

MOLLY KEANE'S *GOOD BEHAVIOUR* AND PHILIP
LARKIN'S *COLLECTED POEMS* : SOME ASPECTS OF
POETIC MEMORY

By

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SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

ENGLISH

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Director of Studies : Professor Rosemary Gray
February 2005

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank to my husband and my mother for their support.

Special thanks to Professor Rosemary Gray for her advice and the encouragement to finalise my work,

My thanks are also due to Rita Badenhorst, of the University of Pretoria Library for her friendly assistance.

Dedicated to my daughter
Katja

Abstract

How can we speak of the action of the mind under any divisions, as of its knowledge, of its ethics, of its works, and so forth, since it melts will into perception, knowledge into act? Each becomes the other. Itself alone is. Its vision is not like the vision of the eye, but is union with the things known.

(Ralf Waldo Emerson, 'Intellect' 1841 in Stephen Wilson, *The Bloomsbury Book of Mind*, 2004:60)

This study is a comparative study of the term "poetics of memory" and its psychological, linguistic, socio-cultural or metaphysic interpretation, applied to Philip Larkin's poetry in *Collected Poems* and Molly Keane's *Good Behaviour*.

It also focuses on the exploration of some parts of the development of aesthetic thought – such as the categories of beauty, or the sublime, seeing them as an integral part of various literary theories. They are again linked to the term 'poetics of memory' as a complex of the aspects in the interpretation of the particular literary genre, style, or even a period.

The meaning of the term "memory" is questioned, in its application to the presented literary genres of poetry and novel, particularly its use in the contexts of a selective memory. The study includes a discussion of Plato's anamnesis, antique divine possession, catharsis, Proust's involuntary memory, and the nature of a literary text as such, (with all its semiotic and stylistic characteristics).

Larkin and Keane's poetics deal with memory, recollection and time in relation to consciousness, linking these concepts to the influences of the same general historical and cultural climate under which the writers developed their own literary styles and personal messages, chosen to express a variety of ideas. Having as a background a history of Western thought, particularly the modern aesthetic streams of the second half of the twentieth century – ranging from modernism to the deconstruction of post-structuralism, Larkin and Keane share a common ground of feelings of negativism, nihilism, alienation and atheism. These aspects are explored.

The applied term of the "poetics of memory" may be a key aesthetic term of understanding the history and essence of humanity and keeping it alive.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1. Introduction and a brief outline of the research

The main aim of this dissertation is to explore possible links in the interpretation of the poetics of memory between the two contemporaries, Philip Larkin (1922-1985) a British poet and Molly Keane – M.J. Farrell, (1904-1996) an Anglo-Irish novelist. The key research tool is a comparative application of the term “poetics of memory” to Larkin’s *Collected Poems* (1988) and Keane’s novel *Good Behaviour* (1981), recognized as her masterpiece, representing two different literary genres, each with specific and strong characteristics of its creator’s style, but sharing a common philosophical background. The accent is on a “close reading” of the primary texts and the hints they may suggest in dealing with memory and recollection. I also try to focus on similarities in Larkin and Keane’s styles, with reference to the development of the idea of a poetics of memory informed by the history of theoretical thought on memory and the purpose of art. In doing so, I stress the importance of linking memory as a theoretical term to other theoretical terms such as anamnesis, catharsis, the sublime and metaphor in order to reach a better understanding of its complexity.

The methodology adopted is Mode 1 (pure), inductive, qualitative research, with the emphasis on interpretation. The first phase is the gathering of relevant

information, through the primary and secondary sources. I use a “purpose sampling” of data related to the topic of research, especially published data used in my review of the relevant literature. I attempt to code my own study into the “big picture”, trying to maintain the coherence of the topic. Ultimately, the purpose of my research is to gain a new perspective in understanding the work of the two chosen authors.

Chapter One begins by articulating the proposition of this research project, that is, that the two contemporary British writers, Larkin and Keane, have much in common in their treatment of memory, and by providing a justification for the topic. It includes an introduction to the essential term of this research – the poetics of memory – and a survey of the way in which many different philosophical and literary schools have understood this concept. This involves quotations from Platonic and Aristotelian texts, from Neoplatonism (Plotinus), the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, eighteenth century aesthetics (Kant), and the Romantics (Wordsworth and Coleridge). Then I mention two nineteenth century literary milestone approaches: Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis and memory, and Proust’s theory of involuntary memory (which links the term with microelements of metaphor, impression, and sensation in order to recapture the feeling of regained memory). A brief survey through the twentieth century approaches to memory (in Yeats, Eliot, Pound) follows, concluding with Virginia Woolf’s presentation of the Bloomsbury aesthetic and her contribution to the “stream of consciousness” novel and the idea of broadening the borders between

poetry and prose, which brings Larkin and Keane closer to a contemporary historical and theoretical perspective and shows how they share a comparable ideological stance in the selected texts.

Chapter Two starts with a critical analysis of Philip Larkin's *Collected Poems* from the aspects of his personal thought on poetic style, and includes a review of previous theoretical work done on his poetry concerning the poetics of memory or recollection. A metrical and stylistic analysis of selected poems from various periods that could be linked to the term poetics of memory follows examining, comparatively, Larkin's possible link to the philosophy of Existentialism, and Samuel Beckett's or Nietzsche's nihilism. The chapter concludes by taking a closer look at the language of Larkin's poetics, stressing his stylistics and well-known "negativity". All of this is supported with examples from *A Concordance to the poetry of Philip Larkin*, edited by T. Watt. Particular emphasis is placed on Larkin's use of specific nouns and new-coined infinitives that highlight his metaphysics and extend the borders of poetry as a genre towards prose.

Chapter Three is an analysis of Molly Keane's novel *Good Behaviour* – in the light of poetic reminiscence, the particular Anglo-Irish historical, and socio-cultural climate and *The Big House* novel. I also try to highlight some of the characteristics of her style: irony and abjection, the grotesque, the ridiculous and particularly the ugly as a newer category of theoretical concern. I then point to some of the potential links with Aristotle, Greek tragedies and comedies, to the

Gothic novel, Impressionism or Surrealism. I also apply some of the psychoanalytical guidance through the main character's search for "time regained" – in which this anti-heroine misinterprets the past in order to understand a series of family tragedies. Through the quoted extracts from the novel, I try to show how Keane deals with some aspects of memory. Firstly, it is a psychological portrait of selective memory of the main characters and their relationships. Then, it is the existence of the picturesque memory of nature, which could stress the influence of the streams of Romanticism or Impressionism on Keane's stylistics. I end the chapter with the Platonic idea of the ultimate memory of the life after death that Keane's fiction contains, pointing to the way in which her prose acquires the quality of poetry, just as Larkin's poetry acquires the quality of prose.

