerchief she wanted. She blew her nose and then handed Eustace his winnings.

Immediately, though it was not in their contract, he got up and kissed her. There was a salt-tasting tear on her cheek. "Are you crying?" he asked.

"As you would say, 'Not really'," she replied. "I ought to be glad, oughn't I, that I'm going to save so many shillings in future?"

Young as he was Eustace already experienced the awkwardness that falls between people when discharging debts of honour.

"But you'll let me kiss you all the same?" he said. "Once if I lose, twice if I win."

Miss Fothergill did not answer for a moment. Then she said, "When am I going to see you again?"

(EHT, p. 124)

Deeper feelings have been touched in Miss Fothergill, and her reaching into her purse for a handkerchief rather than for money is a small act suggestive of the development of her relationship with Eustace. The exchange of money has been superseded by strong emotion--her growing love for the boy closes her eyes to his concern that he might still need his kiss-currency, "'Once if I lose, twice if I win'".

The old woman's triumph occurs when, in pursuit of Eustace's devotion, in the wake of their shared kisses, she manages to intensify their physical relationship. As he sits beside the old lady at the moment of her death, she asks:

"Eustace, will you hold my hand?"

Eustace approached her. For years Miss Fothergill had shaken hands with no one. It was obvious that she couldn't, and she had long since ceased to feel seriously embarrassed when a stranger offered to. She would refuse with a quick, petulant gesture.... To Eustace her hands had come to seem stylised, hardly more real than hands in a picture; he no longer thought of them as flesh and blood. To touch them now seemed an act of unbearable intimacy from which his whole being shrank--not so much in alarm,

for his alarm had become too general to find new terrors in an ancient bugbear-- as from an obscure feeling that he was breaking the rules, doing something that she herself, were she herself, would never allow.

(EHT, p. 128)

Having overcome, through Eustace, years of inhibition, Miss Fothergill is finally able to hold hands with another person. When Eustace is discovered with the dead Miss Fothergill, Dr. Speedwell reports that Eustace "'was sitting there...as if he was taking her pulse. And he wouldn't move at first'" (EHT, p. 128). The relationship between the boy and elderly Janet Fothergill finally reaches its zenith; the old lady finds emotional and physical satisfaction, and with them, the precious variation in life that her secluded and crippled condition had previously denied her.

Marian Maudsley, like Miss Fothergill, is involved in an intense liaison that constitutes a "breaking [of] the rules": Marian is ignoring at least the values of her upper-middle class family in developing a sexual relationship with a local farmer; Miss Fothergill, in gambling for kisses with a boy, is gaining sexual pleasure and emotional comfort by exploiting the innocence of a child. Yet, such exploitation is far less daring than Marian's "personal rebellion on behalf of vitality" which is "different in kind from the Victorian propriety she [Marian] came from".¹⁷

Marian Maudsley's passion for Ted Burgess is, of course,

dramatically different in quality from Miss Fothergill's love for Eustace. Marian's intense and tempestuous feelings enjoy expression in a mutually satisfying, and "earthy", sexual relationship. If only Miss Grimshaw and Eustace are affected by Miss Fothergill's relationship with the boy, Marian's relationship wreaks havoc upon several lives: her own, Ted's, her future husband's (presumably), her mother's, her father's, Leo's, and her future grandson's. While Mrs. Maudsley's goal is to have Marian marry Lord Trimmingham, her daughter's efforts are centred upon outwitting her mother, in order that she might continue her passionate love affair with Ted Burgess, of Black Farm. The conflict between the two women is a harsh one, but for the most part, if not ultimately, Marian is the more successfully calculating of the two. Her intelligence emerges in small details like the serving of tea:

She did not put the finesse into pouring out the tea that her mother did, asking questions all round the table, making each cup seem like a present, for she seemed to know by instinct, or to remember from other times, just how everybody liked their tea. "Yours is with lemon, isn't it?" she would say, and so on.

(GB, p. 181)

Unlike her mother, who enjoys the occasion as Mrs. Colston would do, Marian treats it in a practical way and allows a combination of memory and instinct to guide her around the guests and their particular tastes. If there is something of the calculating young woman in Marian, then there is also a

compassionate and sympathetic person in her too, though it may not have been Hartley's intention to demonstrate it;¹⁸ at the time she begins to recognise the advantages to herself, and to Ted, of befriending Leo, for example, Marian also extends to the boy a good deal of spontaneous affection:

Marian said she would find out what I needed. For this she would have to examine my exiguous wardrobe, an inquisition which I dreaded; but when it came, when all soft and flouncy she appeared in our room, heralded by Marcus, what a delight it was!--a transformation scene. She studied each garment almost reverently. "How beautifully they are mended!" she said. "I wish we had someone who could mend like that!" I didn't tell her that my mother had done it, but perhaps she guessed. She was quick at finding out things. "Those clothes you had at home were a myth, weren't they?" she said. "A myth?" I echoed. "I mean you didn't really have them?" I nodded, happy to have been found out, delighting in the shared secret.

(GB, p. 46)

Marian's reverent inspection of Leo's clothing and her interest in his "myth" are not the actions of a detached schemer. If Marian plans to meet her lover in Norwich, it will not be before she has purchased clothing for Leo, in whom she has quite naturally taken an interest. We might also consider the older Leo's re-assessment of Marian's behaviour to him as a child:

...it became clear to me--chronology proved it--that Marian had been quite fond of me before there was any question of my action as go-between. Afterwards she had redoubled her favours, making up to me and stuffing me with lies; but the

episode of the green suit came first. I saw now, what I did not take in then, that her chief object in going to Norwich was to meet Ted Burgess: his must have been the raised hat on the other side of the Square. But it would be unduly cynical to say I was only a pretext for her journey. It would have been such an expensive pretext, for one thing--not that she minded about money. I felt pretty sure that she was genuinely concerned about my permanently over-heated state, and wanted to do me a good turn.

(GB, p. 266)

In the bathing scene, too, Marian shows some affection, even though she is distracted:

"Is your hair dry now?" I asked solicitously.

She laughed and said, "Thanks to your bathing-suit!"

I felt proud of having been of use to her, but I couldn't think of anything to say to her except, "Does it only come down by accident?"

She laughed again and said, "Haven't you any sisters?" which surprised and even wounded me; I had told her all about my family circumstances, for me an oyster-like disclosure, the day we went to Norwich. I reminded her of this.

"Of course you did," she said. "And I remember it all perfectly. But I have so many things to think about, it slipped out of my mind. I am so sorry."

(GB, p. 65)

Marian laughs in Leo's company and finds his boyish charm amusing. More compelling is her lack of the social curiosity of Mrs. Maudsley and of the snobbish Marcus. Leo's family background is not important to Marian, but the quality

of their friendship, in spite of his being her go-between, does ~~indeed~~ concern her. Marian further demonstrates her interest when the boy cuts his knee at Ted Burgess' farm. Even though she is perhaps excited by the fact that Leo has visited Ted, she does not know that Leo is carrying a letter from her beloved. She spontaneously cares for Leo's wound, and bathes his knee, even though there are twelve servants who might perform the first aid.

"My goodness," she said, "you did come a cropper," but to my surprise she said nothing about Ted Burgess until almost the end, after she had put on the new bandage. The old one was lying on the edge of the bath, all creased and bloodstained, and she looked at it and said: "Is that his handkerchief?"

(GB, p. 88)

It is not until Leo presents Marian with Ted's letter that she becomes confused about the bandage, insists that no-one should know about the note, and overlooks the fact that Marcus is ill in bed--"'I seem to forget everything'" claims Marian, now that she is again intoxicated by the subject of Ted Burgess (GB, p. 89). In the intervening period, however, she has at least displayed a genuine human warmth towards Leo.

By sending Leo with messages to her lover, Marian is able to "outdesign" her designing mother and to achieve her major goal of organising trysts with Ted. Marian's notes all bespeak a violent passion; she writes a message, for example, that begins "'Darling, darling, darling'" (GB, p. 110), and

another note that ends "'and if he doesn't get through with it I shall be there at six, and wait till seven or eight or nine or Doomsday--darling, darling'" (GB, p. 268). In Marian's note we sense the powerful force that motivates her; her goal is to enjoy a fertile, passionate and reciprocated love for Ted, while Mrs. Maudsley would weed out the "uncultivated" relationship (resembling the burgeoning belladonna), in favour of a marriage between her daughter and Lord Trimingham.

Marian's affair culminates in Ted's suicide, and Marian marries Hugh so that people will be "nice" to her (GB, p. 277). After "'so much happiness and beauty'" (GB, 279) in her relationship with Ted, Marian's greatest sorrow, as an old woman, is that her grandson does not very often come to visit. We last meet Marian craving the companionship of even a guest; a situation similar to the one in which Miss Fothergill found herself before the old woman so exploited Eustace with her sexual interests. Hartley's "clutching" female figures must, in the end, content themselves with crumbs of affection.

While the socially-based objectives of Mrs. Maudsley and Mrs. Colston are inhibiting for their children, each of the women variously attempts to secure a "place" for her child on a higher rung of the social ladder; their goals, therefore, are socially determined and attempt to bring social "advancement" to the young person who suffers under

their rigour. The morally-based objectives of Sarah Cherrington and Hilda, however, are far more strenuously asserted; Eustace's sister and his aunt manipulate the boy according to strict Victorian or Puritanical standards, and the cumulative effect of this regulating is to deny life to the boy. Tarnished as Marian is, and affected as Leo is, by exposure to maternal designing ways, unlike Eustace they do not die as a result of their experiences. While in many ways Mrs. Maudsley's controls upon life at Brandham are similar to Aunt Sarah's over Cambo, they are not exercised for their own sake as are the life-denying restraints at Eustace's home.

Sarah Cherrington holds the reins upon life at Cambo. Keeping everyone on a string, Alfred Cherrington's sister maintains a cautious grip upon any events that might lead to excesses or to an indulgent enjoyment of life. Like the house of which she is mistress, there is a vigorous sense of restraint about her, particularly in the matter of Miss Fothergill's legacy:

She looked round the room, so clean and so uncomfortable, returning its unfriendly stare with another equally unfriendly; she looked at the unjustifiable fire, doggedly achieving combustion; she looked at the glass in her brother's hand. Then she said:

"There's another reason why we shouldn't accept Miss Fothergill's legacy. It might get us into extravagant ways too."

(EHT, p. 130)

In the austere drawing-room, beneath the more animated activities of Eustace in the bath-tub, Aunt Sarah's cold temperament suits its hostile surroundings. We are presented here with a dichotomy explored more widely in the trilogy between the "Gothic" experiences of Eustace's childhood, and the "Baroque" extravagances to which he is subjected in Venice. The natural and inviting warmth of the fire at Cambo is an "unjustifiable" one, and its combustion is a dogged persistence that interferes with the stiff and unnatural discomfort that Aunt Sarah would be happier promoting. And following her unfriendly stare from the indulgence of a fire's warmth, our attention rests upon the glass in her brother's hand--another luxury which might, alas, be nurtured by the financial improvement that is proffered by Eustace's windfall.

That her controls upon the house could be damaging is suggested by her appearance. Hartley emphasises faded colours and linear qualities when presenting Aunt Sarah; features again symbolic of the rigidities associated with the boy's early childhood experiences:

"I don't know what you mean, Sarah, but I could do with a bit of extravagance myself, I can tell you." He looked down at his sister, at the threads of grey contending with the brown, at the uprush of vertical lines that supported others as deeply scored across her brow, at the faded eyes fixed abstractedly on her tired-looking black shoes.

(EHT, p. 130)

Sarah's unextravagant features betray the worn, restrained unfriendliness of her manner--she is branded by intersecting lines, her eyes and shoes are in decline. Her "squareness" is something that Eustace leaves behind him as he gazes at the untrue angles of his room in Venice--"But could a thing, or a person, be fair without being square?" he asks himself (EHT, p. 451). Beneath the controls Aunt Sarah has brought upon herself is an exhausted spirit whose sterility she has tried to impose upon her household.

In particular, however, and in Hilda's fashion, Aunt Sarah's main objective is to direct the innocent Eustace. It is she, for example, who would maintain that the boy is "'easily led'" (EHT, p. 130), and that he is susceptible to "'pretty things'" (EHT, p. 131).like Nancy Steptoe. Aunt Sarah would prefer that virtue find its own rewards and that Eustace, therefore, be more restrained like her, and so more withdrawn from any "sense of luxury" that could corrupt him (EHT, p. 132). While Aunt Sarah's views express a good deal of truth about Eustace, she is not only trying to control her nephew when she states them. In raising Eustace according to her moral standards, she is also keeping her wayward brother in check. The danger of so much money coming to the boy, for example, prompts her to chide Alfred, who does not share her Puritanical ways. At the Frontisham tea she declares: "'One cannot be too careful about money, one's own or other people's'" (EHT,

p. 154). Her remark is prompted by Alfred's view that the price of so many cakes is not a financial difficulty to them-- Alfred is quick to frown at Sarah, and "his face suddenly looked lined and tired above his creaseless suit" (EHT, p. 154). As she endeavours to influence her brother, Sarah causes Alfred to adopt her own brand of strained physical features, so expressive of her life-denying beliefs.

Some commentators have been tempted to see Hilda Cherrington as an "earnest commissar",¹⁹ as "a personification of the harsh universe",²⁰ or as "assertive and a tyrant".²¹ Her connection with Eustace has even been called a "savage relationship enacted with something approaching obscenity",²² but it would seem more reasonable to consider her simply as an excessively dutiful elder sister, "the aim of whose life is to mould [Eustace] in the image of her ideal".²³ She is indeed a powerful influence over Eustace, but she is not quite the merciless female that many critics would have us believe. Nevertheless, it is Hilda, for example, who would organise the process of expiation for Eustace when he had committed any misdemeanour:

Expiation already played a part in his life; it reinstated him in happiness continually. Hilda was the organiser of expiation: she did not let him off: she kept him up to the scratch, she was extreme to mark what was done amiss. But as the agent of retribution she was impersonal: she only adjudicated between him and a third party.

(EHT, p. 25)

In appointing herself Eustace's "extreme" guide, Hilda confines herself to the moral sphere, however, for here she feels that she has some divinely ordained ability:

Hilda believed that her dominion was founded upon grace: she shouldered her moral responsibilities towards Eustace without misgiving: she did not think it necessary to prove or demonstrate her ascendancy by personal achievements outside the moral sphere.

(EHT, p. 35)

With her unique form of control over the boy, Hilda is able to protect Eustace from any outside interference and so keep him as her exclusive companion. She snatches the boy away from the "stuck-up" Nancy, for example, and suggests alternative plans for her brother at the pond-making (EHT, p. 22).

Similarly, she keeps at bay any potential intruder:

...woe betide the stranger who, by accident or design, tampered with Hilda's rampart! Large or small, she gave him a piece of her mind; and Eustace, standing some way behind, balanced uncertainly on the edge of the conflict, would echo some of his sister's less provocative phrases, by way of underlining.

Together they repaired the damage and with it the lesion in their affections....

(EHT, pp. 30-31)

With the provocative phrases, Hilda is protecting herself and Eustace from any contact with other people--Eustace is also within her castle walls. And on the Downs, during the tobogganing, Hilda admirably pursues her cause with her mirth at Gerald's fall as he demonstrates to the children the run downhill:

"You've been very unkind to me, Eustace."

Eustace was feeling tired: he wished Hilda had offered to help him pull up the toboggan. Her accusation, acting on his nerves, seemed to redouble his weariness.

"Oh why, Hilda? I asked you to come and you wouldn't."

"Because I saw you wanted to be with Nancy," said Hilda sombrely. "You never left her alone for a moment. You don't know how silly you looked--both of you," she added as an after-thought.

"You didn't see us," Eustace argued feebly, "you were always looking the other way."

"I did try not to see you," said Hilda, remorselessly striding up the slope, her superior stature, unimpaired freshness and natural vigour giving her a great advantage over Eustace. "But when I couldn't see you I could hear you. I was ashamed of you and so was Aunt Sarah and so was Daddy."

"Daddy said he was proud of me."

"Oh, he said that to please Major Steptoe."

(EHT, pp. 54-55)

In order to keep Eustace for herself, Hilda carefully manipulates his precarious feelings by instilling guilt in him for his behaviour. Like Aunt Sarah's unfriendly stare at the fire and at Alfred's glass, Hilda's hostility towards the tobogganing is her attempt to deny Eustace the living that she would crave for herself. We later witness an expression of Hilda's desire to participate in the events she presently

snubs, when she takes control of the tobogganing. Eustace, so enjoying himself, is halted by his sister's insistence that he has been personally unkind to her in having spent so much time with Nancy.

Displaying a need similar to that of Miss Fothergill, Hilda ignores the object of her supposed affection, her brother, and instead she feeds her own desperation--she ridicules Eustace for looking so "silly" with Nancy. Hilda reveals a sorely wounded pride when she confesses to not having seen Nancy and Eustace so much as heard them. She reacts to what she has imagined of Eustace's behaviour, and not to ~~the~~ behaviour directly--in the pathological failure to confront reality lies the source of her neurosis.

To further her discontent with what she has felt during her isolation, and with Eustace's behaviour, Hilda finally crowns her case by invoking the alleged support of Aunt Sarah and Alfred Cherrington. In spite of what Eustace remembers of his father's praising him, Hilda says that their father spoke "'to please Major Steptoe'" (EHT, p. 55). Hilda presents her brother with a world wherein one lies to please others and to gain their esteem--ironically, the hypocrisy that Hilda attributes to her father is not unlike her own. Hilda carefully distorts the truth in order to satisfy her desperate need for the comfort of her brother's uncompromised friendship.

That Hilda's need of Eustace is one that stifles and

taints their relationship is also revealed when the boy prepares to go away for his schooling:

Even Aunt Sarah, who did not like the whistling or the hands in the pockets or the slang, only rebuked them half-heartedly.

But Hilda, beautiful, unapproachable Hilda, could not reconcile herself to the turn events had taken. Was she not and would she not always be nearly four years older than her brother Eustace? Was she not his spiritual adviser, pledged to make him a credit to her and to himself and to his family?

He was her care, her task in life. Indeed, he was much more than that; her strongest feelings centred in him and at the thought of losing him she felt as if her heart was being torn out of her body.

So while Eustace grew more perky, Hilda pined. She had never carried herself well, but now she slouched along, hurrying past people she knew as if she had important business to attend to, and her beauty, had she been aware of it, might have been a pursuer she was trying to shake off.

Eustace must not go to school, he must not. She knew he would not want to, when the time came; but then it would be too late. She had rescued him from Anchorstone Hall, the lair of the highwayman, Dick Staveley, his hero and her bête noire; and she would rescue him again. But she must act, and act at once.

It was easy to find arguments. School would be bad for him. It would bring out the qualities he shared with other little boys, qualities which could be kept in check if he remained at home.