Chapter Four examines the common ground that the two chosen writers share. The finding is that this lies in a history of Western thought, as outlined in Chapter One of this study, as well as in its development into the modern aesthetic streams of the second half of the twentieth century, ranging from Modernism to Structuralism and Postmodernism. I show that Larkin and Keane use the relation between the past and the present as a symbol that connects the text and the complex possibilities of its interpretation. These feelings of negativism, nihilism, alienation and atheism are, however, expressed through the different mediums of the literary genres (poetry and the novel). Larkin and Keane's comprehension of time suggests a link with unconscious mind, and primordial images of a collective

past where the images of inborn intuitions are stored. I try to stay close to the original texts of *Collected Poems* and *Good Behaviour* in showing links between the unconscious mind and poetic expression. Gradually, these chosen examples from the poetry and novel move in the same direction. It is in the use of language, metaphor, emotion or theme – and it culminates in some sort of applied theory of Platonic anamnesis. Through the ideal metaphorical landscape, the soul remembers eternity. This is the outline of both Larkin and Keane's metaphysics and, to emphasise a general philosophical trend, I point to the link with Woolf's *The Waves* (1971).

Chapter Five provides a conclusion to the comparative study of two chosen authors and genres.

The existence of art, like the existence of anything else, is only possible in relation to the movement of time.

The artist's ability to modify something ...lies in the fact that he can remember an originally given object in a new way, and this we find art's connection with the past mode of time. It could be argued that aesthetic creativity is always a way of remembering; that its truth lies in recollection. (Keyes, 1971:68).

Looking at time as aesthetic time in its artistic modification, this dissertation compares and contrasts the two chosen authors.

I have chosen to deal with Philip Larkin's poetry first, not the Keane's novel immediately after the introduction and the historical background of the term "poetics of memory". This order seems natural because the nature of the poetry

is considered as the most abstract of all literary genres and the closest to the expressions of pure ideas or emotions. And in this case, Larkin's poetry is more immediate in its evocation of the idea of recollected images.

Conceptual framework of the idea of a poetics of memory is to be linked to the evolution of various theoretical approaches that try to explain the essence or purpose of the object of art. It is a succession of many different aspects in treating the object of art: from the early platonic theory of anamnesis, catharsis, interpretation of dreams, recollection of nature, theory of involuntary memory, theory of metaphor, stream of consciousness, the theory of deconstruction of the text or the semiotic approach. The closest critical school that I could relate in this research is the theoretical school of the New Criticism and their method of "close reading". Being in the opposition to positivistic approach to the text through historical, socio-cultural or biographical aspects, new critics stress the importance of analytical approach to the text itself in order to understand its complexity.

1.2. Historical Background of the term "Poetics of Memory"

As the main thrust of this dissertation concerns the concept of memory as both poetic material and text itself, it is necessary to provide a brief survey of the theories of the poetics of memory, from Plato to Pound. Authors that are

mentioned and quoted here are all significant representatives of the development of this aesthetic term throughout the history of literary criticism; but not all thinkers who have made a contribution to the search for answers to the nature of poetical memory are discussed. Some selection is, of course, necessary since the focus of this dissertation is not on the theories themselves but rather on their application to selected literary works. Chapters Two and Three, then, apply these theories to *Collected Poems* (1988) by Philip Larkin and to a novel, *Good Behaviour* (1981) by Molly Keane, respectively, as noted above, while the conclusion provides a comparative summary of the treatment of the theme by the two authors chosen for discussion.

The term “poetics of memory” on every level of its meaning has been a significant part of the new approaches to literary criticism in the twentieth century, influencing the strands of hermeneutics, formalism, positivism, structuralism, new criticism, postmodernism, problem of consciousness writing and psychoanalysis applied to literary texts. The modern age highlights the new meaning given to many aesthetic categories and to views on the interpretation of the literary text (whether poetry or prose), combining them comparatively with the new philosophical systems and contemporary scientific discoveries. The quest, traditionally and in this research project, is to try to find answers to the relation between something which is the aesthetic essence of an object of art and (historically and theoretically) the civilised art lover, whether serious critic or casual reader. In this circle, memory as a biophysical category, memory as the

text itself, and memory as something metaphysical interact and give rise to notions of a universal meaning of humanity.

Thomas Wägenbaum, (1998:1) in *The Poetics of Memory*, 'Memory and Recollection' defines memory as the 'recollection controversy between mind and brain research'. This definition opposes the cybernetic approach of "memory [as] machine", which influences one's everyday practice of obtaining information in the twentieth and twenty-first century. This is not to deny the polemics of essentialism versus constructivism, for memory does not need to be true (as becomes clear in the discussion of Aroon St Charles's memories of Hubert and Richard in Chapter Three of this study); it only needs to be useful for further mental and physical activities. It is understood that in the cycle of memory, canonical texts last and circulate much longer than anything in the electronic media. This is because in great literature, the reader re-lives and revivifies the experience captured by the author; past experience is resurrected by the reader with each successive reading – and that is the case with the works of authors such as Philip Larkin and Molly Keane, selected for discussion in this dissertation. It is also because there is a whole history of memory to be retold as knowledge and as story, and not simply to be stored as information. This history encounters the whole genealogy of archaeological collections, archives and monuments.

A.J. Cascardi argues against the idea of memory as a machine or archive stressing that the difference lies in human knowledge and maturity which makes

the crucial difference between humans and machines. For humans, the purpose of remembering the past is not to repeat it but to overcome it, creating future time:

.... one further reason for rejecting the archive model of memory is that it, and the concept it evokes, are sources of the idea that human knowledge amounts to something *more* than a rational way of dealing with the world, that knowledge is an essential rather than a practical human capacity.... If I understand the sense of the above objection, it is not directly motivated by worries of an actual inability to tell humans from machines. Rather, the fear is of the loss of certain concepts, or of the usefulness of certain concepts by which we distinguish humans as such. In general terms it is a fear of fraudulence, and the characteristic demand associated with that of *authenticity*....(Cascardi, 1984:288)

The other aspect in understanding the term “memory” certainly lies in the sphere of language use, particularly in the use of a metaphor, which is discussed at some length in Chapter Four of this study. In the article ‘The Tacit Dimension of Poetic Imagery’, G. D. Martin (1979:99-111) points out that ‘tacit knowing is an integral part of our memories, and that poetry draws upon this tacit knowing’. He finds the mechanism by which the metaphors are evoked – stirring the infinite emotional depths in this tacit knowing which he defines as follows,

What then is tacit knowing? Roughly, it is everything in our experience that we either do not or cannot make explicit....it has two aspects 1) perceptual and 2) verbal.(Martin,1979:101).

The experience compressed in consciousness and emotion, which cannot be explained by common language, is the essence of art. Using metaphor, poetic language abstractly links past experiences with present.

Any narrative writing stores information, representing what is absent through metaphorical, metonymical or synecdochal elements, producing new combinations and a new surplus of meaning.

This genealogy of archetypes is told by literature, as the examination of Philip Larkin's *Collected Poems* and Molly Keane's *Good Behaviour* seeks to show.

Thoughts on the poetic "memory" can be found as early as in the texts of Plato (427-347 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 BC), in a variety of levels from primordial, metaphysical, historical, ethical, stylistic to rhetorical.

Although discriminating against literature, Plato is the first to record his metaphysical theory of *anamnesis* (remember-yourself), paradoxically presented through the medium of literary writing.

In the dialogue of Phaedrus, Plato relates his theory of recollection through a description of the soul as immortal and indestructible, self-moving but never leaving the self. The Platonic soul is compared with a pair of winged horses and a charioteer. The winged horses and the charioteer of the gods are noble, and of noble descent, but those of other races are mixed. The human charioteer is either noble or not, and this causes imbalance. The imperfect soul loses its wings and settles on the ground where it receives an earthly frame composed of a soul and a body (Plato, *Dialogues*, 'Phaedrus', 246-247).

The divine virtues, such as beauty, wisdom or goodness, nourish the wings of the soul and make it grow; the opposite, that is, vice, makes the soul fall away. The pilot of the soul is true knowledge, colourless, formless essence visible only to the mind.

According to Platonic theory, the soul of a mortal, which has seen most of the truth, will come to birth as a philosopher or artist; the second degree will be some righteous king or warrior chief. The soul that is in the third class will be a politician or economist or trader; the fourth – the lover of gymnastics; the fifth – the prophet; the sixth – the poet or some imitative artist; the seventh – artisan; the eighth – sophist; and the ninth – tyrant (Plato, *Dialogues*, 'Phaedrus', 247-248).

According to Plato, ten thousand years must elapse before the soul of each one returns to the place from where it came. Every thousand years, the good souls and evil souls come to choose a second life and they may take any form they please. But the soul that has never seen the truth will not pass into the human form. A person must have intelligence of universals, and be able to proceed from the many particulars of sense to one conception of reason – this is recollection of those things that a soul once saw while following God. Applying these memories is a way of being initiated into those mysteries and becoming truly perfect.

Seeing the beauty of the earth a person has recollections of true beauty, which is a celestial form. For Plato, prefiguring Wordsworth's notion of memory as "emotions recollected in tranquillity", emotion is an important part of this process of recollection.

This interpretation of *anamnesis* has influenced many later theories throughout the history of literary criticism. Already in Plato, there is a model of memory that recalls its own modelling process. This observation of observation is the form of writing and memory about which Plato's student, Aristotle, had much of importance (for the development of the poetics of memory) to say.

Aristotle's texts, *On Soul* and *On Memory and Reminiscence* have a more systematic analysis of the terms "memory" and "recollection". He defines memory as 'neither Perception nor Conception, but a state of one of these, conditioned by the lapse of time' (Aristotle, *On Memory and Reminiscence*, [25]¹:690). There is no memory of the present while present, for the present consists only of perception, and the future of expectation; but object of the memory is the past. This implies that history – and so a person's experience in life – underpins Aristotelian philosophy. Thus, past experience is the "matter" of which his philosophy is a "form".

Without a presentation, intellectual activity is impossible. We cannot exercise the intellect on any object absolutely apart from continuously, or apply it even to non-

temporal things unless in connection with time. One must cognize magnitude and motion by means of the same faculty by which one cognizes time (by that which is also the faculty of memory) and the presentation involved in such cognition is an object of contemplation (an affection of *sensus communis*), the primary faculty of perception. Accordingly, memory, even of intellectual objects, involves a presentation; and it follows (as Aristotle argues) that it belongs to the faculty of intelligence only incidentally, while directly and essentially it belongs to the primary faculty of sense-perception.

Memory is a function of a soul and all objects capable of being presented are the proper objects of memory. On the question as to whether perceiving is impression or a picture and why the perception of the impression should be memory or something else, instead of being related to this impression alone, Aristotle answers that, when someone remembers, the impression is what one contemplates, and this is what one perceives. He concludes that the mnemonic presentation within the self is something that is, by itself, the object of contemplation, while in relation to something else, as it is its likeness. In the same text he gives an example:

....just as when one contemplates the painting in the picture as being a likeness, and without having seen the actual Korikos, contemplates it as a likeness of Korikos, the experience involved in the contemplation of it is different from the one when it is simply contemplated as a painted picture. The first one presents itself as a thought, and the other one (just because it is a likeness) presents itself as a mnemonic token (Aristotle, [451]:691)

¹ Square brackets , like [25a] point to the number of the verse in Aristotle's texts.

Memory, for Aristotle, is therefore the state of a presentation experienced as a likeness to that faculty of memory within us, which is its function.

On the subject of recollection, Aristotle underlines the notion that recollection is not the “recovery” of memory. Recollecting is defined as:

....an activity which will not be immanent until the original experience has undergone the lapse of time; for one remembers now what one saw or otherwise experienced formerly; the moment of the original experience and the moment of the memory of it are never identical. (*ibid.*).

Aristotle also argues that recollecting ‘must imply to those who recollect the presence of something over and above that from which they originally learnt. It occurs in experience (op.cit: [452a]). He concludes by expressing the following idea: when one is recollecting, one is searching for a starting point in thought ‘either from present intuition or some other (past perception), and from something either similar, or smaller, or contrary to what one seeks’ (Aristotle, *On Memory and Reminiscence*, [452a]).

For Aristotle, the point of capital importance is that, for the purpose of recollection, one should cognize the time relation, as he realises that ‘remembering implies the consciousness of itself’ and that one does not remember ‘if the movement corresponding to the objective fact takes place without corresponding to the time factor’ (Aristotle,[453b]). Finally, he defines recollection as searching for an ‘image’ through a corporeal substitute (Aristotle, [15]).

There is a strong self-reference relation between performance and representation in Aristotle's mnemonic system. Recollection in writing often uses a metaphor as a vehicle to transcend the gap between remembrance and recollection, and is mirrored by any kind of consciousness (a point discussed more fully in Chapter Four of this study).