(EHT, p. 202)

As with her response to Nancy and Eustace's behaviour

at the tobogganing on the Downs, Hilda believes that the intensity of her feelings is justification enough for the measures she proposes taking to keep Eustace at Cambo. She will not allow her feelings to go toward anyone else, and her black-and-white imagination will keep Eustace forever "in check" whether at home, at Oxford, or in Venice.

Leo Colston, Eustace Cherrington and Stephen Leadbitter, partly because of their complaisant conduct and partly because of their tendency to inhabit fantasy worlds, become victims of the women's designing ways. The women are determinedly pursuing goals that are variously social, sexual, moral and spiritual. While Leo, Eustace and Leadbitter cannot be said to lack goals of their own, their objectives in life are subjugated to those of Mrs. Colston, Mrs. and Marian Maudsley, of Miss Fothergill, Aunt Sarah, Hilda Cherrington, and Lady Nelly, and of Lady Franklin. In considering the efforts of Leo, Eustace and Leadbitter to live their lives, we are reminded of Eustace's experience at Miss Wauchope's dancing-class:

Eustace, assiduous and anxious to give satisfaction, got the steps fairly correct but missed, and felt he missed, their spirit. He was too intent on getting the details right. His air of nervous and conciliatory concentration would have awakened the bully in the most good-natured of women; little did Eustace realise the bridle Miss Wauchope put on her tongue as she watched his conscientious, clumsy movements.

(EHT, p. 75)

Leo, Eustace and Leadbitter, in behaving as they do, and in imagining what they do, stimulate conduct "in the most good-natured of women" that tends towards that of "the bully". By describing the landscape of his characters' imaginative lives, Hartley has revealed the complex means by which Leo, Eustace and Leadbitter fall under the spell of the women and their very "real" objectives. In the light of these unequal relationships between men and women, the discussion can now proceed to Hartley's treatment of alternative relationships that seem to hold out more hope of equality: those between males.

NOTES

- ¹Jones, Hartley, 60.
- ²Trevor Allen, "L.P. Hartley in Focus," Books and Bookmen 18 (November 1972): 26.
- ³Margaret Moan, "Setting and Structure: An Approach to Hartley's The Go-Between," Critique 15.2 (January 1973): 32.
- ⁴Jones, Hartley, 59.
- ⁵Mulkeen, Wild, 43.
- ⁶Jones, Hartley, 60.
- ⁷Mulkeen, Wild, 56.
- ⁸Ibid., 50.
- ⁹Ibid., 61.
- ¹⁰Jones, Hartley, 65.
- ¹¹Ibid., 146.
- ¹²L.P. Hartley, Introduction to The Go-Between (London: Heinemann, 1963) 4.
- ¹³In the film "The Go-Between", as Lois Gordon has pointed out, Leo's role in Mrs. Maudsley's plans is more clearly presented than in the book:

...Mrs. Maudsley, as gracious and generous as she is to Leo, is also manipulating the boy, for she, on the one hand, is happy to have someone at Brandham Hall to entertain her adolescent Marcus, but more important, she suspects her daughter of an affair, and she needs a sounding board, silent though Leo is, for an articulation of her own suspicions about Marian.

In the novel, Mrs. Maudsley is initially concerned about Leo because he causes her problems.

(Lois Gordon, "The Go-Between--Hartley by Pinter," Kansas Quarterly 4.2 (1972): 86.

¹⁴"Fate and Eustace," Times Literary Supplement (July 19, 1947): 361.

¹⁵Paul Bloomfield, "L.P. Hartley," Writers and their Work 144 (London 1962): 14.

¹⁶Bien, Hartley, 64.

¹⁷Jones, Hartley, 109.

¹⁸In deciding that Marian had "behaved very badly", Hartley, in "My Own Work", acknowledges that his attitude "softened" towards her and Ted:

However, as the story went on I softened towards them....I found I wanted Marian and Ted to be ordinary flesh and blood people...driven by forces stronger than themselves....

But I did think she behaved very badly and Ted only less badly, and one reason why I wrote the Epilogue was to show how her sins found her out....I was afraid that the critics would say I had portrayed a monster, but none of them did: indeed one of them said that though it was obvious I disapproved of Marian, he was on her side: because she represented life in its richness and complexity. And several people have told me that they liked her, or at any rate found her attractive.

Of course any novelist would rather have it said that he had drawn an attractive woman than that he had upheld the Moral Law....

(Bien, Hartley, 182). (Delivered in a 1957 lecture by Hartley at the Aldeburgh Festival).

¹⁹John Atkins, Six Novelists Look at Society (London: John Calder, 1977) 87-88.

²⁰Bien, Hartley, 46.

²¹P.H. Newby, The Novelists: 1945-1950 (London 1951) 36.

²²John McCormick, Catastrophe and Imagination: An Interpretation of the English and American Novel (London 1957) 300.

²³Cecil, Introduction, 7.

CHAPTER III
THE MALE/MALE RELATIONSHIP:
HARTLEY'S PORTRAYAL OF AN ALTERNATIVE

L.P. Hartley was a homosexual. Towards the end of his life there was a gradual easing of public hostility towards people of his kind. In the year Hartley was born, Oscar Wilde was undergoing his infamous public trials. Justice Willis' "utmost sense of indignation" that caused him to "pass the severest sentence that the law allows"¹ upon Wilde, had a serious effect upon homosexual writers in particular. As Jeffrey Meyers has indicated in Homosexuality and Literature: 1890-1930, "Modern English literature was significantly affected by the conviction of Wilde in 1895, for it established the pattern of persecution that forced homosexuals to go underground for more than seventy years."²

Hartley was not unaffected by the slow and painful emancipation of the homosexual. The Wolfenden Report of 1957 looked more favourably than Judge Willis upon consenting adult homosexuals, and it recommended that their activities "should no longer be a criminal offence."³ When, in a letter to The Times, Sir Henry Slessor criticized the advocates of the report,⁴ Hartley was swift to respond; in a letter to Roderick Meiklejohn he expressed his great anger at Slessor's opinions.⁵

Nine years later, in The Betrayal, Hartley presents the case of Denys Aspin, who, in a Soho restaurant, allegedly shows homosexual interest in Alfred Baker, a labourer. Baker brutally attacks Aspin, who subsequently dies from his injuries. At a preliminary hearing, before Aspin has died, the homophobic Chairman of the Bench apologizes for sending Baker for trial at the Assizes. His remarks about Aspin and his alleged crime ("none of the witnesses is prepared to say that the offence was offered" (BTL, p. 237)), recall the ferocity of Judge Willis' indictment of Wilde:

"...I think we may give the accused the benefit of the doubt when he says he did believe it, and if that is so he was defending himself by natural means, his fists, and his feet, against something which is wholly unnatural and un-English and abominable and ought to be stamped out or kicked out. No man has a right to take the law into his own hands, but if ever there were extenuating circumstances, Baker, in my opinion, has a right to claim them. We must commit you, Baker, for trial at the Assizes, but I am sure that there they will take as lenient a view of your case as it is possible to take, and I hope for your sake that the man you handled so roughly will survive, although men of that sort--if he was a man of that sort--are of no use to anyone, indeed they are a menace to society."
(BTL, pp. 237-238)

Francis King, a literary acquaintance of Hartley, has explained in an interview his friend's difficulty with the subject of homosexuality in his work and in his personal life:

He [Hartley] would never come clean about being homosexual. To me, of course, he was totally frank, but since his death I've met a lot of his friends who were absolutely amazed that he should have been gay.

He was very, very frightened of coming out. Of course as he grew older he became less and less discreet in his novels, but he was very nervous about some of those later novels. He used to say "what will Lady So-and-So say when she reads this?" And I thought, hell what does it matter. In any case, nowadays nobody's going to be particularly upset. After some of those later novels, My Brother's [sic] Keeper, for example, he was very worried what his grand friends were going to say about it.⁶

Hartley's predicament was one faced by most homosexual writers of his generation: E.M. Forster, like Hartley, was more restrained than, for example, Auden and Isherwood, in his literary expression of homosexual behaviour. Forster posthumously published Maurice (1971) and The Life to Come (1972), which are similar in nature to Hartley's rather "bare" later novels, for example My Sisters' Keeper (1970) and The Harness Room (1971). In their earlier works, however, both writers disguise a homosexual theme. Jeffrey Meyers has discussed this technique, and others, as a typical method of concealment employed by homosexual writers:

The clandestine predilections of homosexual novelists are both an obstacle and a stimulus to art, and lead to a creative tension between repression and expression. The novels become a raid on inarticulate feelings, and force the authors to find a language of reticence and evasion, obliqueness and indirection, to convey their theme.

Homosexual novels are characteristically subtle, allusive and symbolic...and form an eighth kind of literary ambiguity.... If a specifically homosexual tone, sensibility, vision or mode of apprehension exists, then it would be characterized by these cautious and covert qualities, and by the use of art to conceal rather than to reveal the actual theme of the novel: "Il n'y a de vérité que dans les nuances".⁷

When Peter Bien published his L.P. Hartley in 1963, Hartley had not yet fully explored the homosexual theme in his fiction. In connection with his study of My Fellow Devils, however, Bien comments upon what he sees as Hartley's unnecessary reluctance when dealing with the theme of male homosexuality:

Nick is a somewhat idiosyncratic Adam, being a homosexual. Mr. Hartley keeps the barrister's inversion completely hidden at first, and when he does finally reveal the "schoolboy attachment" between Nick and Colum (p. 128), he does so in an off-hand manner, almost in passing. "All this...is in the book," Mr. Hartley states (Letter 7), "but I played it down as much as I could, because I didn't want to write a specifically 'homosexual novel', and I didn't want to suggest that Colum was wicked because of his homosexuality."

One is tempted to say that this reluctance is salutary, particularly in view of the fact that contemporary English novels are so over-populated with homosexuals. In this case, however, the homosexuality is central to both plot and characterization; moreover, Mr. Hartley's reluctance has caused him to forego the splendid dramatic irony which would have resulted had we, the audience, known the true reason for Nick's seemingly-excessive aversion to Colum in the opening scenes, while Margaret remained in the dark.⁸

Bien was subsequently to say that his book could have benefited from further study of the homosexual issue:

...one of the (many I'm sure) defects of my book on Hartley is the absence of this homosexual theme. I was too naive or too imperceptive at the time to pick this up...and Hartley was not ready to come out of the "closet".⁹

By contrast, Anne Mulkeen avoids discussing the developing theme of homosexuality by criticising the later fiction, including My Sisters' Keeper and The Harness Room, thus:

Less and less symbolic (though on occasion allegorical), more and more confined to a rarefied social milieu, these books seem valuable mainly as insights into Hartley's personal world and preoccupations. Freudian critics in particular will find much material for speculation in the more daring topics, including homosexuality, which Hartley touched on in his last years. But in this study I have felt justified in regarding these books as unrelated to what I see as the main thrust of Hartley's literary art.¹⁰

E.T. Jones, however, in 1978, takes a different view, and, after a brief study of The Harness Room, concludes:

Though few of Hartley's novels are explicitly about sex, an orientation gradually reveals itself from the earliest novels to the last ones which is consistent and productive, reflecting, among other things, the changing cultural conditions of the times. In Hartley's joyous portrayal of physical and emotional bonding between men, he achieves a celebration of natural and spontaneous liberation which surpasses even the "happy" endings of books like Facial Justice.¹¹

While Mulkeen is, undoubtedly, accurate in her assessment of Hartley's later novels--she sees them as "less symbolic" and therefore "lighter" and carrying less of a "message"¹²--these later works demand consideration in order to balance the discussion of themes presented in earlier chapters of the thesis. The Harness Room, for example, deals with the male homosexual issue that, as Jones indicates, has appeared in Hartley's work from the earliest novels. One would hardly refer, though, to Hartley's depiction of male bonding as "joyous". By comparing Hartley's symbolic handling of the theme in an early novel with his more direct presentation of it in a later work, we will gain a more rounded understanding of Hartley's depiction of relationships between males. As Peter Bien points out:

[Hartley's] greater frankness, later in life, about his homosexuality (a function of the times, of course, and the revelations in public about Forster), naturally invites one to reinterpret certain aspects of the novels in this light.¹³

Jones has stated that Hartley's tentative examination of this orientation "as a complement, if not a superior alternative, to love between the sexes", was "begun obliquely in My Fellow Devils [1951], hinted at peripherally in The Brickfield/The Betrayal [1964, 1966]...surfacing in My Sisters' Keeper [1970]".¹⁴ In 1971, Ian Young, in The Male Homosexual in Literature: A Bibliography (1975), expanded Jones' list and cited the Go-Between and The Hireling as also dealing with

the theme of the male homosexual.¹⁵

In Chapter One, I examined the process by which Eustace, the typical Hartleian male protagonist, grows towards self-understanding; how, principally by separating himself from his sister, he prepares to establish his independence in life. In this chapter, I propose examining how Hartley presents the growth of a male protagonist, Leo Colston, partly in terms of his forming a close relationship with another male, Ted Burgess.

In Chapter Two, I tried to demonstrate how, because of their fantasizing and willingness to please others, Leo, Eustace and Leadbitter become victims of the female characters; Leo, in fact, repeatedly states that it was Marian "whom I loved" (GB, p. 228); she, however, "the Virgin of the Zodiac" (GB, p. 167), weakens the boy who has become dependent upon this goddess who has "re-created" him in the role of Mercury. The more deeply Leo is pulled into the fantasy world of the gods, the more easily he is manipulated. Hartley reveals, however, that Leo also sees Ted Burgess as someone who affects him as urgently as Marian; the farmer competes with Marian in the boy's imagination and affections as Leo becomes inextricably woven into the relationship between Ted and his mistress. As I will try to show, Hartley gently and repeatedly tries to suggest that Leo's feelings for Ted are included in the boy's great "love" for Marian.

Instead of simply being manipulated by the farmer, however, as Leo is by Marian, the boy is allowed growth, even strength, through contact with him. Ted, in stark contrast to Marian, offers the boy a refuge from both the women who smother him, and from the "ampler ether" that so intoxicates him during his stay at the Hall (GB, p. 95). The farmer cultivates Leo by introducing him to "real life"--the sort of experience to which Eustace is also exposed at the Redentore, and when he dreams of the prospect of meeting a man under a railway arch:

Only he [Ted], it seemed to me, had a real life outside the problem [of Marian's engagement to Trimingham], a life unconnected with it to which he was always reaching. Into that other life he admitted me as a real person, not only as an errand boy who must be petted or scolded to make him function.... With Ted it was different. He felt he owed me something--me, Leo: the tribute of one nature to another.

(GB, p. 231)

As Nancy Steptoe does to Eustace, the farmer offers the boy freedom from the constraints he experiences elsewhere. Instead of the weakness Leo feels when in the realm of the imagination, in Ted's company he can prove to himself that "in the realm of experience I was fairly tough" (GB, p. 167).

As Francis King has stated, "Yes, of course, The Go-Between is about Leo's love for Ted; as much as it is about Leo's love for Marian. But Hartley would have been appalled if you had suggested that to him".¹⁶ Appalled as Hartley may

have been in 1953, one is reluctant to accept that in the 1970's, after writing My Sisters' Keeper and The Harness Room, he could have reacted in a similar way; part of the action in the former novel focuses attention on the interaction between Terry O'Donovan and a boy in a men's underground lavatory on the Earl's Court Road (MSK, p. 131). The latter novel concerns the circumstances surrounding a sexual relationship between a seventeen-year-old boy and his twenty-eight-year-old chauffeur. Even if King's conjecture is correct, Hartley's reaction would point more to his horror at having the matter suggested, than to his shock at having it identified. We might recall, also, that Hartley was not always prepared for readers' responses to his work; when told, for example, that some people found Marian attractive, he felt "a little like a judge whose sentence on a delinquent has been quashed by a higher court".¹⁷ Within the Ted/Marian/Leo relationship, Hartley is exploring more than just heterosexual passion. The Go-Between is also about Leo's exposure to the prospect of gaining maturity, and to the complexity of sexual attraction; the boy's interest in Marian is accompanied by his attraction to Ted's physical and sexual potency.

As much as Leo is a go-between for Marian and Ted, he is also a go-between in terms of his own personal development. As Anne Mulkeen has noted, the twelve-year-old Leo, whom we meet in the diary, is "just on the threshold of seeing himself

as a man, as a separate person".¹⁸ As the boy himself "goes between" childhood and manhood, he comes into contact with the farmer, who is a composite of the "two candidates" who had suggested themselves to Leo as models of desirable forms of manhood--the Archer and the Water-Carrier.¹⁹

I was between twelve and thirteen, and I wanted to think of myself as a man.

There were only two candidates, the Archer and the Water-carrier, and, to make the choice more difficult, the artist, who probably had few facial types at his command, had drawn them very much alike. They were in fact the same man following different callings. He was strong and sturdy and this appealed to me, for one of my ambitions was to become a kind of Hercules. I leaned to the Archer as the more romantic, and because the idea of shooting appealed to me. But my father had been against war, which I supposed was the Archer's profession; and as to the Water-carrier, though I knew him to be a useful member of society, I could not help of conceiving of him as a farm-labourer or at best a gardener, neither of which I wanted to be. The two men attracted and repelled me at the same time: perhaps I was jealous of them.