In Aristotle's *On Poetics* ([20-25]), his definition of a "tragedy" encapsulates the essence of his point of view on art:

A tragedy is ...the imitation of an action that is serious, and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.

Structural elements of tragedy are Fable or Plot, Characters, Diction, Thought, Spectacle and Melody; but the first four are of the utmost importance for its composition. Metaphor is a part of Diction in his system. In classifying the structure of nouns, in *On Poetics* Aristotle [1458a] provides his definition of "metaphor":

Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy.

Metaphor can also be a new word, or a coined word; it can imply a riddle (and a good riddle can furnish a good metaphor). It can save the poet's language, giving it a non-prosaic appearance; it can give quality and clearness. Aristotle cautions

that metaphors should be used properly and in moderation (metaphors used in tragedy are not the same as those used in comedy). In Aristotelian thought, the greatest thing for a poet is to be a master of metaphor; and this will always point to the distinction between good and bad poetry, as the following extract from *On Poetics* shows:

It is the one thing that cannot be learned from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies the intuitive perception of the similarity of dissimilar (Aristotle, [1449a]).

In *Rhetoric* [1405b], Aristotle classifies “metaphor” as ‘being of great value both to poetry and prose’, for ‘it gives names to the nameless things’, and opposes the sophists’ approach that argues that no matter which word is used for a given thing, the meaning is the same. The materials of metaphor ‘must be beautiful to the ear, to the understanding, to the eye or to some other physical sense’ (Aristotle,[1406a]). As Frauke Berndt (Wägenbaur, 1998:1) points out, ‘we cannot think about an object like memory without metaphors – it is how the problem faced by discourse in its attempt to express memory is summarized’.

Aristotle’s analysis of both memory and metaphor endures for all cultural epochs and fashions of literary theories. It is common opinion, and is expressed by Berndt, (Wägenbaur, 1998:25) as follows:

...Aristotle develops the functions of memory, thereby demonstrating the contiguity of individual memory and *cultural* memory; and on the other (hand) describing both the superficial and deep structures of text whose aesthetic figurations illustrate this memory .

According to Bertrand Russel in *History of Western Philosophy* (1946:309), Plotinus's (204-270 A.D.) opus is historically important because it moulds Plato's and Aristotle's ideas with the ideas of Christianity in the Middle Ages. In Plotinus's (204-270 A.D.) neoplatonic philosophy, the central tempt is the suspension of the self-reference of memory, because the truth must be beyond memory. By extension, as Plotinus argues, the soul is the duality of the Reason-principle of the universe and it is also the principal Reason-principle of the entire realm of sense.

In *The Enneads*, (Plotinus, 1952:189) rejects the theory of memory and perception as an imprint of impression on the soul and mind. He argues that

....(a) sensible object striking upon soul or mind makes a mark upon it, and that retention of this mark is memory.

Therefore, the human mind affirms something not contained within it: this is the characteristic of our effort to remember, to bring the thing back to us in a flash. The basic characteristic of memory is the soul-power brought to full strength. Central to Plotinus's argument is that sensation and memory are not passivity, but power. Plotinus (1952:190) asserts:

To the sense-order it stands in a similar nearness and to such things it gives a radiance out of its own store and, as it were, elaborates them to visibility: the power is always ripe and....whenever it puts its strength in the direction of what once has been present in it, it sees the object as present still; and the more intent the effort is, the more durable is the presence. That is why, it is agreed, children have long memory; the things presented to them are not constantly withdrawn but remain in sight....

According to Plotinus, if memory represents a series of sealed-impressions, the multiplicity of objects would have no weakening effect on that memory. There would, therefore, be no need to think back to revive remembrance; there would be the possibility of being subject to forgetting and recalling; all would lie engraved within. The fact that humans train themselves to remember, shows that what they get by the process is a strengthening of the mind (Plotinus, 1952:190).

Plotinus concludes his metaphysical approach to remembering in his theory of “ecstasy”, with part of it being a variation of the Platonic idea of *anamnesis*:

We may know we have had the vision when the Soul has suddenly taken light. This light is from the Supreme and is the Supreme; we may believe in the Presence when, like that other God on the call of a certain man, He comes bringing light: the light is the proof of the advent. Thus, the Soul unlit remains without the vision; lit, it possesses what it sought. And this is the true end set before the Soul, to take that light, to see the Supreme by the Supreme and not by the light of any other principle – to see the Supreme which is also the means to the vision; for that which illuminates the Soul is that which it is to see just as it is by the sun's own light that we see the sun. (Plotinus, *Enneads*, V *Ennead*, 1952:226)

Throughout the Middle Ages (from the fourth to the fourteenth centuries), scholars stressed the importance of memory over imagination and placed it among the highest values that mark superior moral and intellectual character. During this period, it was thought important to transform knowledge into useful experience and also to preserve the essence of Holy Scripture, which was believed to be the memorial clue that traces pre-existing truth for following generations. In many of the instances of these extraordinary remembrances, such as those of St Thomas Aquinas, the explanation given was that of divine

intervention. Endorsing this point of view, Mary Carruthers argues in *The Book of Memory* (1990) that a person without memory would be a person without moral character and without humanity.

In Medieval culture, memory was so highly valued that it almost became the one of the art disciplines. In the words of Mary Carruthers (1990:8), texts are material out of which human beings make “literature”, and, in memorial culture “the book” is only one of the ways in which to remember a “text”. Thomas Aquinas assumed that a *thing* is metaphorically “written” in the mind of everyone, when it is firmly held in memory. For him, recollection is an interpretative activity, in which all books, emotions, pictures, images, signs and stories told to children have a memorative function in which God reminds human beings of Himself, and people remember the world.

To summarise the argument thus far, memory has traditionally been a part of literature; it has also been one of the divisions of ancient and medieval rhetoric (the “noblest” one, the basis of the rest); and memory has always been seen as an integral part of the virtue of prudence, which makes moral judgement possible. As Carruthers (1990:9) notes:

Training the memory was much more than a matter of providing oneself with the means to compose and converse intelligently when books were not readily to hand, for it was in trained memory that one built character, judgement, citizenship, and piety.

There is a whole medieval science concerning the ways in which *ars memorativa* could be learnt: regarding the visual image of the text, when studying from illuminated books, colour, shape, position or placement of letters fix that text in the memory. Then, using images (of the things absent and again presented in our minds), when one contemplates these images, emotions arise and one re-experiences what happened:

This function is distinctively medieval, most likely developed in monastic meditational practices. It accounts for the medieval use of the word “remember” to describe what one was doing while meditating, in vivid “picture form”, on hell and heaven, places one had never oneself visited and thus could not actually “remember”, in our sense. But meditation was thought to be intense memorial activity (Carruthers, 1990:150).

In line with Aristotle’s philosophy (quoted earlier), the medieval understanding of the memory remains, by its nature, of the past – a thing cannot be in memory until it is past:

Therefore, to say that memory is a matrix within humans to perceive present and future is also to say that both present and future, in human time, are meditated by the past. But “the past”, is not itself something, but rather a memory, a representing of what no longer exists as itself but only in its memorial traces. (Carruthers, 1990:193)

This is the essential difference between the Medieval and the Renaissance approach to memory. Renaissance and modern theoreticians argue that the past is meditated by the present.

The eighteenth century brings about the Copernican shift from an external, transcendental reference to an internal, transcendental reference in Kant’s aesthetic theory, proclaimed in *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1787). Immanuel

Kant (1724-1804) emphasises the fact (as did Plato) that all one can know is the appearance of things; hence the realities which religion teaches are little more than assumptions. He believes that all claims about beauty are subjective, based on feelings of pleasure. He reserves the term “aesthetics” (which was used for the first time in the eighteenth century) for a study of our sensibility and its operations. Kant abandoned a search for a “critique of taste” or any examination of the validity that any subject may claim for an appreciation of beauty. The four moments of the ‘Analytic of the Beautiful’ confirm that this aesthetic validity is possible and, in *The Critique of The Judgement* (1792:55), Kant presents the four declaration “moments” discussed in what follows.

The first moment involves the judgement of taste, according to quality:

Taste is the faculty of judging of an object or a method of representing it by an entirely disinterested satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The object of such satisfaction is called beautiful.

For Kant, a judgement of taste is not a judgement of cognition; and it is not simply logical, but aesthetic and teleological. It is also subjective, referring to feelings of pleasure and pain affected by the representation of the given object of art. The interest is the satisfaction, which the subject combines with the representation of the existence of an object of art, and has reference to the faculty of desire. In judgements about beauty, one must be indifferent in favour of the existence of things, in order to judge the things of taste. The satisfaction in the beautiful must depend on the reflection of an object, and it is distinguished from the pleasant, which rests entirely upon sensation. Pleasant is that thing that

gratifies a person, but concerns irrational animals, too. Beauty only concerns humans, and the aesthetic liking of an object must be without any interest, being neither the interest in the senses, nor the interest of reflection.

The second moment of the judgement of taste, according to quantity, defines the concept of beauty:

Beautiful is what, without a concept, is liked universally. (Kant,1892:67)

An aesthetic judgement is similar to a logical judgement, for it is valid for all. Judgement of taste, accompanied by the consciousness of separation from all interest, must claim validity for all, without depending on objects.

Nothing can be universally communicated except cognition, and only cognition has a universal point of reference. The cognitive powers, here, are in free play. A representation by which an object is given, that is to become a cognition in general, requires imagination, for gathering intuition and understanding, for uniting the representations. This state of the free play of the cognitive faculties in representation, by which an object is given, must be universally communicable, and is the only kind of representation which is valid for everyone.

The third moment of judgement of taste, according to the relation of purposes, is as follows:

Beauty is the form of the purposiveness of an object, so far as this is perceived in it without any representation of a purpose. (Kant,1892:90)

The consciousness of the formal purposiveness in the play of a subject's cognitive powers in a representation through which an object is given is the pleasure itself. This pleasure is not practical, neither rising from the ground of pleasantness, nor from an intellectual base. It requires, instead, representation itself and the occupation of cognitive powers. Every interest spoils the judgement of taste, especially if the purposiveness is grounded in it. A judgement of taste, on which charm and emotion have no influence (although they may be bound up with the satisfaction in the beautiful) – which has as its determining ground merely the purposiveness of the form, is a pure judgement of taste.

Aesthetic judgements can be divided into empirical judgements and pure judgements. The first ones present pleasantness or unpleasantness and they are judgements of sense; the second, that is, pure judgements, assert the beauty of an object or the manner of representing it, and they are strictly judgements of taste. There are also two kinds of beauty: free beauty and dependent beauty. The first (free beauty) proposes no concept of what the object could be; the second (dependent beauty), as dependent upon a concept (conditioned beauty), is ascribed to objects which come under the concept of a particular purpose. The "beauty" of nature is a free beauty, but human "beauty" or architectural "beauty" presupposes a concept of purpose, which determines what a thing is to be, and consequently a concept of its perfection, and is therefore adherent beauty.

According to Kant, a judgement of taste, in respect of an object with a definite internal purpose, can only be pure, either if the person judging has no concept of its purpose, or if the person abstracts from it in his/her judgement.

The highest model, the archetype of taste, is an Idea, which everyone must produce in himself/herself. "Idea" properly means a rational concept; whereas the "ideal" is the representation of an individual being, regarded as adequate to an Ideal. The ideal of the beautiful can only be the Ideal of the Imagination. The only being that has the purpose of its existence is a person who can determine his/her purposes by Reason. Humans, alone of all creatures in the world, are susceptible to an Ideal of beauty; as it is only the humanity in their person, as intelligence, that is susceptible to the Ideal of perfection. In other words, influenced by Newtonian physics, Kant emphasises and re-emphasises the "activity" of the knowing and perceiving subject in all experience. Thus, one is not only susceptible to, but also contributes to the making of the Ideal.

The fourth moment in the judgement of taste is determined by the modality:

The beautiful is that which without any concept is cognized as the object of necessary satisfaction. (Kant,1892:96)

Thus, Kant argues that judgements of taste must have a subjective principle which determines what pleases or displeases, only by feeling and not by concepts, but which has universal validity. Such a principle can only be regarded as *common sense* alone, which is essentially different from understanding,

because common understanding does not judge by feeling. It always judges by concepts.

The “Beautiful” and the “Sublime” both please in themselves and are both judgements of reflection. The Beautiful in nature is associated with the form of the object, which consists in having definite boundaries. The Sublime, on the other hand, is to be found in a formless object. For Kant, the Beautiful is regarded as the presentation of an indefinite concept of understanding; the Sublime as that of the like concept of reason. In the case of the Beautiful, the satisfaction is bound up with the representation of quality; in the Sublime it is bound up with that of quantity.

In Kantian aesthetics, the Sublime re-emphasises the Medieval relation between aesthetics and morality. Kant argues that one’s pleasure in the Sublime results from realising that one can disinterestedly yet rationally conceptualise those large and overwhelming objects (found in nature) that one cannot grasp and link to the “human frame” in “imaginative or perceptual terms” (1892:134). In such an experience, one feels as if one is transcending the limits imposed by embodiment.