(GB, p. 10)

Ted is a model of manhood to which Leo, not unequivocally, aspires, but he is also a man who arouses the boy's emotions and sexual curiosity. As Bien points out, The Go-Between is "a novel about sexual initiation",²⁰ a work that, as Mulkeen states, "is pervaded with sexual feeling, with the sense of the power and heat...of sexual passion".²¹ Mulkeen often refers to the relationship between Marian and Ted, which she mentions as contributing to the Lady Chatterley's

Lover atmosphere of the book. If she discusses the "dual nature of sexual love"²² she is referring to its terror and beauty and not to its homo-heterosexual components. Yet some of her general pronouncements apply as much to Leo's interest in Ted as to his interest in Marian:

The Go-Between is a book, an experience which can immeasurably increase one's penetration into, one's love for and acceptance of life, one's "tolerance for ambiguity" in people and events....²³

Leo's "ambiguity" rests in his vacillation between "the claims of Ted and Marian";²⁴ Leo, moving between boyhood and manhood, is also moving between male and female polarities. As Morris Fraser correctly indicates, Leo is haunted by the farmer's "insistent masculinity...and again and again comes near to an alliance with Ted".²⁵ While Leo tests the "male principle embodied by Ted", in order that he may identify himself with a man, the boy is also expressing affection and longing. I will use the term "homosexual" to describe the boy's interest in Ted, in the sense of J.Z. Eglinton's definition of "Greek love":

Greek love is the love between an adult man (or, sometimes, an older adolescent) and a younger boy, generally one from about twelve to sixteen or seventeen. By this I do not mean the conventional father-son or fraternal relationship, nor the common form of homosexuality of which we hear so much these days, but something distinctive though with a few elements in common with all these other relationships. The manifestation perhaps most familiar to the usual reader (leaving aside news-

paper scandals) might be that of school-boy crushes on older pupils or teachers; if such a crush is dealt with tenderly, the older recipient of it accepting the younger's affection and returning it in kind, he may be said to enter something like a Greek love relationship with the younger boy, whether or not overt sexual contact follows.²⁶

Young Leo can be said to have a "crush" on Ted Burgess. Even though there is no evidence to support the view that the boy's feelings are reciprocated, Ted does become Leo's "teacher" and friend at Black Farm. In examining The Go-Between, I will focus attention upon the four major incidents wherein Ted and Leo meet; and will indicate how, during each of the encounters, Leo is presented with the farmer's bodily strength and sturdiness. I will investigate how Hartley, principally in terms of the symbolic use of landscape, draws our attention to an increasingly intense and intimate relationship between man and boy. Hartley has stressed the importance of geography, as well as of climate, to our understanding of the novel's symbolism:

...but the landscape and the climate also had a symbolic meaning for me. Their appeal was to my mind--my subconscious mind perhaps--rather than to my mind's eye. They were obsessive, not aesthetic, an integral part of the story intended to deepen its meaning, not an embellishment to increase its artistic effect and help the reader to visualise it.²⁷

Peter Bien has stated of The Go-Between that "the symbols carry most of the book's meaning".²⁸ Jones concurs with

Bien's opinion and comments, "the plot of The Go-Between becomes subordinated to the method of narration and symbolic structural techniques"--he then quotes David Grossvogel: "The symbolism is so explicit 'that it may well have determined the form of the plot'".²⁹ The method of symbolic interpretation that I pursue in this chapter takes its momentum from Bien's approach as outlined in the preface to his book:

In the chapter on The Go-Between I am more of a "new critic," staying within the text as much as possible in order to show the relationship of part to part and the importance of the symbolic motifs which tie the book together and in large measure convey its meaning. For The Go-Between is a symbolist novel--a consciously symbolist novel--and the fact that it does not parade its symbolism is all the more reason why this crucial element should be investigated.³⁰

Following my examination of Ted and Leo in The Go-Between, I will study, briefly, the role that male homosexuality has played in the Hartleian canon. In a short concluding section, I will concentrate upon The Harness Room, comparing it, where possible, with the relationship I discussed in The Go-Between. In general, my interest is to demonstrate how Hartley in his later work treats more explicitly a theme which he had previously dealt with in mainly symbolic terms.

PART ONE

THE GO-BETWEEN

The Bathing Scene

At the river on the Maudsleys' Norfolk estate, Ted Burgess displays his prowess when he dives from a scaffold and, according to the snob Denys "'doesn't swim badly... for a farmer'" (GB, p. 54). He cuts an impressive figure, in fact, as he swims out a good distance, so that only his "bobbing head" and arms can be seen parting the surface of the pool (GB, p. 54). And, on his return to the platform, Ted climbs out assisted by a post in the water, "His muscles bunched, his face tense with effort" (GB, p. 56). In stark contrast, the men of the Hall bathing party spend their time "floating on their backs", sometimes kicking the water into a foam. In a rather waterlogged fashion, their heads sometimes stare at the sky, "only their faces showing". The bathing by the Hall visitors is a noisy frivolity that serves to intensify the boy's, and our, interest in the sleek and powerful swimmer who has recently left the bathers to their dalliance.

Hartley describes the setting of the bathing scene in a way that stresses its languid and sensual qualities:

We were crossing the meadow on a raised causeway towards a curved line of rushes; the curve was concave, and we were aiming for the farthest part. It was one

of those sedgy, marshy places in Norfolk where bog-cotton grows; despite the heat, which was drying up everything, one had to pick one's way, to avoid the pools of reddish water that were half concealed by grass. Squelch, squelch, and a brown trickle came over my low shoes.

(GB, p. 53)

The embracing curve of the line of rushes forms the locale for the company's encounter with the farmer. Ted lives in a natural, elemental world, and even though he is technically a trespasser, the Hall party is entering his environment. As the group probes deeper into the curve in order to reach its "farthest part", the boy is suddenly arrested by the sight of a dark structure:

There was a black thing ahead of us, all bars and spars and uprights, like a gallows. It gave out a sense of fear--also of intense solitude. It was like something that must not be approached, that might catch you and hurt you; I wondered why we were walking towards it so unconcernedly. We had nearly reached it, and I saw how the pitch was peeling off its surfaces, and realized that no one could have attended to it for years....

(GB, p. 53)

It is at this moment, in such a primitive and neglected spot, that the nearly naked Ted Burgess rises from among the rushes. Within the graceful arc of the landscape, recalling the shape that the farmer traces in parting the water during his swim and in his dive ("stretched himself into an arc"), stands the mysterious, angular "black thing". The suddenness of appearance to the boy, and its marked contrast with the sedgy marsh,

considerably distracts Leo. The bars, spars and uprights that so affect him are not only suggestive of Ted's striking display, but in also forming a "gallows", they are representative of death and the fear of punishment that will creep into the subsequent relationship between man and boy.

The farmer is associated with specifically phallic imagery when he meets Denys:

Burgess by now was almost under us. Clamped to the brickwork of the sluice a thick old post stuck out of the water. Exposure to the elements had grooved its sides and sharpened it almost to a point. To this post he clung and began to haul himself up. Crouching over the spike to change his foothold he looked as though he would be impaled; then his hand grasped a ring embedded in the coping and he was on the bank, the water running off him.

"What a way to land!" said Denys, giving him his dry hand to the farmer's wet one; "why didn't you get out comfortably, on the other side of the sluice? We've had some steps made there."

"I know," the farmer said, "but this is the way I've always done it."

(GB, pp. 54-55)

Like an "elemental man" who is completely at home in the world of Nature, Farmer Burgess stands before Denys, "the water running off him".³¹ As noted earlier, Ted is associated with water, and this relationship is emphasised when Denys extends his "dry hand" to Burgess' "wet one". Their handshake barely disguises the huge difference that exists between them; this is a meeting between virtually two different species of Man.

The notion that Ted's virility may lead to his own death is quietly suggested by his posture on leaving the water. The farmer is close to impaling himself as he crouches over a spike.

In the trilogy, Hartley uses the movement of water on Anchorstone beach and in Venice to demonstrate the prospect of Eustace's reaching self-understanding. Water, and also the shapes of an upright spar and an arc, are used by Hartley in The Go-Between, but to symbolise the unity of Marian and Leo with Ted Burgess. When Marian's hair comes down she is immediately flustered. Ted Burgess is also affected; he springs up and with "furious energy" strides away from the scene. He does not wish to meet the "society" Miss Maudsley:

A moment later Marian came by. She was holding the long coil of her hair in front of her. It made two curves with which I was familiar; they belonged to the Virgin of the Zodiac.

(GB, p. 57)

Young Leo, in his concern for Marian's plight, offers her his dry bathing-suit to use as a towel. The trunks are fastened around her neck, they hang down her back, and the coil of hair is spread over them:

I walked back with her through the lengthening shadows, anxious still to be "something" to her, though I didn't know what. Every now and then she asked me how her hair was, and whenever I touched it to see, she pretended I had pulled it. She was in a strange, exalted mood, and so was I; and I thought that somehow our

elations came from the same source. My thoughts enveloped her, they entered into her: I was the bathing-suit on which her hair was spread; I was her drying hair, I was the wind that dried it. I had a tremendous sense of achievement for which I couldn't account. But when she gave me back my property, damp with the dampness I had saved her from, and let me touch her hair once more, dry with the dryness I had won for it, I felt my cup was full.

(GB, pp. 58-59)

There is irony in Leo's believing that his and Marian's "elations came from the same source", that his boyish infatuation for Miss Maudsley is reciprocated. The irony, however, is a double one, for Leo also does share Marian's elation at having seen Ted Burgess. While much of the boy's emotional exuberance is attributable to his interest in Marian, we recall that the farmer's body had earlier spoken to Leo "of something [he] did not know" (GB, p. 56). This as yet unexplored "something" of Leo's development is symbolised by the serpentine wet hair and the swimming trunks; the image is expressive of the tremors of sexual interest that, through his contact with Marian and Ted, are gradually being awakened in the boy.

As the shadows extend across the landscape, they emphasise the aroused condition of Marian and young Leo. If the boy's "cup is full" because Marian's hair is finally "dry with the dryness" he had won for her, Leo's brimful sentiments are also founded on his returned swimming trunks, "damp with the dampness" he had saved her from. Suggested also in the

"cup" image is Leo's dawning identification of himself with Ted, the Water-Carrier. The boy has begun to compete with Ted for Marian's attention, and yet, perhaps unknowingly, he is also attracted to the farmer. As Leo much later understands, he has begun to grow jealous of a powerful feeling that exists between Marian and Ted:

I did not know it by the name of passion....I realized they got something out of it I could not get: I did not realize that I was jealous of it, jealous of whatever it was they gave each other, and did not give me.

(GB, p. 233)

Leo's interest in the farmer, as well as in Marian, is again gently suggested in terms of a pair of swimming trunks when the boy makes his final visit to Black Farm:

On the top of the sluice I stopped and looked back. Ted, too, was looking back. He took off his old soft hat and waved it, shading his eyes and waving vigorously. I tried to take off mine, and wondered why I couldn't. Then I saw why. In one hand I was carrying my bathing-suit, in the other my towel; the rope was draped like a halter round my neck. Suddenly I felt exceedingly uncomfortable; my movements were cramped and my neck was sweating. I hadn't noticed my encumbrances till now, nor apparently had Ted. I had forgotten what I came for and remembered something that I hadn't come for. Swinging my dry bathing-suit, which now was warm to the touch, and with the halter chafing my neck, I walked back across the blistering causeway.

(GB, p. 217)

So absorbed is young Leo in his final meeting with Ted that he forgets about the swim he had intended to take. As he waves

his warm, dry trunks at Ted, Leo is symbolising the frustration he endures in his relationship with him. The boy cannot discover what spooning is because Ted is reluctant to tell him, and, as we will see more fully later, Leo cannot come to terms with his feelings of attraction to the handsome man. The dry bathing-suit represents Leo's concern about daring to "get wet", and therefore, again, about his own sexual feelings, which are matters that Ted Burgess, as much as Marian, has so abruptly raised in him.

The straw-stack incident

"To a boy of my generation a farmyard was a challenge. It was an accepted symbol of romance" confides the older Leo when discussing his first visit to Black Farm (GB, p. 78). Young Leo finds his challenge at the straw-stack, which he climbs by means of a convenient ladder. The thrill of the slide, however, ends with the boy gashing his knee and "hollering". As a result, he meets Ted, literally here a water-carrier with "a pail of water in each hand" (GB, p. 79). Ted is restrained yet solicitous in his treatment of Leo. After initially threatening the boy with "'the biggest thrashing you've ever had in your life'" (GB, p. 79), Ted realises that Leo is "'from the Hall'" and so changes his tune (GB, p. 80). Leo somewhat mistakes the shift in Ted's attitude for a tenant-farmer's deference to a young gentleman, but young Leo's acquaintance

with Marian may have also influenced the farmer. In the farmyard, Leo indeed has the opportunity for "romance", because the boy is finally dubbed "'Spartan'" by Ted, for his bravery when the farmer puts carbolic on his injured knee. Leo feels "exquisitely rewarded" by Burgess' compliment, but the boy's pleasure is also founded on his contact with Ted's strength:

"Now we'll tie it up with this." This was an old handkerchief.

"But won't you want it?" I asked.

"Oh, I've got plenty more." He seemed a little put out by the question. He pulled the bandage rather hard: "Too tight?" he asked.

I liked his half-unwilling gentleness.
(GB, p. 81)

Far from hurting Leo with his zeal, Ted charms the boy with a gentleness that comes from so unlikely a nurse.

On this first excursion to Black Farm, Leo makes a second visit to the bathing spot. He wonders if he will "find the farmer bathing", but Leo is unlucky (GB, p. 78). Nevertheless, he re-enacts Ted's behaviour as he remembers it from their first meeting:

I mounted the black scaffold, which was almost too hot to touch, and looked down into the mirror which had been shattered by the farmer's dive. How flawless it was now; a darker picture of the sky.
(GB, p. 78)

In the great heat, which is also associated with Ted,³² as

much as it is with Marian, and with which Leo is in love,³³ the boy climbs the hot, black scaffold. Hartley allows the scene to conjure up the trepidation Leo feels as a result of following, quite literally, in Ted Burgess' footsteps. His journey to see the farmer is symbolically foreshadowed by the boy's mounting the scaffold; the trip does in fact culminate in the exhilaration of the straw-stack slide--an experience that embraces fear, and the possibility of punishment, even death. In looking at himself in the water's mirror, the boy sees another aspect of himself in "a darker picture", and it is into this darkness that he delves by going to the appropriately named Black Farm that lies within a forest.

Hartley describes the visit through a sensual evocation of landscape. As Leo follows the path between the rushes to Ted's farm, the boy becomes aroused by the difficulty of achieving his goal:

Here for the first time I regretted my low shoes, for the stubble came over them and pricked my ankles. Still it was not unpleasant to feel the hard sharp thrust against my skin. I saw a gate at the far corner and treading carefully made my way towards it.

It opened on a deep-rutted farm road. In some places the ruts were so deep and narrow, and baked so hard, that when I put my boot into them (from a feeling that I ought to) I could hardly get it out....

Beyond the fields the road seemed to vanish into the hillside....But when I got there I found it turned to the left, and

switchbacked its way between spare hedge-rows to a farmyard and a cottage. There it ended.

(GB, p. 78)

Like the concave curve of the line of rushes that leads to the spot where Ted made his arc-like dive, the track to the farmer's cottage is sweeping and graceful. There are surprises too, as there were in young Leo's encounter with Ted; the track that seems to "vanish into the hillside" actually leads elsewhere when one reaches its apparent vanishing point. In spite of its attractive winding way, however, the boy's path is also fraught with difficulties--there is the painful pleasure of the stubble's contact with his ankles, and there are deep and narrow ruts in the road. In a way that serves to emphasise the difficulty the young boy experiences in following in the grown man's footsteps, Leo struggles to walk in and out of the ruts that lead to the farmer's gate. The movement again recalls the correspondence between serpentine and straight lines that surrounds young Leo's involvement with the farmer, and which, in the trilogy, were also configurations expressive of Eustace's journeying toward self-understanding.

During his adventure in the natural world of Ted's farm, the boy comes into closer contact with the strong and sturdy farmer. Their meeting is enveloped in physical intimacy and the fecundities of animals' lives. Leo's first delight, however, is to discover a straw-stack, eminently suitable for a schoolboy's pleasure. The boy climbs the ladder, for much

the same reason as he had mounted the scaffold: to see where a dive can begin:

Soft-footed, bending down and peering round, I made a reconnaissance. The stack was an old one, half of it had been cut away; but plenty was left to slide down. I didn't really want to, but there was no excuse whatever not to, if I was to retain my self-respect. I could not help acting as if the eyes of the whole school were on me. Suddenly a slight panic seized me; I longed to get the sliding over; and I omitted a necessary and practical precaution always taken, and without loss of face, by experienced straw-stack sliders: to make a bed of straw to break my fall. I could have done it--there was plenty lying about--but I yielded to my sense of urgency.

The wild rush through the air, so near to flying, enraptured me: it was deliciously cool, for one thing, and devotee of heat though I now was, I saw nothing illogical in also relishing every experience that relieved me of it. I had already made up my mind to repeat the performance several times when crash! my knee hit something hard. It was a chopping-block, I afterwards discovered, submerged by the straw below the stack; but at the moment I could do nothing but moan and watch the blood flow from a long gash under my knee-cap.

(GB, p. 79)

Although Leo's slide is provoked by "panic" and "urgency", it provides him with the same thrill he experienced while witnessing Ted's dive into the hidden river. At the bathing scene, Ted's "splash" had signalled the presence of the water that Leo could not see; the boy had been startled by the noise (GB, p. 53). At the haystack there is also surprise;

the "splash" here, though, is the "crash!" into a chopping block that breaks Leo's fall. By imitating Ted's behaviour in trespassing and in acting in such a carefree manner, young Leo has adopted features of the "manhood" to which he is attracted. The boy's behaviour also quite literally brings him into the company of "Ted Burgess of the swimming pool" (GB, p. 79). The effect of the meeting on the boy is then intensified when the farmer introduces Leo to his horses (GB, pp. 82-83). Amidst the animal life, Leo's sensibilities rise to a fever pitch; although disoriented, he is also "stimulated" by the experience, as he had been by his previous meeting with Ted. Leo shares Ted's amusement at the horse's name, "Wild Oats"--a title suggestive of sexual promiscuity; Ted's grinning, reciprocated by Leo, suggests a rapport that does not exist between the two of them. The juxtaposition signifies Leo's first lesson in vital, spontaneous, and animal aspects of life--a stark contrast to the restrained ways of Brandham Hall. Leo is desirous to learn about, yet is fearful of, the world Ted represents, and the boy is giddily excited by his experience at the farmer's stable.

The cricket-match

Farmer Burgess, the cricket player, exhibits a Dionysiac style at the "Hall versus Village" cricket match. There is a wide variety of skill in Ted's game, for he makes several mis-hits, is nearly caught out by the pantry-boy, and yet

reaches the boundary, "scattering the spectators" (GB, p. 134). After this, he makes several more mis-hits and "then a really glorious six which sailed over the pavilion and dropped among the trees at the back". As the fieldsmen "[lie] down on the grass", we are reminded of the different swimming styles of the bathing hole that had so differentiated Ted from the Hall party. Here, within the chaos of "Ted's displayful innings", is the force that begins to influence the match--it is play that stirs great emotion in the onlookers (GB, p. 135). Mrs. Maudsley jumps up "with a little cry" when the ball Ted hits hurtles threateningly toward her (GB, p. 136). The boy is so drawn by the farmer's batting that he confesses to himself that he "wanted the other side to win".

At the cricket match, the boy's highly focused interest in the landscape is again important since it heralds the arrival on the field of Ted Burgess--Hartley fully exploits the symbolic value of the setting in order to express Leo's state of mind prior to the farmer's appearance:

And as the game receded from my mind the landscape filled in. There were two bows: the arch of the trees beyond the cricket field, and the arch of the sky above them; and each repeated the other's curve. This delighted my sense of symmetry; what disturbed it was the spire of the church. The church itself was almost invisible among the trees, which grew over the mound it stood on in the shape of a protractor, an almost perfect semi-circle. But the spire, instead of dividing the protractor into two equal segments, raised its pencil-point to the left of the centre--

about eight degrees, I calculated. Why could not the church conform to Nature's plan? There must be a place, I thought, where the spire would be seen as a continuation of the protractor's axis, producing the perpendicular indefinitely into the sky, with two majestic right angles at its base, like flying buttresses, holding it up. Perhaps some of the spectators enjoyed this view, I wished I could go in search of it, while our team was skittling out the village side.