Apart from the philosophical examination of the beautiful, other categories such as the sublime, mimesis, harmony, comedy and ugliness were introduced into eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, and could be found in the observations of

the British thinkers from Gerald, Allison, Shaftsbury and Hutcheson to Hume; while the active moral self became fundamental.

Romantic poetry is the first to demonstrate the influence of a new approach to the philosophy of the beautiful. The significant characteristics of Romanticism, in terms of this present study, are its theories of the imagination, and its revival of myth-making poetry, particularly in regard to the relation between the poet's self-consciousness and the world of nature. These characteristics are to be found in the works of British poets of that time, including Milton, Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and Byron. These representative poets are all influenced by the aesthetics of Kant, Hegel and Hume. Their poetry reveals a fascination with the powers of nature, mythology, imagination, and the specific aesthetic experience that has deep individual and universal meaning.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) sees memory as a technique of association interacting with time in human consciousness. In his *Biographia Literaria* (1983:121) he states:

.... For as the function of the human understanding is no other than merely (to appear to itself) to combine and to apply the phenomena of the association; and as these derive all their reality from the primary sensations; and the sensations again all *their* reality from the impressions ab extra; a God not visible, audible, or tangible, can exist only in the sound or letters from his name and attributes.... The process, by which Hume degraded the notion of the cause and effect into a blind product of delusion and habit, into the mere sensation of *proceeding* life associated with the images of the memory; this same process must be repeated to the equal degradation of every fundamental idea in ethics or theology. (Coleridge, 1983:121)

William Wordsworth's (1770-1850) source for his theory of recollection is Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*; and it enabled him to put into consistent form matters that most concerned him. There was, in the first place, a vision of the other world, both real and divine. Then, he knew that the visionary power was closely connected with the imagination and the creative process, and finally, through poetic vision, Wordsworth is able to discover the meaning of eternity.

Wordsworth's poetry stresses the importance of memory as a creative principle. In 'Ode Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' (1807), for example, his theory of *anamnesis* is related to three things which concerned him most. In the first place, it was the vision of another world, which seems both real and divine:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness
And not in the utter nakedness
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home;
Heaven lies about us in our infancy! (v.ll 58-66)

Secondly, there is evidence of the theory of *anamnesis* in the fact that the visionary power is closely connected with the imagination and its creative process. In children, Wordsworth sees creative power in its purest form. The child fashions his or her own little world of the mind because she/he is divinely

inspired by heavenly memories. This enlightenment of childhood is treasured until death:

But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
 Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence: truths that wake,
 To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
 Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
 Hence, in a season of calm weather,
 Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore. (IX,II 149-168)

Thirdly, through the poetic vision achieved by recollecting in tranquillity, alluded to earlier, Wordsworth encountered what he called eternity. He speaks of such recollections, as if they took place in Time, as if humankind's moral state were preceded temporally by a celestial state of which one retains memories.

If one is not elevated to the state of tranquillity, then one cannot recollect.

Wordsworth writes in one of his letters:

At first I had a strong impulse to write a poem that should record my Brother's virtues, and be worthy of his memory. I began to give vent to my feelings, with this view, but I was overpowered by my subject and could not proceed; I composed much, but it is all lost except a few lines, as it came from me in such a torrent that I was unable to remember it; I could not hold the pen myself, and the subject was such that I could not employ Mrs. Wordsworth or my Sister as my

amanuensis. This work must therefore rest awhile till I am something calmer... (De Selincourt, 1st May 1805: 488).

Also, there were and are, however, a few different critical interpretations of Wordsworth's idea of "emotions recollected in tranquillity", which Wägenbaur mentions in his essay 'Memory and Recollection: The Cognitive and Literary Model'(1998). Wägenbaur argues that the whole process of recollecting is linked more to the brain and mind search than to consciousness, unconsciousness, dream or divine possession. According to him, memories could only exist in the presence of an active nervous system. He quotes M. H. Abrams's approach to Wordsworth as something that Abrams calls a "paradox of observation". Abrams (1965:533) notes:

Tintern Abbey... inaugurated the wonderfully functional device Wordsworth later called "two consciousnesses": a scene is revisited, and the remembered landscape (the picture of the mind) is superimposed on the picture before the eye; the two landscapes fail to match, and so set a problem (sad perplexity) which compels the meditation.

Wägenbaur also mentions M.H. Miller in an attempt to tie together the neurophysiologic moment of self-referential memory and its principle of literary writing in Wordsworth:

Conflict there may be in Wordsworth, but this conflict has been seen by many critics as a middle stage in a three-stage dialectic leading from an early harmony with nature to a period of self-consciousness and alienation. This second stage is the discovery of the dangerous autonomy of the imagination. The final stage is the rejection of that detachment and a consequent return at a higher level to a calm reconciliation with nature, for "Nature never betrays / The heart that loved her". (Miller,1985: 44)

It seems that Wordsworth's theory of anamnesis is a kind of the divine poetic possession, but not the kind of systematic philosophical thought which was favoured in descriptions of recollection from the eighteenth century onwards.

In an article entitled 'Aristotle: Towards a Poetics of Memory', Frauke Berndt (1998:23) argues that only in the nineteenth century is the birth of the psychological subject in art fully manifested:

With the birth of the modern, (psycho)logical subject in the nineteenth century, the subject-orientated function of memory was increasingly moved to the centre of interest in the wake of the recognition that the often painful and strenuous "*Penelope's work of recollection*²" was the high road to self-consciousness and integrated life experience.

In terms of the argument in this dissertation, the high point of the nineteenth century's theoretical approaches to literature lies in Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) psychoanalytical theory – in his emphasis on the unconscious aspects of the human psyche. Freud demonstrates that, like the iceberg, the human mind is structured so that the great weight and density lie beneath the surface (below the level of consciousness). In 'Anatomy of the Mental Personality', Lecture XX, (1929:99-100), Freud discriminates between the levels of conscious and unconscious mental activity:

The oldest and best meaning of the word "unconscious" is the descriptive one; we call "unconscious" any mental activity the existence of which we are obliged to assume – because, for instance, we infer it in some way from its effects – but of which we are not directly aware.

² Metaphorically refers to Penelope's web, which was unraveled each night and recommenced again and again

Freud elaborates that if one wanted to be more accurate, one would have to modify the statement by saying that a process is called “unconscious” when one has to assume that it was active at a certain time, although at that time one knew nothing about it. In *Introductory Lectures of Psychoanalysis* (1929:101), Freud defines two types of unconscious:

One, which is transformed into conscious material easily and under conditions, which frequently arise, and another in the case of which such a transformation is difficult, can only come about with a considerable expenditure of energy, or may never occur at all. We call the unconscious something that is latent, the “preconscious”, and keep the name “unconscious” for the other.

Freud's first major premise is that most of the individual mental processes are unconscious. Secondly (a point rejected by many of his disciples, including Carl Jung), he argues that all human behaviour is motivated by what we call sexuality. His third major premise is that because of the powerful social taboos attached to certain impulses, many desires and memories are repressed (actively excluded from conscious awareness). Therefore, suppressed memories reveal themselves through dreams.

In the new-born method of psychoanalysis, Freud underlines the significance of remembering, and of the interpretation of dreams (a phenomenon and unresolved mystery of the human psyche). In *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), he transforms the Wordsworthian idea of recollection of early childhood life, linking it with the idea of the unconscious. Merging the processes of dreaming and

remembering, Freud's theory elevates reconstruction to a higher level of understanding the complexity of human soul:

The control which the dream exercises over material from our childhood, most of which, as is well known, falls into the lacunae of our conscious memory, is responsible for the production of interesting hypermnesic³ dreams....

...The behaviour of memory in dreams is surely most significant for any theory of memory whatsoever. It teaches us that "nothing which we have once psychically possessed is ever entirely lost".

...It might even occur to one to reduce the phenomenon of dreaming to that of remembering, and to regard the dream as the manifestation of a reproductive activity, unresting even at night, which is an end in itself. (1900:143-145)

In his article 'Dreams in Place', Ian Hacking continues the further exploration of the links between dreams and memory. His starting premises are that 'Objectivity has its home in the waking life. Dreams welcome unreason' (2001:245).

So-called "significant dreams" rise from both the individual and cultural milieu to reach the universal meaning through their symbolism attached to all languages, which again contains the memory of archetypes of a certain civilisations, such as the Western civilisation with Hebrew or Greek origins, which are different from the Eastern civilisations with their own roots and codes.

Similar to Freud, Hacking explores the origins of memory in dreams and compares it (memory in dreams) with the waking logic of a person. The memory repertoire in dreams could be thought, knowledge, an impression or an inventive imagination. Hacking's essay collates the history of different approaches to

³ In hypermnesic dreams memory is intensified by the free play of sensory images and free associations evoked in the dreamer's mind.

dreams, giving examples from dreams dreamt on holy sites which tell the prophecy that connects the Gods with humankind; the dreams of insignificant things for the waking state which gain almost surrealistic significance when dreamt; the dreams that are lost on waking; the poetic dreams like Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan'; the scepticism on theories on the revelation of Truth in the dreams; the Freudian dream-analysis of the twentieth century; and mysticism, which is connected with the reflections of time. Hacking proclaims that

We live in all time, all the time, although we are primarily conscious of a shortish (roughly two day) moving segment of time; the moments that we are conscious of in waking life are experiences of the middle of such a segment. But in dreams we blend together events that we experienced when awake during the whole of the time surrounding the dream, both past and future, with events closer in time being more salient than those further away. (Hacking, 2001:256)

Hacking also mentions the Internet sites which exchange the texts of dreams, and Sleep Laboratories which lay their hypothesis on the possibility of demonstrating the content of a person's dreams by measuring the Rapid Eye Movement. (There is a growing opinion among neurologists that the processes of remembering and forgetting occur during the REM phase and that the oldest memories are the most resistant). He concludes in praise of Freud and his analysis of unreason:

Dreams are interpreted to uncover, among other things, the repressed drives that are at work in unconsciousness, the very drives that reasonable and civilised humanity will not own up to. (Hacking, 2001:258)

Closely connected to the unconscious mind is the concept of *involuntary memory*, which determines Marcel Proust's (1887-1922) masterpiece *In Search of Lost Time* [*A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*] (1913-1927). Frauke Berndt (1998:24) highlights the significance of the connection between Freud and Proust:

One look at Proust's negotiations with the text, the significance of which, for the literary discourse of memory in the twentieth century proved more decisive than any other, will confirm psychology is dependent on aesthetics. Freud's *Interpretations of Dreams*, published in 1900, is also founded on the assumption that dream and textual genres are contiguous. It develops the model of the dream text. According to Freud, in reaction to traumatic loss of the primary object, the functions of the unconscious – displacement and condensation – set in motion a process of generation similar to that of poetic production (339). The rigor [*sic*] of this model is obvious; "inside" and "outside" are not only based on the same rhetorical operations, they are actually one and the same. Just a few years after the appearance of *Interpretations of Dreams*, Proust began his life's work – to reflect poetically via the involuntary memory on the functions of memory defined by it, and to literally stimulate the process of remembering by means of an autobiographical fiction. In doing this, *Search of Lost Time* (*A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*), generates a memory text, which does not simply gather individual, authentic experiences, but rather represents a stroll through the archive of western civilisation stored in "libraries" and "galleries".

Proust takes the metaphors, impressions, sensations, ideas and other micro-elements that make his vision and places them within his complex world which contains hundreds of characters, Combray, Venice, as well as flowers, lights and scents and in that world of regained memory everything partakes of a character. In *Time and Sense* (1996:135), Julia Kristeva's summative comment on the Proustian character of memory is succinct and to the point:

The “impressions”, “traces”, “figures”, and “furrows” that Proust places at the intersection of words and sensations and dreams to be the primary target of involuntary memory are made manifest only when they are lodged in the visionary volumes and the verbal visions represented by his characters. Dominated by the authority of metaphorical memory, Proust’s characters are less shaped by action, for which they appear to have little talent (except when it is a passionate “action” like jealousy), than by the opinion they create, manipulate, fear or endure. The Proustian character is a macrometaphor of the sense of time. It represents the time of speech. No time or word can be articulated unless they are first relayed by a figure – by a syllable, word, or statue. Even so the figure loses its boundaries in the regions of inexpressible sensation, where it merges with the narrator’s vision, that is with experience Proust calls “style”. There, time does not pass, for the character goes from being “lost” to being “regained” through a pure movement of time embodied.

In Proust’s *Time Regained* [Le Temps Retrouvé] (1927), the narrator does not discover the rule of metaphor and art until he applies his intelligence to the “inexplicable happiness” produced by his experience of involuntary memory, and conducts his inquiry in a logical manner – even though the subject of his investigation totally excludes logic:

Certain people, whose minds are prone to mystery, like to believe that objects retain something of the eyes which have looked at them, that old buildings and pictures appear to us not as they originally were but beneath a perceptible veil woven for them over the centuries by the love and contemplation of millions of admirers. This fantasy, if you transpose it into the domain of what is for each one of us sole reality, the domain of his own sensibility, becomes the truth....