But soon my eye, following the distressful spire into the heavens, rested on the enormous cloud that hung there, and tried to penetrate its depths. A creation of the heat, it was like no cloud I had ever seen. It was pure white on top, rounded and thick and lustrous as a snow-drift; below, the white was flushed with pink, and still further below, in the very heart of the cloud, the pink deepened to purple. Was there a menace in this purple tract, a hint of thunder? I did not think so. The cloud seemed absolutely motionless; scan it as I would, I could not detect the smallest alteration in its outline. And yet it was moving--moving towards the sun, and getting brighter and brighter as it approached it. A few more degrees, and then--

As I was visualizing the lines of the protractor printed on the sky I heard a rattle and a clatter. It was Ted Burgess going out to bat; he was whistling, no doubt to keep his spirits up.

(GB, pp. 133-134)

As in the bathing scene, here are two curves that attract the boy's attention and stimulate his sense of symmetry. But just as Ted had sprung up from the rushes at the bathing hole, almost as the "scaffold" had done, so in this setting the spire of the church is a "disturbance". The image is a

curious one, for apart from its obvious phallicism, it is also suggestive of the archer's bow and arrow; a warrior aspect of manhood to which Leo is attracted, and by which he is also repelled. The boy's imagination also craves a sight of the spire that is, from some angle, "producing the perpendicular indefinitely into the sky".

Like Leo who, through his experience of adult passion, will fly "too near the sun", and be scorched (GB, p. 20), the cloud is imperceptibly "moving towards the sun, and getting brighter as it approaches it"--the movement of the cloud effectively reflects the progress of young Leo's life. As the boy strains to imagine what would happen at the intersecting point of spire, cloud and sun--"and then--" (GB, p. 24)--Ted strolls on to the cricket pitch. Symbolically suggested in the sky is how Leo's exposure to emotions of manhood is influenced by the phallic potency associated with the farmer, and symbolised by the spire. Finally, and tragically, however, as Jones has commented, Leo will be metaphorically "scorched by the heat of passion" after simply being drawn to "the warmth of physical love".³⁴

At the cricket match, the "lines of the protractor printed on the sky" recede from the boy's mind, and he again concentrates upon the match. But Leo immediately becomes confused--"I was puzzled, for until now my feelings had been quite clear....The first ball narrowly shaved his wicket and

then I knew: I did not want him to get out" (GB, p. 134). In spite of his schoolboy's sense of duty and loyalty to the Hall, in spirit Leo changes sides and joins the man who is so in keeping with the play of his aroused imagination. Ted will hit the cricket balls beyond the boundary, as young Leo would have the spire reach out indefinitely into the sky. In that phallic potency lies the source of Leo's attraction to Ted.

When Leo joins Marian he discovers that her feelings for Ted are being aroused, as are his own, at the sight of the farmer's cricketing:

...spying a vacant seat beside Marian I edged my way down to her and whispered:

"Isn't it exciting?" I felt this was not too much betrayal of our side.

When she did not answer I repeated the question. She turned to me and nodded, and I saw that the reason she didn't answer was because she couldn't trust herself to speak. Her eyes were bright, her cheeks were flushed, and her lips trembled. I was a child and lived in the society of children and I knew the signs. At the time I didn't ask myself what they meant, but the sight of a grown-up person so visibly affected greatly increased my emotional response to the game, and I could hardly sit still, for I always wriggled when excited. The conflict in my feelings deepened: I could not bear to face the fact which was becoming more apparent to me every moment, that I wanted the other side to win.

(GB, pp. 135-136)

These sentiments duplicate, in part, Leo's and Marian's emotions

during the bathing scene; the two are excited on both occasions by Ted's startling and impressive performance. A link between man and boy is firmly established on this occasion, however, when Ted hits a ball towards young Leo--"travelling towards me on a rising straight line like a cable stretched between us"--and the boy catches it. The game has presented Leo with a road to manhood--"Life was meant to test a man, bring out his courage, initiative, resource; and I long, I thought, to be tested" (GB, p. 70). Although Leo wants to tell Ted of his regret about the catch, the boy has been tested and brought out by his experience with the farmer on the cricket pitch. Leo has moved a step further in understanding his attraction to Ted, and in the process has emulated the skill and vitality of the farmer's behaviour.

The gun scene

After the cricket match, Leo in a "black mood" makes a reluctant visit to Black Farm (GB, p. 169). The boy is now fully aware of what he considers to be "Marian's duplicity", and he is not happy with his role as postman. The boy at first refuses to comply with the farmer's proposal that they go outside and let the gun off:

"You've got to start some time. It kicks but it wouldn't hurt you half as much as that catch you held. Ah, that was a beauty, that was. I haven't forgiven you yet."

At the reference to my catch something gave in me and I felt more myself.

"Well, would you like to come out and see me shoot something?" he suggested, as if my salvation lay in shooting. "There's some old rooks round here that could do with a peppering."

I couldn't go on saying no, and followed him out into the stackyard. For some reason I imagined that shooting was a long business, a matter of patient waiting for some psychological moment, but no sooner were we outside the door than the gun went to his shoulder.

The bang took me completely by surprise. It frightened me out of my wits, which was perhaps the best thing that could have happened to me.

(GB, pp. 171-172)

Once again, Leo is won over by Ted Burgess' strength of purpose. As at the river, Leo is excited by the suddenness of Ted's actions, and recognises the therapeutic value to him of the farmer's stridency:

No one is quite the same after a loud bang as before it: I went back into the kitchen a different person. My grief had changed to sulkiness and self-pity, a sure sign of recovery. The deed of blood had somehow sealed a covenant between us, drawn us together by some ancient, sacrificial rite.

(GB, p. 172)

Like the zodiacal Archer by whom Leo is so affected, Ted shoots down a bird, and Leo feels that he and the man have been united.

Hartley's presentation of the landscape on Leo's journey to Black Farm on this occasion is again symbolically important. The setting illustrates the boy's sense of what he by now feels are his deteriorating relationships with Ted

and Marian. On Leo's previous visit, the sun had already begun to take its toll on the pool and its surrounding vegetation, thus:

I climbed the stile into the water-meadow and at once the sun caught me in its fierce embrace. What strength it had! The boggy pools that fringed the causeway were almost dried up; the stalks that had been below the water-line showed a band of dirty yellow where the sun had scorched them. And standing on the sluice platform I saw almost with dismay how far the level of the river had sunk. On the blue side, the deep side, I could see stones at the bottom that had never been visible before; and on the other side, the gold and green side, the water was almost lost to view beneath the trailing weeds which, piled one on another, gave a distressing impression of disarray. And the water-lilies, instead of lying on the water, stuck up awkwardly above it.

(GB, p. 112)

The oozing mud and reddish pools associated with young Leo's first encounter with Ted are now drying up, and the stalks amongst which the farmer had swum have turned yellow. When Leo looks into the water this time, he does not see the "darker picture of the sky" (GB, p. 78) into which he had metaphorically dived by visiting Black Farm. The boy now notices weeds in the water that give a distressing "impression of disarray", and stones. The landscape is suggestive of Leo's disordered state of mind in light of his discovery of Marian's motives for cultivating a relationship with him.

On this penultimate visit to Ted, the farmer is cleaning his gun. The landscape is more ruinously over-extended

than before; the rushes, an "army of spearmen", have been routed, and the reeds "that tapered to a point like swords" are now "bent and broken" (GB, p. 169). The image that the vegetation conjures up is one of tremendous virility that has been thwarted by its own vitality. The rushes, because of the heat that they have so eagerly absorbed and that rests within them, have been scorched to death. The torrid affair between Marian and Ted that destroys the farmer and injures Leo is like this heat, and young Leo's involvement with the farmer is also embraced within it.

The little we know of Ted's affection for Leo is expressed in the farmer's letter of apology to the boy after Leo had fled Black Farm. Leo's feelings, however, are more explicitly presented:

...I liked Ted Burgess in a reluctant, half-admiring, half-hating way. When I was away from him I could think of him objectively as a working farmer whom no one at the Hall thought much of. But when I was with him his mere physical presence cast a spell on me, it established an ascendancy which I could not break. He was, I felt, what a man ought to be, what I should like to be when I grew up. At the same time I was jealous of him, jealous of his power over Marian, little as I understood its nature, jealous of whatever it was he had that I had not. He came between me and my image of her. In my thoughts I wanted to humiliate him, and sometimes did. But I also identified myself with him, so that I could not think of his discomfiture without pain, I could not hurt him without

hurting myself. He fitted into my imaginative life, he was my companion of the greenwood, a rival, an ally, an enemy, a friend--I couldn't be sure which.

(GB, p. 154)

If, on receiving his "Robin Hood" clothing, young Leo had seen himself "roaming in the greenwood with Maid Marian" (GB, p. 49), his relationship with Ted Burgess of the "greenwood" ranges far more widely; Leo is jealous of and frustrated by Ted's sexual potency, which separates the boy from both Marian and the farmer. He would like to understand Ted better in order to discover something about manhood, but also in order to retain his "image" of Marian.

That the boy is influenced by the spell of the farmer's "mere physical presence" is demonstrated in the gun scene when Ted Burgess clearly establishes his unbreakable "ascendancy" over the boy. The encounter is violent and erotic, and brings the boy round from his gloomy introspection:

He was sitting on a chair behind the table with a gun between his knees, so absorbed that he didn't hear me. The muzzle was just below his mouth, the barrel was pressed against his naked chest, and he was peering down it. He heard me and jumped up.

(GB, p. 170)

The image is suggestive of the phallicism³⁵ earlier associated with the farmer. And, the gun becomes an instrument for jollying the boy back into good spirits. After Ted and Leo go outside

to let the gun off, and thus to resume their friendship through what the boy considers to be a "deed of blood", the two settle down to cleaning the firearm:

"Now you take this cleaning-rod," he said, "and this bit of four-by-two"--picking up a piece of frayed, white, oily rag--"and you thread it through the eye of this cleaning-rod, same as you would a needle." Screwing his eyes up, for the kitchen was not well lighted, he suited the action to the word. The slightest movement brought into play the muscles of his forearms; they moved in ridges and hollows from a knot above his elbow, like pistons working from a cylinder. "And then you press it down the breech, like this, and you'll be surprised how dirty it comes out." He pushed the wire rod up and down several times. "There, didn't I say it would be dirty?" he exclaimed, triumphantly showing me the rag, which was filthy enough to satisfy one's extremest expectations. "But the barrel'll be quite clean now, you look--and then look through the other which I haven't cleaned. That'll show you." He spoke as if I had denied there would be a difference. Taking the gun to the window he made me look through it. He held it level with one hand; I could hardly hold it with two, resting the other under the barrel. But I got a strange thrill from the contact, from feeling the butt press against my shoulder and the steel cold against my palm.

(GB, p. 172)

As Leo tries simultaneously to hold the gun and to keep his head down, he inadvertently points the weapon at Ted--an act prophetic of Leo's role in manipulating the events that lead to Ted's death. The boy then asks if he might oil the farmer's bat, and we witness the boy's handling of more of Ted's phallic-shaped equipment:

I handled the bat as reverently as if it had been the bow of Ulysses, and wondered which of the bruises on its much-scarred surface had been caused by the stroke I caught him off. The oil came in an alien container: "Price's Cycle Axle Oil" was printed on the tin, and there was a picture of a lady and a gentleman bicycling gaily along a country road, looking at me and at the future with surprised but pleased and confident expressions.

I poured a little oil on to the middle of the bat and began to work it in gently with my fingers; the wood seemed to drink it thirstily and gratefully, as if it too was suffering from the drought. The rhythmic rubbing half soothed and half excited me; it seemed to have a ritual significance, as if I was rubbing out my own bruises, as if the new strength I was putting into the bat would pass into its owner. I was thinking more normally now: I belonged to the present, not to a ruined past and a menacing future. Or so I felt.

(GB, pp. 173-174)

The cleaning of the gun, the firing of it, and the oiling of the bat have re-asserted Ted's primacy within the boy's imagination. The boy's interest in physical contact with the farmer is suggested by the two acts of cleaning. While Ted is rubbing the oily rag and cleaning rod up and down the shaft of the gun, Leo's attention is swiftly drawn to the more bodily aspect of the task; Leo notices the play of the farmer's forearm muscles, and the ridges and hollows that they form from the elbow. The physical details of the task of oiling the cricket bat are more keenly studied, so as to imply a vicarious experience of

physical contact with Ted in Leo's imagination. Leo, in rubbing out the bat's "bruises" and "scars", feels that he is healing his own, and that he is also transmitting new strength into the bat's "owner". Having established this physical link between man and boy, Leo begins to think "more normally now": he belongs "to the present". As a result of his symbolic "union" with Ted, the boy feels that the future is not as menacing and helpless as the landscape had suggested when he had made his way to this encounter.

Leo exploits the comfort and security he enjoys with Ted Burgess, however, by harrassing the farmer with questions about spooning. The boy's problem is that he wants to know what it feels like to spoon, while Ted can only explain that "'it makes you feel on top of the world....it's like flying, or floating, or waking up and finding someone you thought was dead is really there. It's what you like doing best, and then some more'" (GB, pp. 176-177). Leo is not satisfied with Ted's answers, and so persists with his questions:

"Yes, but what more?" I cried. "I know you know, and I won't take any more messages for you unless you tell me."

Some primitive instinct told me that I had him in a corner; it also warned me that I had tried him too far. He towered above me, as hard and straight and dangerous as his gun. I saw the temper leap into his eyes as it had when he caught me sliding down the straw-stack. Armoured by his nakedness he took a step towards me.

"Clear out of here quick," he said, "or you'll be sorry."

(GB, p. 177)

To the practical-minded Ted, who enjoys instructing the boy in gun-cleaning and shooting, and who is delighted with young Leo's oiling of the bat, it is a difficult task to explain the nature of spooning. Ted is no expert in the subtle uses of language, and the frustration that this causes him, together with his fear that Leo will no longer act as go-between, exasperates him to the breaking-point. Ted later explains himself in the letter he writes to Leo:

"...at the last moment I jibbed at telling you something. Perhaps when you are older you will understand how it was and forgive me. It was quite natural you should want to know being a boy of your age but the fact is I didn't feel like telling you at the moment."

(GB, p. 202)

In their final meeting, Leo, in a lofty manner, evades any possible elucidations of spooning by Ted, and the farmer is left to express the hope that the boy will, at some time, be told about it "right" (GB, p. 216). It is clear, however, that the boy, consciously or not, has gone to the furthest lengths possible in developing his relationship with Ted. Leo's sexual interest in the farmer is further explored, however, in the belladonna and bicycle scenes.

Leo's sexual interest in Ted

In the "Epilogue" to The Go-Between, an older Leo reflects upon the "magic" he had effected at school and at the Maudsleys' home:

At school a spell had saved me; and at Brandham, too, I had resorted to a spell. The spell had worked: I couldn't deny that. It had broken off the relationship between Ted and Marian, from whose continuance I had foreseen such direful consequences. It had uprooted the belladonna, and blasted it in Ted's very arms. But it had recoiled on me. In destroying the belladonna I had also destroyed Ted, and perhaps destroyed myself. Was it really a moment of triumph when I lay prostrate on the ground, and the uplifted root rained down earth on me?

I saw myself entering Ted's life, an unknown small boy, a visitant from afar, sliding down his straw-stack; and it seemed to me that from that moment he was doomed. And so was I--our fates were linked together. I could not injure him without injuring myself.

(GB, p. 264)

The elderly man, in identifying himself with Ted's destruction, links two important images: the belladonna, and Ted's gun. If we examine young Leo's assignation with the deadly nightshade in terms of its relevance to the farmer's gun, then our understanding of the boy's particular interest in Ted increases. The focal point of the elderly Leo's concern is whether or not it was a triumph to lie prostrate holding the poisonous plant in his hand. In other words, was it worthwhile, given the subsequent destruction of Ted, to cast a spell upon the relationship between Marian and the farmer? The old man's other concern, however, is the extent to which his behaviour in 1900 was a triumph--his own life, after all, was also destroyed by his actions.

In examining the "deeply imagistic"³⁶ belladonna scene, it is useful to record Hartley's uncertainty about what the plant represents:

Even now I am not sure whether the plant stood for Marian alone, or for the whole principle of sex, in which beside the beauty and attraction there is also a strong dose of poison....³⁷

In Leo's relationship with Marian, and with Ted, there is a great deal of attraction on the boy's part, as we have noted, as well as a feeling of repulsion; both Ted and Marian have deceived Leo in the process of stirring his emotions. In their different ways, the two adults inject poison into Leo's impressions of them, which is why they are betrayed. In the belladonna scene, Leo's sexual interest in Ted is woven into a symbolic passage that reveals the boy's interest in Marian and in human sexuality in general:³⁸

Though my eyes get gradually accustomed to the darkness I was almost on top of the outhouses before I saw the thick blur of the deadly nightshade. It was like a lady standing in her doorway looking out for someone. I was prepared to dread it, but not prepared for the tumult of emotions it aroused in me. In some way it wanted me, I felt, just as I wanted it; and the fancy took me that it wanted me as an ingredient, and would have me. The spell was not waiting to be born in my bedroom, as I meant it should be, but here in this roofless shed, and I was not preparing it for the deadly nightshade, but the deadly nightshade was preparing it for me. "Come

in," it seemed to say; and at last after an unfathomable time I stretched my hand out into the thick darkness where it grew and felt the shoots and leaves close softly on it. I withdrew my hand and peered. There was no room for me inside, but if I went inside, into the unhallowed darkness where it lurked, that springing mass of vegetable force, I should learn its secret and it would learn mine. And in I went. It was stifling, yet delicious, the leaves, the shoots, even the twigs, so yielding; and this must be a flower that brushed my eyelids, and this must be a berry that pressed against my lips....

At that I panicked and tried to force my way out but could not find the way out: there seemed to be a wall on every side, and I barked my knuckles. At first I was afraid of hurting the plant, then in my terror I began to tear at it, and heard its branches ripping and crackling. Soon I cleared a space round my head, but that was not enough, it must all be clear. The plant was much less strong than I supposed: I fought with it: I got hold of its main stem and snapped it off. There was a swish; a soft, sighing fall of leaf on leaf; a swirl, a débris of upturned leaves, knee-deep all round me: and standing up among them, the torn stem. I seized it and pulled it with all my might, and as I pulled the words of the missing spell floated into my mind out of some history lesson--"delenda est belladonna! delenda est belladonna!" I heard the roots creaking and cracking, felt their last strength arrayed against me, the vital principle of the plant defending itself in its death-agony.. "Delenda est belladonna!" I chanted, not loudly, but loud enough for anyone listening to hear, and braced myself for a last pull. And then it gave, came away in my hands, throwing up with a soft sigh a little shower of earth which rustled on the leaves like rain; and I was lying on my back in the open, still clutching the stump, staring up at its mop-like coronal of roots, from which grains of earth kept dropping on my face.

(GB, pp. 240-241)

Naturally enough, the experience evokes impressions of Marian and of sexual behaviour generally, but also in this ambience of dream-sensation, the nocturnal event looks back to many of Leo's experiences with Ted. He, like the plant, is also endowed with "lusty limbs" (GB, p. 38). The scene recalls Leo's first encounter with the farmer at the bathing spot when the boy's tumult of emotions on seeing the farmer's body was woven into his elation at being with Marian. As Ted's physique spoke to the boy of something he did not know, represented a desirable form of manhood, while also evoking feelings associated with Marian, so does the deadly nightshade, belladonna, speak to him simultaneously of man and woman.

The suddenness with which the "scaffold", Ted, and later the path to Black Farm appear to Leo, is also recalled in the bush. The boy is "almost on top" of the outhouse, which is isolated like Ted's farm, before he becomes aware of the nightshade. The darkness of the belladonna scene recalls the "black thing ahead of us" on the riverbank with "pitch peeling off its surfaces" (GB, p. 53). Within the darkness to which young Leo grows accustomed at the outhouse there is a further obscurity, the "thick blur" of the plant he has come to find. The "double darkness" at the outhouse is separated by a "doorway" before which the boy stands, as Ted had stood on the scaffold's platform "between the wheel and pulley"--the "double darkness" at the pool is represented by that "darker picture" into which

Ted dives from his position on the "black thing" (GB, p. 78).

In the belladonna scene, Leo makes yet another "dive" into darkness. At first he hesitates: "I stretched my hand out into the darkness". In his desire to learn the "secret" of the black vegetation, however, the boy enters: "And in I went". What young Leo discovers there in a world of "unhallowed darkness" is "that springing mass of vegetable force" we have previously seen strewn across a parched landscape on the boy's visit to Black Farm. As the boy feels his way across the leaves, shoots and twigs, we are reminded of the sensual landscape that is associated with young Leo's encounters with the farmer; the feel of the stubble on the boy's bare ankles. As Leo is "brushed" and "pressed" in this "delicious" experience of turning about within the foliage, we also remember Ted's explanations of the "'floating, or flying'" sensations the farmer associates with spooning (GB, p. 177). Leo's experience in the bush resembles the "effects of chiaroscuro" by which the older Colston will recall to his mind's eye his buried memories of Brandham Hall (GB, p. 32). In his encounter with the foliage, Leo's recent past, particularly his visit to the farmer's cottage, drifts into the "darker picture" in which the boy is now swimming.

Critics correctly point to the belladonna scene as representative of the boy's interest in Marian, and partly take their cue from the phrase, "a lady standing in her doorway

looking out for someone". Indeed, the image of the harlot, the beautiful lady waiting for a man, is strongly suggested; even the name, "beautiful lady" encourages us to evaluate Leo's experiences in the bush in terms of his interest in Marian. Nevertheless, the boy makes it clear that it is in "some way" that the plant wants him, and that he is only to be "an ingredient". Leo's role is as ambiguously defined here as it had been in connection with the relationship between Ted and Marian. As Leo had literally been led by a woman, Marian, to meet a man whose company the boy had subsequently sought, so too is the image of the harlot at the door a means by which young Leo will encounter the male potency he seeks.

While the sound of the belladonna roots "creaking and cracking" fills the boy's ears, we are reminded of Leo's final visit to Black Farm before Ted dies:

I stared at him. I was not very observant but I saw that the strangeness in his manner was borne out by his appearance. Once he had reminded me of a cornfield ripe for reaping; now he was like corn that had been cut and left in the sun. I suppose he wasn't more than twenty-five. He had never looked young to me; young men in those days didn't try to look young, they aped the appearance of maturity. But now I could see in his face the features of a much older person. Sweating though he was, he looked dried up, the husk of the man he had been. He had taken in his belt another notch, I noticed. I might have said to him, as he had said to me, "Who's been upsetting you?"

(GB, p. 215)

Years later, Leo recognises that by falsifying the time of the

lovers' tryst he had contributed to Ted's death. So in "destroying the belladonna" (GB, p. 264), the boy feels "the vital principle of the plant defending itself in its death agony". The sounds that young Leo hears about him as he struggles with the plant's torn stem are also the noise of Ted's fate as embodied in the "cornfield ripe for reaping". Farmer Burgess will be reduced to "corn...cut and left in the sun" (GB, p. 215). As the boy had made his "harvest" of Ted, who pulls in his belt as though he were a sheaf awaiting collection, so we listen to the very act of the farmer's destruction as the roots of the belladonna are torn out of the ground. Leo has become Ted's reaper.

Leo's observation that the plant was "much less strong than I thought" is confirmed when he notes that the belladonna "came away in [his] hands". As Marian had informed the boy, "'Ted is as weak as water'" (GB, p. 226), and the sound of "a little shower of earth" rustling on the leaves, "like rain", emphasises the fact that young Leo has extracted Ted's essence-- Leo has ripped the plant from its natural home, as he has torn asunder the relationship between Marian and Ted. In extracting the stem, he has also, symbolically, grasped what remains of Ted's potency, which, as I have noted, is also bound up with the farmer's death.

There is a more evidently sexual element to the boy's experience, however, for young Leo is "lying on [his] back in

the open, still clutching the stump"--the scene anticipates the position in which Marian will be discovered by the boy and Mrs. Maudsley; indeed, sexual climax is strongly suggested in the scene. Significantly, the boy is looking "up" at the "mop-like coronal of roots from which grains of earth kept dropping on [his] face". Hartley has symbolically presented Leo being physically subjected to the male potency that Marian will later enjoy, also in a rain. Finally, though metaphorically, the boy has become "wet"; he has achieved his only intimate contact with Ted, and Leo has therefore enjoyed, in a symbolic way, the "something" that exists between the two grown-ups whose affair he has pursued, and which so much attracts him. Leo is now like Ted, the swimmer, who extended his wet hand to Denys when they met in the bathing scene.

Leo's sexual relationship with Ted Burgess is epitomised in the final scene before the boy's breakdown. Mrs. Maudsley, who suspects her daughter of having an affair with Ted Burgess, sweeps Leo away from his birthday tea. She believes that her daughter is not at Nannie Robson's, and that Leo knows of Marian's whereabouts. When the boy passes through the hallway, he notices the bicycle that is to be his birthday gift, but it is its condition that lingers in his mind:

It was propped against the newel-post of the staircase, and somehow reminded me of a little mountain sheep with curly horns, its head lowered in apology or defence. The handlebars, turned towards me, were dwarfed by the great height of the saddle

which, pulled out to its fullest extent for Marian to ride, disclosed a shining tube of steel six inches long.

The vision remained with me, imparting a distressing sense of something misshapen and misused, as I ran through the rain at Mrs. Maudsley's side.

(GB, p. 261)

Like the Ram, the Bull, and the Lion who "epitomised imperious manhood", and who were "what we all thought we had it in us to be; careless, noble, self-sufficient, they ruled their months with sovereign sway" (GB, p. 9), the bicycle, "a little mountain sheep with curly horns" conveys this sense of the grown man-- it is, after all, also a birthday present for a boy who would want to become a man on this day.

Significantly, the "shining tube of steel six inches long" is, again, the phallic image, like the spire or upright, that repeatedly precedes an encounter between Marian and Ted in which Leo is involved. The complexity of the "love triangle" is suggested when the boy describes his distressing sense of having seen something "misshapen and misused". Leo's distress derives from his awareness that the bicycle has been prepared for Marian to ride into the birthday-tea room. The boy's anxiety reflects his sense of exclusion from Marian's and Ted's relationship. Leo's disillusionment is echoed, as the broken rushes had earlier reflected his misery, when he subsequently notices the "tousle-headed stump...still lying on the path, limp and bedraggled" as he is led by Mrs. Maudsley

to the back of the building (GB, p. 262).

Along with the sound of pattering rain, recalling the spattering of the earth that had showered upon young Leo's face in his delirium, there is only the other sound of a "swishing through the puddles" of Mrs. Maudsley's dress--a sound, like the sharp catching of breath that anticipates the sexual act that Leo and Mrs. Maudsley are about to encounter. The climax of the scene is Mrs. Maudsley's scream when she sees the young couple in flagrante delicto on the ground. The image that Hartley employs to depict the sexual act is an accretion of the symbols of spire and sky, spire and cloud, steel tube and saddle, which have been associated with Marian and Ted, but which have also illustrated young Leo's unfulfilled place within their passion--"a shadow on the wall that opened and closed like an umbrella" (GB, p. 262). This last image reinforces the idea of the boy's apartness from the couple, as he stands in the rain holding Mrs. Maudsley's hand; Leo may have learned through Ted what it is to be a man, but he has failed to enter the "umbrella" of the farmer's sexual potency.

After young Leo experiences frustration and shock at seeing the couple in the outhouse, he spends his life as "A foreigner in the world of the emotions, ignorant of their language but compelled to listen to it" (GB, p. 280).³⁹ Thus, on his return to Brandham, he drifts into another trip as go-between to meet Lady Marian Trimmingham's grandson, who also

wears corduroy trousers and has the colouring of "a cornfield; a ripe cornfield in the month of May" (GB, p. 271). The man's name is Edward, but he prefers the name Hugh, no doubt to preserve himself from the bastardly association of being of a line that began with Marian and Ted--"'Edward (only don't call him that)...he's the same age Ted was when you came to Brandham'" (GB, p. 280). When the elderly Leo Colston goes to inform Edward that "'there's no spell or curse except an unloving heart'" (GB, p. 280), the "dried up" bibliographer also carries a message appropriate to himself. He did not fully understand the nature of the attraction that he had had for Ted. Even now, as a stranger to his emotions, he does not recognise that he is finally going to meet the young man who most fully resembles the boyhood goal young Leo had set for himself. Edward/Hugh, the eleventh Viscount Trimmingham, has no war in which to be a warrior, nor is he a farm labourer--he thus embodies neither of the two manly ideals--the Archer and the Water-Carrier--between which Leo, as a boy, had found it troubling to choose. Edward is of Ted Burgess, and yet is also of the Hall--a level of society to which Leo has also been attracted. The old man goes to visit Edward to cast out the curse under which the young man feels he is held and which he believes restrains him from marriage. The spell has caused the "unlovingness" that has dried up his and Leo's hearts.

Before I proceed to a discussion of The Harness Room, an overtly homosexual novel, I will try to demonstrate how Hartley, in other novels, has employed the theme of male homosexuality. In this way, I would hope to show that homosexual concerns in Hartley's work have not been confined to his later period.

PART TWO

THE HARTLEIAN "MURMUR": NOTES ON OTHER WORKS

In The Novelist's Responsibility, Hartley discusses the novelist thus:

Many novelists who do not make a personal appearance in their books are haunted by a particular idea or situation which embodies what they feel about life and enables them to apply their sensibility to it, and to choose what elements in it nourish their gifts, just as surely as if they were writing about themselves. This idea or situation goes on in them like a kind of murmur; it is what their thoughts turn to when they are by themselves. Most of us, writers or not writers, have some orientation of that kind, a magnetic north for our private musings.⁴⁰

In Hartley's fiction, the "murmur" includes his interest in discussing, in an increasingly open manner, the place of male homosexual behaviour in everyday human relationships. E.T. Jones has explained why a critical reader should be encouraged to unearth the shadowy theme:

If Hartley's canon can be seriously faulted, it is that his fiction, Prufrockian-like, seems to be moving toward some overwhelming question (about love, identity, good and evil, fantasy and fact) that is never quite phrased, let alone answered.

....

Hartley entertains a number of controversial undercurrents in his fiction, from incest to homosexuality, without completely facing them. Whether out of fear, natural reticence, gentility, or repugnance, his treatment of these topics remains shadowy, though provocative. That he introduces

them at all suggests a willingness on his part to confront reality with candor and even some measure of daring. Indeed, as Hartley moves from symbolic showing in the early novels to more direct telling in the later ones, the distance may be charted of how Edwardian man becomes fully later twentieth-century humanity.⁴¹

When considering Hartley's at times coy handling of the male homosexual dimension of his life and work, one recalls psychiatrist Dr. Powell's remarks to Basil Hancock in My Sisters'

Keeper:

"I think you have always identified yourself with your sisters and you wanted them to get married because you wanted to get married yourself. How much your schoolboy friendship with Terry O'Donovan had to do with this, I don't know. I do know that you refused his advances (from motives of conscience, for which I respect you), but if you had (how shall I say?)... acceded to them, and accorded him your favours, you might now be a happily married man, with four or five children to your credit, as he has. It often works that way. What I mean to say is, your sisters were substitutes for your own desires."

(MSK, pp. 229-230)

If Basil had fully experienced a relationship with Terry (MSK, p. 18), Dr. Powell suggests, he might now have developed into a man able to fully enjoy a heterosexual relationship; of course Basil might also have grown up into a homosexual able to conduct a relationship with another man. Instead, Basil's sexual development, like that of Leo and Eustace, is in a dormant state. In the fiction, had Hartley more solidly addressed the issue of homosexuality, he might have found himself able to

avoid simply reiterating, throughout the canon, the prospect of homosexual alliance occurring between male characters.

By re-examining the earlier novels, from the vantage point of works like My Sisters' Keeper and The Harness Room, we see more clearly how, like Basil's sisters, women like Hilda and Marian in particular can be viewed as "substitutes" for the male protagonists' urgent, but perhaps not fully recognised, desires for other males. What Meyers says of Forster's Where Angels Fear to Tread, The Longest Journey, and especially A Room With a View is also applicable to Hartley's Eustace and Hilda trilogy and The Go-Between: "the disguised homosexual theme subtly undermines the heterosexual romance".⁴²

In the trilogy, for example, Eustace's response to Dick is similar to Leo's in The Go-Between, when the boy is confronted by Ted. As the farmer had presented himself to Leo as a desirable and glamorous species of manhood, so Dick appears to the younger boy as an attractive "hero" figure, almost "other-worldly":

...he felt himself transported into another world, a world in which strange shapes and stranger shadows served as a background for heroic deeds, performed in company with Dick Staveley.

(EHT, p. 102)

Dick, like the archer of Leo's imagination, is a lord "'of the foreshore'", whose beach "'belongs to us as far as a man can ride into the sea and shoot an arrow'" (EHT, p. 102). Like Ted, Dick has a powerful physique which expresses his "'sheer

masculinity''; in a chapter coyly entitled "The Shrine of Fantasy", Eustace learns from Antony of Dick's stark-naked body and of how "'his skin fits him like armour-plating....His body is like a lethal weapon'" (EHT, p. 353).

Dick, like Ted, is also the owner of a gun which Hartley describes in similar terms to those used in the erotically symbolic scene in The Go-Between. When Eustace recalls being carried by Dick after the paper-chase, as Ted had supported Leo after the straw-stack incident (GB, p. 80), he remembers "'how shiny and wet'" the firearm had looked; it is symbolic of young Staveley's potency, all the more potent for being contrasted with Eustace's weakness (EHT, p. 100).

When a character like Dick forms a relationship with Eustace's sister Hilda, we cannot ignore Eustace's own desires as he watches the relationship beginning to develop. In the chapter ambiguously entitled "The Sixth Heaven", Eustace describes his elation at seeing Dick's plane take off with Hilda also in the cockpit; in much the same way as Leo had described his feelings after seeing Ted at the bathing spot, Eustace expresses his aroused feelings thus:

Watching its flight, Eustace felt his mind growing tenuous in sympathy. Something that he had launched had taken wing and was flying far beyond his control, with a strength which was not his, but which he had had it in him to release. Somewhere in his dull being, as in the messy cells of a battery, that dynamism had slumbered; now it was off to its native ether, not taking him with it--that could not be--but leaving him

exalted and tingling with the energy of its discharge. The sense of fulfilment he had felt when Hilda promised to come to Anchorstone returned to him, the ecstasy of achievement which is only realised in dreams.

(EHT, p. 399)

Martin Seymour-Smith's view of Eustace is that he is a beautifully portrayed character, "except that he should have been overtly homosexual".⁴³ We share the critic's frustration at Hartley's reluctance to more clearly discuss such a crucial dimension of the process of Eustace's attempts at self-understanding.

Hartley's reticence about the male homosexual theme, together with its ubiquitous place throughout the canon, promotes re-evaluation of novels like The Boat; to what extent, for example, are we to take note of Vera Cross's reference to young, handsome Edgell as Timothy Casson's "'boy-friend'" (B, p. 84)? How are we to interpret Beattie's reaction to Mr. Wimbush's suggestion that Timothy Casson is in need of a male companion--"'Companion's a nice way of putting it'" she says, before being ordered by Effie to "'please be serious'" (B, p. 266).

Homosexual innuendo in a novel like The Boat becomes more direct a statement in My Fellow Devils; it is not the relationship between Margaret Pennefather and Colum McInnes that principally preoccupies our thoughts when we learn more about Nick Burden's relationship with Colum. Although Nick is a character whom Hartley quickly shifts to the wings after

Margaret's marriage to Colum, his suffering over Colum pervades the central action of the story: the development of the McInnes' relationship. In a letter to Margaret, Nick explains his feelings for her husband:

It's odd I should be pleading for him, and I wouldn't now--it would be unbearably insulting to you--if I hadn't suffered on his account even more perhaps than you have. And am still suffering--choosing between my oldest and my dearest friend."

(MFD, p. 365)

And later:

"...I do appeal to you if you ever loved him, to put your petty prejudices aside and take him back, as...as I have." He considered the last sentence and disliked it. Angry with himself, and therefore less careful to spare Margaret, he hurried on.

(MFD, p. 372)

Margaret becomes increasingly aware of the affinity between the two men who are like "blood-brothers"--"'Boys will be boys, I suppose.' She disliked herself for saying it, disliked the tone, disliked the implication" (MFD, p. 377):

They [Nick and Colum] were in league against her. Ever since Colum came into the room he had been edging nearer to Nick; now they were standing almost side by side, two naughty boys being reprimanded by their teacher, mutely supporting each other. It was an unnatural alliance, and she wanted to say something wounding, something in the worst of taste, that would drive a wedge between them. She was aware of their male solidarity working against her, she felt the mortification, the sex-shame of a woman whom men have made a fool of.

(MFD, p. 376)

Margaret even feels that she has been cast in the role of "go-between" (MFD, p. 344) for Nick and Colum, as Leo had been with Marian and Ted. And as Margaret's friend, Lauriol, informs her, the relationship between the two men has not been completely exhausted by Colum's marriage, and by Nick's jealousy about it:

"P.S. His boy-friend Burden drops in fairly often. Do you approve of that. I don't. Old Nick, Colum calls him, so now there are two of them...."

(MFD, p. 410)

My Sisters' Keeper might also be examined in terms of its discussion of Basil's likely homosexuality. Apart from his avowed but unsteady interest in Terry, when at school, there is also the question of Basil's interest in Alan Walsingham; Amabel, Basil's sister, informs her brother that "'I believe you have a crush on him yourself. You like that type'" (MSK, p. 160). The central concern of My Sisters' Keeper is, anyway, based on the matter of Terry's homosexual behaviour, and how Basil might have made more effort to inform his sister Gwendolen that he and her fiancé, Terry, enjoyed a homosexual relationship at school:

"But you hadn't the guts to say it," said Gwendolen, still torn between tears and anger. "If you had, I should never have married this wretched friend of yours-- a sodomite, not to give him a nastier name. I knew, or I came to know, that he fancied any pretty face, but I didn't know, as you must have known, that he fancied any pretty bottom."

(MSK, p. 120)

Whether or not we choose to explore the male homosexual theme in Hartley's fiction, it is clear that his treatment of male/male relationships is well in keeping with Meyers' estimation that "the homosexual experience portrayed in modern literature is extremely negative, for even Forster's happy endings are completely unconvincing".⁴⁴

In The Harness Room, the relationship between Fred Carrington and Fergus Macready is one of clearly reciprocated interests, in contrast with the attraction of boy-to-man in The Go-Between. In spite of the temporary happiness of the male bonding between Fred and Fergus, in The Harness Room, the relationship is soon terminated by Fergus' accidental death: a further instance of the negative experience to which Meyers refers.

PART THREE

THE HARNESS ROOM: FROM LEO AND TED TO FERGUS AND FRED

As I have tried to demonstrate, the male homosexual theme lies distinctly and provocatively within the symbolic underlayers of The Go-Between. If we examine The Harness Room in the light of our reading of the relationship between Leo and Ted, we see how Hartley has stripped away symbolic concealment in order to expose an explicitly homosexual alliance between Fred and Fergus. The story principally describes the experiences of Colonel Macready's son, Fergus, when he is left by his parents to do some physical training, which is supervised by Fred Carrington, the family chauffeur. Like Eustace Cherrington, Fergus is faced with the prospect of growing up; and, like Eustace, Leo and Leadbitter, he is exposed to a woman's designing ways. In this section, I will examine Hartley's presentation of Fergus' involvement with the family chauffeur, and compare that treatment with the depiction of the relationship between Leo and Ted. Where it seems appropriate, I will mention incidents in Hartley's other novels where homosexual concerns provide a useful comparison.

In Chapter One, I examined the way in which Eustace nears self-understanding, and how this process involves a series of acts of self-assertiveness. I discussed how these acts demonstrated Eustace's wish to establish a relationship

with the outside world. While much of Eustace's assertiveness includes physical exertion, its principal feature is the inner growth that it accords him. Although Fergus Macready is mainly confronted by the necessity of developing physically, during the summer vacation, the boy also increases his understanding of himself, his father, and his step-mother.

Being sent away from home, and having to undergo some sort of training for adult life, are situations typically faced by young, male Hartleian protagonists. Fergus' physical education lasts for only a month, however; the length of his father's honeymoon with his second wife, Sonia. The adolescent son of Colonel Macready carries with him "a long-time conviction of physical inferiority, which his father and the school authorities had confirmed" (HR, p. 26). Unlike Richard Mardick in The Brickfield/Betrayal, Fergus is not reluctant to embark upon his "sessions" with Fred; in fact he would "'rather look like'" the muscular Carrington, than remain in his current physical condition.

From the age of five, Fergus has had only a father to raise him (HR, p. 3). His single-parent background is similar to that of Eustace, and to the fatherless circumstances of Leo. Fergus ultimately falls prey to his father's stridently-voiced aspirations. Fergus may be himself unhappy with his physique, and is therefore willing to train, but his temperament causes him to resist his father's other plans for him.

Like Richard, the scholar, Fergus is a "'bookworm'", and not the suitable candidate for Sandhurst that his father would like him to be (HR, p. 4). Colonel Macready, however, is intent upon getting Fergus "up to the military mark" (HR, p. 3).

The colonel, a "little man" (HR, p. 1), though active, compensates for some of his own physical shortcomings by stressing "'the active side of life'" (HR, p. 4). Some of his limitations emerge during an interview with Fred:

"I know you won't be tough with him, because he's a timid boy, and easily frightened, but every man has a fighting spirit in him, it only has to be brought out. If he knows that he has to hurt, as well as to be hurt, it will make life easier for him. If you're fighting, you have to fight. I don't want him to be a cissy. Of course I'll make it worth your while--"

Colonel Macready stretched himself upwards, making the most of his short stature, literally and laterally, spreading out his fierce yellow moustache, and Carrington, from his superior height, looked down on him.

(HR, p. 4)

Fred accepts the task of imbuing Fergus with an "aggressive spirit". The chauffeur will temporarily become Fergus' surrogate father, as Ted Burgess might have done with Leo had not the boy's questions about spooning so obsessed him.

Leo had possessed features of his mother's temperament, and Fergus too is Frances Macready's "replica"; but this is a matter of some concern to his widower father, especially as the colonel is preparing to re-marry:

By now [Frances'] image was receding from his mind, and the image of Fergus, as a replacement of her, was growing dim too. He realized that the feminine qualities, which he so loved in her, wouldn't be suitable in a son he wanted to ride and hunt and shoot. The likeness, the physical appearance, were still there, but he wasn't being unfair to Fergus when he thought they didn't become a boy on the verge of manhood.

But before he took the plunge he was considering, he still clung to the idea that somehow Fergus could be made a soldier. Fergus was still the dearest thing he had; in a few days he might not be; it all depended on how his suit with Sonia went....

(HR, p. 3)

By encouraging Fergus over "the verge of manhood", Colonel Macready will no longer have to be reminded of his deceased wife who is so reflected in the "feminine qualities" of the boy. Fergus, through Fred's instruction, will become a "new man" who will be able to represent his father in a military world, and to symbolise the new start that the colonel has made.

At the boxing bout between Fergus and Fred, the boy demonstrates the pluck that his father had wished to see (HR, p. 130)--"The fighting spirit at last!....it was Fred who had begotten this new attitude in him, as by a kind of brain-washing" (HR, p. 114). But rather as Eustace experiences "deflation" after an act of assertiveness, so Fergus experiences death after his triumph in the ring.

Although he has physically developed, Fergus is also on the threshold of understanding his emotions. Like Eustace, the boy is ripe for coming to terms with his strong feelings (for Fred) at the moment of his death. He feels that he has "grown up emotionally" while his parents have been on their honeymoon, and he has been under Fred's tutelage (HR, p. 100). As Fergus awaits the return of his father and stepmother, however, he feels that he has "stopped flowering" (HR, p. 80). Like Leo's paralysing experience at the outhouse, prior to his retreat from the world of emotions and of love, Fergus' inner growth is forestalled when the colonel and his new wife return from their honeymoon.

In Chapter Two, I discussed how Leo, Eustace and Lead-bitter please others, and how, because of this tendency and because of their fantasizing, these male characters become victims of the women with whom they are confronted. Fergus, the typical Hartleian hero, is sensitive--"a timid, retiring, retreating character" who is compelled to do his father's bidding (HR, p. 29). Although Fergus is primarily subjected to the colonel's aspirations, he is also prey to his stepmother's designs.

Colonel Macready's physical ugliness ("'Old Piggy' they called him"), and his age, are points of weakness in his "campaign" for Sonia (HR, p. 12). As he imagines a battle between himself and her, the colonel feels himself "yielding

each point, without starting it". Sonia agrees to marry him, even though she "wasn't in love with him", and so begins her tyranny over the household (HR, p. 22). With the rigour of an Aunt Sarah or a Hilda, and the intensity of a Mrs. Maudsley, Sonia reorganises everything--"Every piece of furniture (or so it seemed to [Fergus]) was in a new place, and wore a new look" (HR, p. 83).

By making her "potent...changes" (HR, p. 84) in the Macready household, Sonia is, in part, attempting to satisfy her mother's need to recall "the grandeur of her past". By altering the way of life at Foxton Farm, she tries in her small way to protect the colonel and Fergus from the sense of social inferiority that her mother would otherwise bestow upon them (HR, p. 11); "to keep up...appearance" was Mrs. Verriden's, and therefore Sonia's, major interest (HR, p. 12).

Even though Fergus, as his father later acknowledges, is, like Eustace, "a boy who wanted to please, who was only too pleased to please" (HR, p. 124), he does manage to protect his "sanctum", the morning room, from Sonia's interfering ideas (HR, p. 84). Nevertheless, Fergus increasingly feels that he is "weakening" beneath his stepmother's influence: "Sonia penetrated, she permeated, she diffused; and there was only one place that was exempt from her influence: the harness room" (HR, p. 85). In Fred's company, Fergus can escape Sonia, and can be with a man who, like his counterpart Leadbitter in

The Hireling, is uncomfortable with women (HR, p. 5).

Sonia's desire for intimacy with her stepson is an objective that gradually reveals itself. From her honeymoon location she sends Fergus letters that are "more intimate" than those of the colonel--"she remembered little things they had talked about, things that had interested him" (HR, p. 54). Gossip, however, whose accuracy we may wish to question, is, at first, the major vehicle for news of Sonia's interest in Fergus. Fred reports to the boy the following:

"Well, in the house they say that Madam hasn't eyes for anyone but you. It isn't surprising--you're a nice-looking chap, or will be, when you've filled out a bit, and you're much nearer her age."

Fred kept his eyes on the floor, an attitude that was rare with him, and shuffled his feet, which he seldom did.

"But you don't think this is true, Fred, do you? They gossip so."

"Well, of course, I haven't seen you in each other's arms."

"No, and you won't," said Fergus, trying to be angry with Fred. "She's only wanting to make things easier for my father, by making things easier for me."

"You watch out," said Fred. "You never know what women are up to."

Fergus was shaken by this. Fred had so much more experience of life, up and down the world, than he had, and what reason could Fred have for saying this? Not jealousy, surely.

He gave the chauffeur a distressed inquiring look, and Fred, who still looked more serious than was his wont, said,

"Never mind what I said, Mr. Fergus. Only watch your step. Did they know you were coming up here?" he added.

(HR, pp. 87-88)

Fergus becomes greatly troubled by "the signs of favour which Sonia showered on him", but he cannot decide whether these signs represent maternal affection, or "a real partiality" (HR, p. 93). The chauffeur suggests that Fergus is violently opposed to Sonia's behaviour. Furthermore, Fred believes that the boy's dislike of his stepmother may have contributed to Fergus' "'more mettlesome fighting'" (HR, p. 108). The chauffeur warns the boy to be wary of Sonia because "'Women are like that'" (HR, p. 96).

While remaining suspicious of the servants' tittle-tattle, Fergus finally recognises the "unmistakable signs of Sonia's favour, which he couldn't disregard". The staff may have exaggerated his stepmother's conduct, but Fergus is sure that "her attitude was not one of general indiscriminate affability" (HR, p. 100).

After the boy's death, Sonia leaves the colonel, but not before a quarrel in which her husband also reveals his knowledge of her interest in Fergus:

"Don't imagine I haven't heard, since we came back, about you and Fergus! I may be stupid, but I can use my eyes, and I've seen what I never thought of seeing, the way you looked at Fergus, as if he was the apple of your eye! Oh yes, it was only because of Fergus that you condescended to marry me! Fergus was the catch, and I was the bait! Oh yes, Sonia, you played your

cards well, as no doubt you will play them
another time."

(HR, pp. 123-124)

With the object of her interest now dead, Sonia leaves the grieving father as he sits, later in the evening, in the drawing-room "which Sonia had done up in accordance with her tastes without much consulting him". The decoration of the room, like the arrangement of the couple's relationship, had all been to Sonia's advantage; the colonel is left "a stranger in his own house" as he had been in his marriage (HR, p. 127). Sonia's eyes have told him "how little he had ever meant to her" (HR, p. 123).

Once Hartley's male protagonists are away from close parental jurisdiction, they typically encounter another male, usually older, with whom they form a close relationship. The younger male is charmed by the older male, who is invariably a worldlier character, able to offer the boy a wider outlook on life. Richard Mardick meets Uncle Hal who, as Ted does for Leo, and Fred for Fergus, provides the bored teenager with "a door--a door into the outer world" (BFD, p. 117). Basil Hancock forms a three-year relationship with his "hero" (MSK, 16), the glamorous Terry O'Donovan, who allows Basil "that expansion of the spirit" (MSK, p. 111) that he does not feel when with girls. Fergus is considerably drawn to Carrington, whom "he had always liked". Referring to his feelings for the chauffeur, Fergus declares that "hungry is the heart!", but,

"It never occurred to Fergus that Carrington's might be as hungry as his own" (HR, p. 25). Common to both Ted and Fred is the way in which they charm their respective boys. After Leo has played upon the straw-stack at Black Farm, for example, the boy prepares to leave for Brandham Hall with his bandaged knee. Ted makes his farewells thus:

"You're a good boy," he said,
shaking hands with me. "Hop off, and
be kind to yourself."

I laughed at this, it seemed so
funny to be told to be kind to yourself,
and then I remembered what I wanted to
say. "May I come and slide down your
straw-stack again?"

"I'll have it combed and brushed
for you," he said. "And now you must
scoot."

He went with me to the stackyard
gate and when I turned round a little
later he was still standing there. I
waved and he waved back.

(GB, p. 87)

Similarly, when Fergus "[comes] a little closer" to Fred, as the chauffeur cleans his car, the following exchange occurs:

"I don't want to bother you," said
Fergus, insincerely.

"Oh, you're not bothering me, Mr.
Fergus," said Carrington, coming nearer
and rolling up his shirt-sleeves above
the elbows. "I'm only giving the car a
wash and brush-up, as you might say."

(HR, p. 25)

Both Ted and Fred are adept at lending human qualities to the

impersonal; such a skill engenders the sense of security that each man wishes to establish with his boy. Both men are "combing and brushing", "washing and brushing-up" an inanimate object as an act of service from which their young companions will benefit.

The warmth and security between man and boy that are inspired by these words are confirmed in The Go-Between when the two males wave, like parting lovers drinking in a final view of each other. In The Harness Room, there is an exchange of similar intimacy that conveys the promise of further relationship:

"What is your Christian name?"

"It's Fred, as a matter of fact, sir."

"May I call you Fred?"

"Call me anything you like, sir."

(HR, p. 25)

As we know from Lady Franklin's meeting with Leadbitter (H, p. 41), from Denys Aspin and Richard Mardick (BFD, p. 1), and from Terry O'Donovan's early encounter with Basil Hancock (MSK, p. 16), the knowledge of Christian names in Hartley is an important signal--it is a prelude to a more developed sort of intimacy, which subsequently occurs between Carrington and Fergus. On one occasion Fred adopts a Ted-like expression as the boy departs--"Be good to yourself", he says, as he pockets the money Fergus has given him (HR, p. 58).

Hartley's older male mentors, except for Timothy Casson and the likewise anomalous Richard Mardick, are handsome and in good physical condition; the younger male is profoundly impressed by such prowess. Mrs. Hancock concurs with her son, Basil, that Terry O'Donovan is good-looking (MSK, p. 13). Terry, with his "prowess at games" (MSK, p. 18), is seen at his most powerful, as is Ted Burgess, during an annual cricket match; Terry becomes "hero of the hour" (MSK, p. 21). Dick Staveley who "duplicates Ted's strength and sexual freedom",⁴⁵ Terry, Hal, and Leadbitter create a physical composite with which Fred Carrington may be easily associated. Hartley especially draws our attention to Fergus' interest in the chauffeur's body. In an early encounter, for example, Fergus becomes distracted by Fred's "hairy, muscular forearms" as they glisten in the July sun (HR, p. 25). Fergus is evidently attracted to the chauffeur in this, the preliminary stage of Fred's denudation:

Fergus glanced at Fred. He had often glanced at him before and always envied him his good looks. He was the embodiment of the tough guy, the cinema hero (or villain) with a moustache exactly right for the position it occupied under his straight nose, his brown eyes, his dark hair, and the splendid physique, some of which could be inferred, as being in keeping with his naked muscular forearms....

(HR, p. 26)

Such a description reminds us of the "striking appearance" of the "tall and dark and handsome" Leadbitter, whose physical characteristics Hartley describes at some length (H, p. 7).

We also recall Leo's interest in Ted's forearm muscles during the gun-cleaning (GB, p. 172), and how the boy "noticed that [Ted's] arm had turned a darker shade of brown" (GB, p. 113). Even though we know from Marcus that Marian is beautiful, it is, consistently, the effect of Ted's physical attributes upon Leo that is presented. In The Harness Room, however, we note a more direct presentation of the boy's curiosity about the handsome man.

On Fergus' subsequent meeting with the chauffeur, Carrington is "'just in a singlet, and sweating too'" (HR, p. 33). We remember, here, Ted Burgess' condition after his first meeting with young Leo, after the farmer had written a message to Marian--"I noticed for the first time that he was sweating: his shirt was sticking in dark patches to his chest" (GB, p. 87). Fred soon removes his singlet, however, when he demonstrates press-ups to the boy. And the chauffeur's state of petto nudo is repeated at the next meeting when Fred is again cleaning the car. Carrington places a jacket over his naked chest; but this "rather emphasized his nakedness", so Fergus asks that he remove the coat (HR, p. 44). Leo is more visibly affected by his experience of Ted's naked chest, and the farmer, in response, offers to dress himself:

Seeing the hesitations and reservations
in my face he said, "I oughtn't to be like
this when callers come, but I was that hot.
Do you mind? Shall I put a shirt on?
There are no ladies present."

One of the ways he had of winning me was by deferring to me.

"N--no," I began to say, but a hiccup interrupted the word.

(GB, p. 170)

Both boys are given command of the display of nakedness that so arrests their attention. And like Ted Burgess' "powerful body" (GB, p. 56), Fred's physique is impressive, although the chauffeur has been more deliberate in his body-building:

"...I am pretty strong. And I try to keep it up--I have a sort of private little gym in my flat over the garage, with a punch-ball, and bar-bells and so on. I don't want to go soft, if you know what I mean."

(HR, p. 27)

It is not surprising, therefore, that when the twenty-eight-year-old chauffeur shows Fergus a photograph of himself as a youth, in "the altogether", the boy gazes upon a striking picture of the young man posing as Samson (HR, p. 73)--a character reminiscent of the Hercules young Leo would like to be, and whose qualities Leo observes in Ted Burgess.

Leo's experience of Ted's physique is the sudden exposure of a boy to a nearly-naked, powerfully built man-- "suddenly the head and shoulders of a man rose from among the rushes" (GB, p. 53). The farmer's second dive also impresses the boy--"We watched him dive--it must have been a ten-foot drop--" (GB, p. 55). The slow and stealthy movements of the tenant-farmer are all the more exciting for young Leo because the boy finally sees "that powerful body" at close quarters in

the reeds (GB, p. 56). This, together with the abruptness with which Ted appears, stimulates Leo.

In both The Go-Between and The Harness Room the boy is exposed to a close scrutiny of the male body. When Fergus looks upon the photograph of Carrington's physique, the boy's study is extremely detailed, and betrays an intensity of interest in what lies in the "foliage" of the "fluffier" dark triangle that spreads out below "the belly button" (HR, p. 71). The analysis is more methodical than the account Leo takes of Ted's body, whose torso has been all the more vivid for having been "nearly naked in the presence of the clothed" (GB, p. 55).

As though imitative of the perspiring Carrington, Ted, at the pool, looks down at the water "collecting in a puddle on the bluish brickwork at his feet". Leo, even more to the boy's surprise, but not to his displeasure, soon after, finds himself in close proximity to the wet, muscular farmer, who has stretched himself on the sun-warmed brickwork (GB, pp. 56-57). Leo is clearly awestruck by the opportunity to share Ted's scrutiny of a flawless body. There is no gradual undressing as with Carrington and his singlet, and no photograph of a man posing nude. Unlike the highly cultivated musculature of Fred Carrington, Ted's body is "beyond the need of gym and playing field" (GB, p. 57). In describing Ted's exquisite physique, however, Hartley also hints at the farmer's weakness. Ted lies prostrate in the rushes, and later stands erect in

the cornfield when everything else, in violent contrast, is "very flat" (GB, p. 101). These poses present the extent to which Ted, while physically attractive, is also vulnerable, at odds with the status quo. Carrington, by contrast, does not suffer the sort of criticism to which the farmer is subjected.

Both Leo and Fergus are interested in the physical prowess of their male mentors. In each of the experiences we have studied, there is also an element of sensuality that lends a further dimension to the encounter. After Fergus thanks Fred for showing him the photograph, the boy does not immediately relinquish it, but continues to gaze at it and to extend his investigation:

"You've told me, or as good as told me, that it's a picture of you, minus your face, and I can follow that streak of darkness between the bright light on the rest of you" (and he gently touched the two inverted triangles of hair on Fred's ample but narrowing torso), "but what is this at the bottom of it all, where this big bit of wavy material, silk or damask, I dare say, covers it all up?"

"Can't you guess?" Fred asked.

"I dare say I could," said Fergus, still wanting to continue his inquisition. "I suppose I could. But what you can see is different from what you can imagine."

They looked at each other with the mute inquiry which human beings, of whatever sex, have often interchanged.

"I mean this," said Fergus, looking at Samson's left arm in the photograph

(his right arm, being in shadow, was suggested rather than drawn). "Is your forearm really like that? I mean, is there really that division between the upper and the lower muscles? I can't describe it--but the painter--" and he pointed to the artist's rendering of the forearm, and the deep shadow which divided it.

For answer, Fred clenched his fist and forced it upwards against his wrist; and the two muscles jutted out, with the hairy chasm between them, and a blue vein trickling through, like a wayward stream in a valley, until they joined together at his elbow.

Fergus tried with his own arm to reproduce this phenomenon, but without success. His arm was soft and pliant,--he had no reason to be ashamed of it--but it had not the hillocky contours of Fred's.

"You win," he said, "you win. I should like to have an arm like yours."
(HR, p. 72)

Leo's interest in spooning had also been confined to pictures--"vulgar post-cards"--but he still does not know what it feels like to spoon (GB, p. 111). Fergus here tries to imitate the chauffeur, as Leo had done with Ted. Fergus, however, has clearly informed Carrington that he wants to be a Samson, like him. As Fergus continues what we later realise constitutes an elaborate act of sexual foreplay, he becomes bolder in his behaviour with the chauffeur:

"I don't know how you feel about yourself," said Fergus, who by this time thought he could say anything, "physically, I mean."

"Physically," said Fred, genuinely surprised, "I take myself for granted."

"Oh, no," said Fergus, more perceptive, "you don't. Now roll up your sleeve and show me your biceps."

Obediently Fred did so, and the muscle, with its intervening blue vein, jumped up with the proverbial roundure of a cricket-ball.

....

Fergus was aware of the tension between them.

(HR, p. 73)

As Fergus makes his further enquiries about the chauffeur's physique, he gradually dispels his belief that "'what you can see is different from what you can imagine'", and the two males move even closer to a sexual act. In The Go-Between, the description of Ted's physique is also a sensual one:

Now he had a plantain stalk in his left hand and was rubbing it gently along the hairs of his right forearm; they glinted in the sun and were paler than his arms, which were mahogany-coloured to above the elbow. Then he stretched both arms high above his chest, which was so white it might have belonged to another person, except below his neck where the sun had burnt a copper breastplate; and he smiled to himself, an intimate, pleased smile, that would have looked childish or imbecile on most people, but on him had the effect of a feather on a tiger--it pointed a contrast, and all to his advantage.

I wondered whether I ought to be spying on him but I could not move without betraying myself and I had a feeling that it would be dangerous to disturb him.

(GB, p. 57)

The "painter's spotlight" (HR, p. 71) in the photograph of Fred's body is here represented as the activity of a plantain stalk. Like brush strokes, Ted's rubbing draws our attention to the hairs of the forearm--an area that also attracts Fergus' attention.

Later in the gun-cleaning scene, which dramatises on a smaller scale the central issue of The Harness Room where a boy is being instructed in a skill, we are also made aware of Leo's increasing interest in physical contact with the farmer, and in the truth about spooning. Fergus' curiosity, however, is less delicately presented--in his questioning the chauffeur about what it is that the silk is covering in the photograph, the boy admits that he "could" guess its contents, but would prefer verification. The pause created by this exchange parallels the crisis between Leo and Ted when the farmer is driven into "a corner" by Leo's curiosity about spooning (GB, p. 177).

Hartley's presentation of male homosexual relationships involves the older men imparting sexual information, or Hartley suggesting that there is sexual behaviour between the two males. In either circumstance, Hartley employs a heavy concentration of homosexual innuendo to reinforce his point.

The sexual act between Fred Carrington and Fergus Macready, although not directly presented, clearly takes place.

Hartley has earlier and unequivocally informed us that Carrington "was bisexual, as he was quite ready to admit; he had had affairs with men and women, boys and girls; he preferred his own sex in these relationships, because it led to less trouble" (HR, p. 5):

Fred paused deeply. "If you don't believe it's me," he said, "take a look for yourself." And he pulled his vest off, and let Fergus see what there was to be seen. "You aren't Delilah, are you," he added. "Nor yet my wife."

Torn between a multitude of feelings Fergus couldn't answer.

"Come into my room," said Fred, "and I'll show you the whole bag of tricks."
(HR, p. 74)

Fergus does the chauffeur's bidding, and makes "fumbling advances" (HR, p. 76). We next meet the boy as Fred escorts him down the wooden staircase. Fergus' reactions to his encounter begin as he walks within shadows:

But wasn't this all wrong, Fergus asked himself when it was over, and with an unsteady step, thanks to the whiskey (though he put it down to another cause), he felt himself entering the dark shadow of the big house. His own shadow that had been longer than his [*sic*] in the trailing sunset light was suddenly swallowed up, as if by another shadow larger and deeper than his.

He felt proud and triumphant, he did not feel guilty, but guilt was round the corner, waiting for him in the darkness behind the side-door, cutting him off from the charmed atmosphere of the harness-room, in which he was such a different person from the sex-satisfied, whiskey-satisfied, poltroon whose flagging footsteps were taking him home.

Reaction came quickly. As he opened the door which gave on the murky little passage which led with a quick left bend into the brightly-lit hall, he asked himself, "Who is to blame?" and answered, "I am."

(HR, p. 75)

The darkness recalls the blackness that surrounded young Leo's encounters with Ted Burgess, and the shadows also recall "the lengthening shadows" that had developed after Leo's first meeting with the farmer, expressing both the boy's elation and his sense of doom that would accompany the subsequent experiences with Ted (GB, p. 58). As Leo had metaphorically entered the "darker picture" by visiting Black Farm, and by pursuing his relationship with Ted, so too is Fergus' shadow "swallowed-up, as if by another shadow larger and deeper than his."

Fergus' relationship with Fred, and Leo's with Ted, both end in the death of one of the pair. Hall's comment that Hartley "takes so much interest in defeat that he sometimes imposes it on his characters"⁴⁶ might help to explain the difficulty we have in accepting Fergus' fate. We are unprepared for his death, which occurs, paradoxically, as he triumphantly displays his "pluck" to his father. Hartley is not content to leave Fergus a victim both of his father's wishes, and of his own unconventional behaviour with Fred--Hartley seemingly punishes Fergus by having him die when he is succeeding both as a stalwart boxer, and when he has begun

to express feeling:

Fergus could not tell what other secrets Fred had stored away, secrets of sex, secrets of passion, that were commonplace to him, such as lurked under the bonnet of the car, but to Fergus were tense with mystery. He only knew that the experience, whatever it was, had increased his capacity for loving. He did not even ask himself, "Does Fred love me as much as I love him?" and if he had, he would have answered, "No."

(HR, p. 78)

Ted's suicide is at least foreshadowed by the death imagery that has consistently been associated with Leo's interest in him. Leo's relationship is fraught with gloomy associations--it begins at a scaffold, develops at a chopping block, and is significantly advanced during the cleaning of a gun that will be used in suicide. The relationship achieves its metaphoric culmination when the boy is within a poisonous bush.

The legacies that remain to both Leo and Fred are ones of guilt. The staff at Foxton Farm even express their view that it was Fergus who contrived his own allegedly accidental death:

It wasn't an accident, as they say, it was prearranged between him and Fred. Between you and me and these four walls, Fred loved the boy, and would have done anything Mr. Fergus asked him. I didn't want to go, but I've been up to the harness room and seen the tear in the carpet--why, a kitten couldn't have tripped over it, let alone a big man like Fred.

(HR, p. 126)

When Colonel Macready and Fred return to the farm after the inquest, they still feel like "co-murderers"; the colonel for organising the exhibition bout of boxing between Fred and Fergus, and Carrington for executing it (HR, p. 129). The elderly Leo's guilt concentrates more upon his treatment of the farmer during the relationship between man and boy, wherein he feels he "destroyed Ted" (GB, p. 264). In spite of their feelings of guilt, loss and profound regret, however, both the older Leo and Fred Carrington continue their lives with some degree of hope. As Margaret Moan has commented of the ageing bibliographer's return to Brandham:

...Leo is now in the world of experience, the world of actuality; and by leaving the book open-ended with Leo poised for his meeting with the young Viscount, Hartley also suggests that Leo's life, little as it has left, has its possibilities.⁴⁷

Similarly, Fred Carrington is re-hired by Colonel Macready, and if there is any hope for the chauffeur it lies in his being able to assuage his guilty feeling of having helped to murder Fergus:

"When I was watching your--your exhibition bout, it seemed to me that Fergus had developed some of the... fighting spirit that I hoped he would."

"You're quite right, sir," said the chauffeur promptly. "He chased me properly, he went after me like a good 'un, he really wanted to hurt me, and I had to keep covering-up so as not to get hurt. And in spite of that," he added, with technical exactitude, "he was giving away three stones in weight. He had pluck, sir, he had real pluck--"

Fred couldn't finish the sentence, but what he had said had a strangely uplifting effect on the Colonel's spirits. Pluck was not a quality he had associated with Fergus; it completed the picture of his son that until then he had lacked something in his mind. Now he could think of Fergus as the soldier he had wanted him to be.

"Thank you, Carrington," he said, "Fergus owed that to you, and even if it turned out badly, I shall always be grateful to you."

Not trusting himself to speak, Carrington nodded and drove on.
(HR, pp. 129-130)

If Carrington has Colonel Macready's gratitude, Fred also enjoys solace through the knowledge that the boy's "pluck" and soldierly spirit are an achievement that at least satisfies Fergus' father. Fred, driving with the colonel to resume his job after Fergus' death, is an example of a man, heavily tarnished by an experience of homosexual passion which, in this instance, led to death. Fred, however, is able to continue with his life in spite of such a negative experience.

The older Leo, whose life is more severely damaged than Fred's, goes to meet Edward many years after Ted's suicide. The errand is as "preposterous" to Leo now as it had ultimately become to him during childhood. Again, Leo's already precarious self-understanding is upset as he begins to experience the sort of ambiguity that had troubled him in 1900. When the elderly Marian tells Leo of the curse of an unloving heart, and of that "beautiful" summer, the biblio-

grapher begins to waver in his resistance to her beliefs:

"Why then was I moved by what she had said? Why did I half wish that I could see it all as she did?" (GB, p. 280). Once more, Leo slips into the "something" that had existed between Marian and Ted; although he could have made his excuses and have telephoned their offspring, Edward, he decides instead to make his visit.

As Leo's dormant emotions are aroused once more, he becomes confused by the challenge of expressing Marian's credo, which, if he applied it to his own condition, would allow him insight into his repressed personality. Leo enters the lodge gates "wondering how I should say what I had come to say" (GB, p. 281). By visiting the allegedly cursed Edward with Marian's message of love, Leo is also re-acquainting himself with the ambivalent emotions that had been blighted after the outhouse scene. He is again challenged to examine the love that had been in his own heart; his boyhood experience of being attracted to man as well as to woman is the wellspring of his dilemma. Retracing his steps as go-between, Leo is offered a further chance to understand himself and to enrich his dried-up emotions. Though less fulfilled and less self-comprehending than Fergus, Leo finally prepares, like the chauffeur, to digest his particular experience of the past and to fully participate in a world that so far has accorded him pain and frustration.

In Hartley's fiction, no male character confronted with the prospect of a homosexual alliance, expressed directly or in symbolic terms, ever enjoys a fulfilling relationship with another male. That the "direct telling" of Hartley's later fiction can affect our appreciation of Hartley's literary art as Mulkeen maintains, is an issue also discussed by Francis King:

Had he been a man less scrupulous about not offending convention or shocking his friends, there is no doubt that like E.M. Forster's, his books would have been very different. But the tension set up between what he wanted to say and what he felt was sayable by a man of his position and age, may, I suspect, have helped to generate the extraordinary electric energy that powers his finest works. Late in his career he began to be more explicit; but even over "The Harness Room" he worried aloud in my presence whether this or that friend might not be shocked and disgusted by it.⁴⁸

The "extraordinary electric energy" within The Go-Between, for example, is greater for Leo's relationship having been suggested through Hartley's use of symbolism. In the later work, there is still evidence of a conflict in Hartley between "what he wanted to say and what he felt was sayable". Hartley's concern with male homosexual love is maintained throughout the canon; if its depiction in My Sisters' Keeper and The Harness Room seems less complex than in The Go-Between or in the Eustace and Hilda trilogy, for example, Hartley still manages to present, sensitively, some of the major issues

involved in male bondings⁴⁹--instinct, spontaneity, sexual passion and their implications, which are always "an invitation to disaster"⁵⁰ in Hartley's work, are studied in both types of Hartleian novel. Even though his treatment of the male homosexual relationship differs, in trying to deal with such an issue at all, Hartley overcomes the constraints of his temperament, his class background, and his society's values. He reveals himself as an authentic novelist for whom "something matters".⁵¹ He explores the theme in ways suitable to his cultural circumstances, even if he finds it difficult to sustain, in his writing, the male bondings that he describes.

Hartley's treatment of the theme, particularly in the earlier, more symbolic novels, is best illustrated by Francis King's remark on Hartley's feelings about male homosexuality:

His was a strange case of someone who simultaneously wanted to blurt things out and to choke them back. When he did blurt them out, he then took an attitude of: 'I haven't said anything'.⁵²

The statement identifies that "creative tension" in Hartley's personality that is reflected in his work; by attempting to deal with the conflict between repression and expression in himself, Hartley inevitably brought the dichotomy to his treatment of the male homosexual theme in his work. We can view these remarks as reflective of Hartley's opinion, expressed in The Novelist's Responsibility, that "all writers are egotists because, even if they are not writing of themselves, their work is an extension of themselves".⁵³

NOTES

¹H. Montgomery Hyde, ed., The Trials of Oscar Wilde (London: William Hodge, 1949) 339.

²Jeffrey Meyers, Homosexuality in Literature: 1890-1930 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1977) 9.

³Sir John Wolfenden, Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution (New York: Stein and Day, 1963) 25.

⁴Letter, London Times (December 16, 1957) 9.

⁵Letter to Roderick Meiklejohn (December 23, 1957), held in the collections at John Rylands University Library, Manchester.

⁶Michael Mason and Peter Burton, "A Domestic Animal?: An Interview with Francis King," Gay News 100 (July 29, 1976): 24.

⁷Meyers, Homosexual, 1-2.

⁸Bien, Hartley, 280.

⁹Personal letter (June 9, 1984).

¹⁰Mulkeen, Wild, 133.

¹¹Jones, Hartley, 162.

¹²...in a 1972 interview [Hartley] described his latest books as a different kind of work from that he had previously done: "lighter", with no particular "message", and written mainly because for him writing was almost to be equated with living.

(Mulkeen, Personal interview with L.P. Hartley (August 1970), see Mulkeen, Wild, 132).

¹³Personal letter (June 9, 1984).

¹⁴Jones, Hartley, 154.

¹⁵Ian Young, The Male Homosexual in Literature: A Bibliography (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1975) 93-94.

¹⁶Personal letter (June 7, 1984).

¹⁷Bien, Hartley, 182.

¹⁸Mulkeen, Wild, 101.

¹⁹Once at Brandham Hall, young Leo assigns zodiacal roles to both Ted and Hugh. Essentially, Farmer Burgess is associated with both the Archer and the Water-carrier, even though Jones (p. 102) and Bien (p. 180) associate the signs with Lord Trimmingham and Ted, respectively.

²⁰Bien, Hartley, 181.

²¹Mulkeen, Wild, 111.

²²Ibid., 108.

²³Ibid., 99.

²⁴Morris Fraser, The Death of Narcissus (London: Secker and Warburg, 1976) 34.

²⁵Ibid., 34.

²⁶J.Z. Eglinton, Greek Love (New York: Oliver Layton Press, 1964) 3.

²⁷Hartley, Introduction, 7.

²⁸Bien, Hartley, 172-173.

²⁹Jones, Hartley, 110. (David Grossvogel, "Under the Sign of Symbols: Losey and Hartley," Diacritics 4 (Fall 1974): 51).

³⁰Bien, Preface, Hartley.

³¹The moment of Leo's seeing Ted, as the farmer suddenly appears out of the water, to which he no less suddenly returns, draws our attention to the idea of the amphibian man in which Hartley was interested:

Hartley doubtlessly identified himself and his characters with Sir Thomas Browne's great and true amphibian, man, who lives in a divided and distinguished world, allied both to the visible and invisible realms,

(Jones, Hartley, 31).

The momentary appearance of the handsome Ted signifies a movement between worlds--one visible and the other not. Leo will soon be involved in a relationship with the farmer, and the boy will pursue that relationship by viewing the farmer both in reality and in his imagination. Leo is therefore on the verge of entering the two worlds that are represented by Ted's diving from a scaffold into a river that is not yet visible to Leo.

- 32 The symbol of the heat pervades the entire atmosphere of the book; it is particularly linked with Ted, the Water-carrier, the beautiful young farmer...."

(Mulkeen, Wild, 103).

- 33 "I was in love with the heat...."

(Hartley, The Go-Between, 76).

- 34 Jones, Hartley, 103.

- 35 A gun in a Western, for example, is an essential part of the plot; it is a requirement of the genre, and so is not at all symbolic--but in a novel set in peaceful English countryside, it might be. Consider the moment of its appearance in L.P. Hartley's The Go-Between....

The gun's association with puberty, maleness and potency is never explicit, but the timing and mode of its introduction say all that is necessary.

(Fraser, Narcissus, 11-12).

- 36 Ibid., 35.

- 37 Hartley, Introduction, 7.

- 38 Leo's destruction of the ambiguous belladonna or nightshade plant--which has come to symbolize both the ambiguous Marian and the ambiguous mystery of sex in its beauty and deadliness--epitomizes the entire experience which he undergoes at Brandham: his innocence, his unknowing but fascinated involvement in sexual intrigue, his terror and the unimagined destruction it wreaks, the living death and burial he brings upon himself....

While the symbolism is obviously strongly sexual, Bien's emphasis upon this incident as a "sexual experience" involving Leo's unrecognized desire for Marian seems not quite Hartley's point. Rather, this seems one of Hartley's characteristic analogues or epitomes or controlling symbols summing up the meaning of the whole book: the encounter of the overly-innocent with the unsuspected--and deadly--force of Nature (and human nature in particular). This is a perfect example of the way in which Hartley can render complexities of inner experience through the detailed description of a symbol or analogy. In the boy's descriptions we catch the strong sexual hints, the suggestion of a harlot standing in a doorway--but the boy does not know what he is describing or why it is so strong, so primeval, so dangerous, so frightening, yet so weak.

(Mulkeen, Wild, 104-105).

³⁹ As a result of the incident, the boy is stunned:

So whichever way I looked, towards the world of experience or the world of the imagination, my gaze returned to me empty. I could make no contact with either, and lacking the nourishment that these umbilical cords convey I shrank into myself.

(GB, pp. 264-265)

Morris Fraser has explained Leo's gaze returning to him empty as the "route to inversion". By this term, Fraser means that the boy's sexual development will involve identification with children who are of the age at which Leo was "paralysed"--thirteen. In Leo's case, the "Narcissus fantasy" would probably be expressed by an interest in people of his own gender. This may contribute to our appreciation of the male homosexual theme which, we recall, is developed as much through the older Leo's narration as it is through the boy's story.

(Fraser, Narcissus, 36).

⁴⁰ Hartley, "Novelist's," Novelist's, 5.

⁴¹ Jones, Hartley, 204-205.

⁴² Meyers, Homosexual, 16.

⁴³ Martin Seymour-Smith, Guide to Modern Literature (London: Wolfe, 1973) 284.

⁴⁴ Meyers, Homosexual, 18.

⁴⁵ Bien, Hartley, 27.

⁴⁶ James Hall, "Games of Apprehension: L.P. Hartley," The Tragic Comedians: Seven Modern British Novelists, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1963): 128.

⁴⁷ Moan, "Setting and Structure," 35.

⁴⁸ Francis King, "Sweet, Cosy and Tough: On L.P. Hartley," Sunday Telegraph (December 17, 1972). Also quoted by Jones, Hartley, 20.

⁴⁹ I refer to L.P. Hartley's interest in form, as it expresses "the reasonableness and moral concern" which he, like Henry James,

wished to see in his characters. In this Mr. Hartley is a disciple. For him, the tight novel, with everything integrated and everything relevant--all fused as it were by the loving care of the artist--is the epitome of life at its best.

(Bien, Hartley, 170).

⁵⁰ Ibid., 170.

⁵¹ Jones, Hartley, 20.

⁵² Personal letter (June 7, 1984).

⁵³ Hartley, "Novelist's," Novelist's, 5.

CONCLUSION

Gilbert Phelps, in "The Post-War English Novel", has compared the period in which Hartley wrote with England at the beginning of the twentieth century:

When we recall the scope and variety of English fiction in the earlier years of this century in the hands of such writers of genius as Henry James, Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, it is difficult not to feel that there has been a decline. The trend of the English novel since the Second World War has, on the whole, been analogous to that of the poetry--a turning aside from the mainstream of European literature and a tendency to retreat into parochialism and defeatism--attended, it is true, by outstanding moments of protest, defiance, honesty or insight, as well as by a proliferation of genuine talents, but rarely approaching a unified vision or the sustained solidarity of achievement that rises from it.¹

The Hartleian canon does not consistently bear much comparison with the work of earlier masters, but in the best novels, for example the trilogy and The Go-Between, Hartley creates male protagonists who clearly illustrate the plight of the individual in post-war society. Hartley's major fiction constitutes an attempt to quietly assert the primacy of the individual; the right of a man to be himself. His work is both a comment upon the difficulty of gaining a sense of identity in post-war society, and a criticism of the collectivist age that attempts to conceal from an individual the path that leads to

"unique personality". He discusses the novelist's task in such a society thus:

The novelist of today has many... difficulties to face. To mention only two: the changes in the structure of society, which are so rapid that any attempt to portray it is out of date before the ink is dry; and the fact that no representative view of even a small section of the community is now complete unless it includes characters who are nervously or mentally unbalanced. But the main danger is lest the individual, snowed under by the mass of suggestions, directions, orders, and ready-made designs for living to which he is exposed, should be submerged and lost in the community, so that his reactions and responses will become automatic and predictable, and protective colouring will make him indistinguishable from the rest. But I cannot help believing that this will not happen, and that an awareness of other people's personalities and their right to be themselves, and of one's dependence, for the fulfilment of one's own personality, on them as individuals--not just fellow-sufferers or fellow-criminals with identical faces--will survive, and with it the novel, which thrives on that belief.²

Hartley uses domestic life, personal relationships ("the shrine of our deepest feelings"),³ and, often, pre-war settings to depict the individual's predicament. His choice of a domestic environment as the setting for his protagonists' struggles represents Hartley's effort at finding an acceptable milieu for fiction "in a period when the structures of contemporary society were somehow failing to carry conviction".⁴ Like Waugh, who attacked traditional British institutions from within, however, Hartley quietly exposes domestic life

as an oppressive and life-denying environment. Also, like Waugh, like Nigel Dennis (Cards of Identity (1955)), Ford Madox Ford, Richard Hughes and John Cowper Powys, Hartley sees "the need to supply a new basis for personality, now that the traditional one has gone".⁵ His picture of sensitive, overburdened figures is illustrative of the difficulty of such a quest.

The subject of personal identity has gained in importance since the war. Peter Abbs, in commenting on the role of autobiography in our society, for example, tries to account for the increased interest in the genre since 1945:

...in an age which so ubiquitously threatens our sense of personal meaning, we become preoccupied with the question of identity and, consciously or unconsciously, turn to autobiography to see how others have managed to secure their sense of a self, hoping, also, that from their struggles we may find clues to our own uneasy quest for identity. I think there is considerable truth in such a reflection....Perhaps, then, we as readers turn to autobiography for the images and narratives of struggling existence, wanting to contemplate the hidden forms of inwardness, wanting to discover the concealed springs of life.⁶

We might turn to Hartley's fiction for the same reason we turn to autobiography. And in spite of the parochialism and defeatism which Phelps identifies in the post-war novel, and which exist in Hartley's work, we also find qualities that express hope for the individual. In "The Literary Scene", published in 1983, John Holloway defines four major types of

response to conditions in England between 1945 and 1965. Two of the categories, in particular, constitute a useful basis for assessing features of Hartley's achievement as a novelist concerned with finding a "place" for his characters, and for himself, in a war-sick world.

Holloway identifies, first, in writings that deal with the difficulties of the post-war period, a tendency to suggest

...some limited area of experience that has value, or some modest and unambitious conception of goodness which can...be insured against undermining.

Writer after writer has in fact pursued this possibility, this hope for a secure even if limited solution.⁷

The "minimal affirmation" is a similar notion to the one employed by Hartley in 1946 when he discussed The Razor's Edge, Time Must Have a Stop and Brideshead Revisited, books which "show their authors searching, in different directions for the same thing: a state of mind, attainable on earth, in which the individual finds appeasement by communion with a happiness or goodness outside and greater than himself".⁸

Hartley's protagonists experience great anguish and unhappiness in their sometimes brief lives. Like Graham Greene, Iris Murdoch and Muriel Spark, Hartley ensures that his characters are greatly harmed by their experiences. His torturing of Eustace, Leo, Leadbitter, and Fergus in particular, for example, is a literary mode typical in post-war writers, who tend to

victimise characters in order to show how difficult it is to "embody human values freely" in the work of the period.⁹

In spite of the male protagonists' failure, however, they strive for happiness by endeavouring to form relationships which, temporarily, provide happiness: Eustace with Nancy, Leo with Marian and Ted, Leadbitter with Lady Franklin, and Fergus with Fred, for example. Although these protagonists are, variously, defeated, they are allowed a glimpse of a sense of identity through their encounters with these people.

A different response to the uncertainty of the post-war period has been many writers' interest in "the miniscule, the limited, the primitive",¹⁰ as a way of expressing how the urbanised environment "superficially so different, [from a natural one] seems at heart to be just as primitive, primal, predatory, as anything in that [natural] environment".¹¹ The primitive instinct in Hartley's work is best illustrated by the tendency to self-destruction in Eustace as he attempts to assert himself in his stultifying environment. The world of Hartley's male protagonists is also not without the female predator whose designing ways I demonstrated in Chapter Two. Most devastating, perhaps, is the effect of uncontrolled passion upon human life in Hartley's fiction when, for example, in the case of Ted, it can turn upon itself and can kill. Rather like Ivy Compton-Burnett in her later novels, Hartley tends to concentrate on the destructive element within the

family, an element emanating notably from its ruling figures.

Hartley makes the observation that, in choosing a subject for a novel,

...it is safer for a novelist to choose as his subject something he feels about than something he knows about, or has got to know about by study and conscious observation. And if not something he feels about--since feeling is at a rather low ebb just at present--then something he thinks about, for feeling and thinking are not easy to disentangle.¹²

In presenting the dilemma of the sensitive male character who lives in alienating circumstances, Hartley has also presented his own feelings of apartness from a rapidly changing world, feelings that are also well-documented in his articles.

Through Hartley's interest in the male protagonists' personal defeat as they attempt to find meaning in their lives, he has illustrated features of the "quest for self" theme that predominates in the "artist-as-hero" novel.

Like the artist, who is usually an "exile" of sorts, lonely characters like Eustace, Leo and Leadbitter experience life as a process of going between what critic Maurice Beebe refers to as ivory towers and sacred founts:

The person blessed (or cursed?) with "artistic temperament" is always sensitive, usually introverted and self-centered, often passive, and sometimes so capable of distracting himself mentally from the world around him that he appears absent-minded or "possessed".¹³

The artist's divided self, or the "doppelgänger" notion familiar

also to James and Hawthorne, manifests itself as "a conflict between "holy" or aesthetic demands...and...natural desire as a human being to participate in the life around him".¹⁴ This tension, most evident in Eustace, Leo and Leadbitter, also expresses itself as a conflict between life-denying and life-affirming experiences with which these characters try to deal as they near self-understanding. Important, too, in Beebe's discussion of the artist-figure, is the way in which women in "portrait-of-the-artist" novels are most often identified with the "sacred fount", with life.¹⁵ All of Hartley's male protagonists encounter women who, like Nancy, Marian, and Lady Franklin, for example, offer experience to the sensitive male that will both enhance, yet harm, his life. If Hartley, then, has also expressed the plight of the artist in society, he has written, as well, of the demise of the male homosexual in the post-war period. In discussing Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, Meyers states that "In the modern age, the relation of the artist to society has been analogous to the relation of the homosexual to society, so that Dorian's image reflects his self-hatred as well as his self-love".¹⁶

It is evident that Hartley as sensitive man at odds with his time, as artist, and as homosexual was, in his fiction, also expressing something of his own unresolved feelings about his predicament:

Wish fulfilment is a despised term,
it describes a universal experience. And
if it has been the dynamo of many bad

novels, it has also been the inspiration of many good ones. It can be, and generally is, combined with autobiography; but seldom with pure autobiography. The novelist presents his experience--sometimes in a rosy light, sometimes in a gloomy light, sometimes hoping to arouse his reader's admiration, sometimes hoping to arouse his pity. (In even the most austere novels there is generally a kind of flirtation between the author and his reader: and when he seems to be flouting him on purpose, for instance devising an unhappy ending that will disappoint or horrify him, he is really trying to win the reader to his side.)¹⁷

By the end of his writing career Hartley had addressed, in The Harness Room, the issue of homosexuality as the single most important aspect of a male protagonist's effort to achieve a sense of identity. Re-assessing Hartley's work from the vantage point of such a novel, we see that the issue of male/male relationships has confronted most of Hartley's male protagonists, though in earlier work the matter had usually been concealed in symbolism:

In the modern period homosexuals became an important literary subject, for writers were attracted to the stigmata of the feared, hated and persecuted outsider who defied the moral law, subverted the concept of the family, symbolized the destructive element in passion and threatened the virility of the ordinary man....

The grave sexual and social problems that affect the lives of homosexuals and often lead to unhappiness and tragedy have been analysed by Auden and Baldwin. The poet writes in his review of Ackerley's My Father and Myself: "Few, if any, homosexuals can boast that their sex life has been happy....The external and,

probably, insoluble problem for the homosexual is finding a substitute for the natural differences, anatomical and psychic, between a man and a woman." And the novelist's comment on Gide echoes Forster's comments on the loveless despair of Proust: "The really terrible thing about the phenomenon of present-day homosexuality...is that today's unlucky deviate can only save himself by the most tremendous exertion of all his forces from falling into an underworld in which he never meets either man or woman, where it is impossible to have either a lover or a friend, where the possibility of a genuine human involvement has altogether ceased".¹⁸

Even though the difficulties faced by Hartley's male protagonists are nearly always insurmountable, one cannot ignore that male homosexual attraction contributes to the difficulty. The revelation does not undermine our reading of the problems encountered by Eustace and Leo, for example, but contributes to our appreciation of how difficult is the task of establishing identity in an increasingly complex society that has evolved rapidly since 1945, and that has become in some ways more tolerant. Notable in Hartley's portrayal of homosexuality is the cross-class nature of the relationships: Fergus with the family chauffeur, Leo attracted to a farmer, Richard Mardick's succession of male secretaries. We can only applaud the means by which Hartley found access to the more "classless" aspirations of the Twentieth Century. Finally, at least, Hartley expressed an explicit cross-class, homosexual relationship in a work of literature, an act that would have earned

him a term of imprisonment earlier in the century. Undoubtedly, the publication of The Harness Room was a personal, as well as public, victory for Hartley.

It is perhaps in The Betrayal that we find a comment which may be suitably applied to Hartley and to his portrayal of the male protagonist in his fiction:

"...you got a name for being a good fellow, but not really counting, if you see what I mean, either as a man or a writer--just repeating over and over again with slight variations, the same pattern of literary good manners. The public felt it too: they liked the taste at first, but with each repetition it grew fainter and then they tired of it".

(BTL, p. 217)

After the publication of The Hireling in 1957, and with the comparatively poor reception of Facial Justice in 1960, Hartley's reputation began to suffer, though he had never been considered a major novelist. His literary variations on the theme of the sensitive male protagonist in a hostile world were also beginning to pall. Lewis Charleston in The Betrayal, in praising the novelist Richard Mardick for finally revealing his hitherto secret past, partly echoes the sentiments of the reader who has worked his way through Hartley's fiction of the 1964-1971 period:

"We never tired of you, but then you're not a book: you respond to a person in a way you don't respond to a blank sheet of paper. You take in--that's why you're such a gift to egoists--but you don't give out. Now we know this about you you've

become real, you don't just reflect, you shine with your own light like a light-house. Everyone, except a few old stagers, will think the better of you, because you're somebody to whom something has really happened. Why don't you write a book about it? It's what the public wants, the raw stuff of experience, and the rawer the better. Experience doesn't need justifying: it's its own justification, in life as well as art. that's why we came to congratulate you--on being the person, the real live human being, that you've so long concealed...."

(BTL, p. 217)

Hartley's male protagonists, like the post-war individual in his society, discover that in order to survive they must look more closely at themselves; they must acknowledge their innermost needs and express them, in spite of the social conditions that would in some ways deny them that freedom. By so accepting what they sometimes least wish to acknowledge, these individuals achieve a "unique personality". Through his marginal emancipation of the male protagonist, by acknowledging a previously unacceptable dimension of his character, Hartley manages to retain and articulate, in terms suitable to the 1970's, his lingering interest in the Great Man; here, though, was a new type of individual, who was, albeit precariously, again at liberty to be himself.

NOTES

¹Gilbert Phelps, "The Post-War English Novel," The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: Volume 8: The Present, ed. Boris Ford (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 417.

²L.P. Hartley, "The Novelist and his Material," The Novelist's Responsibility, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1967) 190.

³L.P. Hartley, "Some Aspects of Gregariousness," The Novelist's Responsibility, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1967) 199.

⁴John Holloway, "The Literary Scene," The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: Volume 8: The Present, ed. Boris Ford (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 69.

⁵Ibid., 69.

⁶Peter Abbs, "Autobiography: Quest for Identity," The Pelican Guide to English Literature: Volume 8: The Present, ed. Boris Ford (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 511.

⁷Holloway, "Literary Scene," Pelican Guide, 82-83.

⁸L.P. Hartley, "The Future of Fiction," New Writing and Daylight, ed. John Lehmann (1946) 87-88.

⁹Holloway, "Literary Scene," Pelican Guide, 85.

¹⁰Ibid., 93.

¹¹Ibid., 97.

¹²L.P. Hartley, "The Novelist's Responsibility," The Novelist's Responsibility, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1967) 5.

¹³Maurice Beebe, Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce (New York: New York UP, 1964) 5.

¹⁴Ibid., 18.

¹⁵Ibid., 18.

¹⁶Jeffrey Meyers, Homosexuality and Literature: 1890-1930 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1977) 27.

¹⁷L.P. Hartley, "Responsibility," Responsibility, 3.

¹⁸Meyers, Homosexuality, 18-19.

KEY

| | |
|---|------------|
| <u>The Betrayal</u> | <u>BTL</u> |
| <u>The Boat</u> | <u>B</u> |
| <u>The Brickfield</u> | <u>BFD</u> |
| <u>Eustace and Hilda: A Trilogy</u> | <u>EHT</u> |
| <u>The Go-Between</u> | <u>GB</u> |
| <u>The Harness Room</u> | <u>HR</u> |
| <u>The Hireling</u> | <u>H</u> |
| <u>My Fellow Devils</u> | <u>MFD</u> |
| <u>My Sisters' Keeper</u> | <u>MSK</u> |

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