An image presented to us by life brings it, in a single moment, sensations which are in fact multiple and heterogeneous....an hour is not merely an hour, it is a vase full of scents and sounds and projects and climates, and what we call reality is a certain connection between these immediate sensations and the memories which envelop us simultaneously with them – a connection that is suppressed in a simple cinematographic vision, which just because it professes to confine itself to the truth in fact departs widely from it – a unique connection which the writer has to rediscover in order to

link for ever in his phrase for two sets of phenomena which reality joins together. He can describe a scene by describing one after another the innumerable objects which at a given moment were present at a particular place, but truth will be attended by him only when he takes two different objects, states the connection between them – a connection analogous in the world of art to the unique connection which in the world of science is provided by the law of causality – and encloses them in the necessary links of a well wrought style. Truth – and life too – can be attended by us only when, by comparing a quality common to two sensations, we succeed in extracting their common essence and reuniting them with each other, liberate them from the contingencies of time, within a metaphor. (Proust, III,1927: 254)

There are many theories that Proust's masterpiece refers to, such as Aristotle's theory of metaphor in *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, as transcending the meaning of ordinary language into unfamiliar uses. Aristotle's general view of metaphor is divided into a number of specialised tropes – metaphor, metonymy, contiguity, synecdoche, analogy, and many others. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Russian formalists established that metonymy applies to prose, and metaphor applies to poetry. In *Linguistics and Poetics* (1960), Roman Jakobson repeats that metonymy applies to prose and metaphor applies to poetry and suggests that each period of literary history tends to favour one or the other principle (The Age of Realism prefers the metonymical system; Romanticism and Modernism, the metaphoric).

French Structuralists classify metaphor as the central trope of all poetic language – “*le figure des figures*”. The essence of all poetic language is displacement of sense; and displacement of sense is metaphor. All methods

employed by metonymy, synecdoche, and resemblance (contiguity, proximity, and juxtaposition for metonymy; intersection for synecdoche) have metaphor as their common denominator. Metaphor is generally conceived as difference; and displacement of sense is not just a figure of style, but an existential figure at the origin of thought and language, which allows man to discover himself.

Proustian metaphor is an example of “pure metonymy”:

My body, still too heavy with sleep to move, would take an effort to construe the form which its tiredness took as an orientation of its various members, so as to introduce from that where the wall lay and the furniture stood, to piece together and to give a name to the house in which it must have lived. Its memory, the composite memory of its ribs, knees, and shoulder-blades offered it a whole series of rooms in which it had at one time or another slept; while the unseen walls kept changing, adapting themselves to the shape of each successive room that it remembered, whirling madly through the darkness. And even before my brain, lingering in the consideration of when things had happened and of what they looked like, had collected sufficient impressions to enable it to identify the room, it, my body, would recall from each room in succession what the bed was like, where the doors were, how daylight came in at the windows, whether there was a passage outside, what I had in my mind when I went to sleep, and had found when I awoke. (Proust, 1922:5)

In *Time Regained* III, Proust (1927:254) declared that metaphor is the essence of style and the fundamental building block of art:

The link may be uninteresting, the objects trivial, the style bad, but unless this process has taken place the description is worthless.

Proust does not state directly that metaphor is an existential figure that itself reflects the heart of existence – his narrator explains that the rule of metaphor

was revealed to him by Nature, and that art must duplicate this natural process if it is to express the truth that eludes intelligence and analysis.

Metaphor does, however, reveal similarities and union – as, for example, in a surrealist painting, the images of which reconstitute the psychological or dream state.

Allusions in Thomas Sterns Eliot's poetry, for example, create a metaphoric structure in which bits and pieces of history, myth, and literature create a dismal contemporary world of memory:

Here are the years that walk between, bearing
Away the fiddles and the flutes, restoring
One who moves in the time between sleep and walking,
Wearing

White light folded, sheeted about her, restoring
With a bright cloud of tears, the years, restoring
With a new verse the ancient rhyme. Redeem
The time. Redeem

The unread vision in the higher dream
While jewelled unicorns draw by the gilded hearse.
The silent sister veiled in white and blue
Between the yews, between the garden god,
Whose flute is breathless, bent her head and sighed but
spoke no
Word.

But the fountain sprang up and the bird sang down
Redeem the time, redeem the dream
The token of the word unheard, unspoken

Till the wind shake a thousand whispers from the yew

And after this our exile. (T. S. Eliot , 'Ash Wednesday', 1930)

Eliot's poetry reveals the essence of Proust in its access to truth; but, putting the stress on alienation, a sense of loss and a preoccupation with death, as in the above quoted 'Ash Wednesday' (1930), it shifts towards the new literary movement known as Modernism.

In the years before and after the First World War, the changes in poetic style described as Modernism took root, and a new mood emerged among the writers. Critics tend to agree that the specific feature signified by Modernism involves a deliberate and radical break with the traditional bases of Western culture and Western art, and the correspondence between Christianity and pagan myths and legends. A prominent feature of Modernism in art is the phenomenon of the "*avant-garde*", or in Ezra Pound's phrase "*make it new*". By violating accepted conventions, Modernists created ever-new artistic forms and styles and introduced neglected, and often aesthetically forbidden, subject matters. Thomas Sterns Eliot, Ezra Pound and William Butler Yeats marked

twentieth century literature and literary criticism with their fresh approaches to poetry, literary history and tradition.

It is William Butler Yeats's (1865-1939) belief that the poet's duty is to preserve memory whatever its form, to preserve the pattern of life that embodies continuity with the past. In the years after 1900, Yeats was confronted everywhere by what he saw as the erosion of memory. Poetry has to mix with the world if it is to continue to appeal not only to the present world, but, to the future, and this is the essence of Philip Larkin's poetry too, as the succeeding chapters show. Craig points to the paradox of "art's rebellion" described by Yeats:

Without the ideas as well as emotions, that associational chain that connects our poetic experiences back to the most distant past, that makes our poetic experience out of the connection with the past, would be impossible. Art's rebellion is paradoxical, because it is rebellion against change; the only insurance against the disruption of the continuity of memory is in environment where memory is hereditary, a part of the process of breeding. Culture belongs to those who inherit or create a rich world of memories and habit of thought, but the possibility of such memory would not exist but for its assurance through continuity of breeding, for it requires a certain amount of wealth to ensure continuity from generation to generation, and free the mind in part from other tasks. (Craig, 1982:164)

Yeats felt the want of religion; and having no sympathy with any established religion, he looked for a religion in art. He created a simple-minded (childlike, rather than naive) religion of his own childhood. He made a new religion,

almost an infallible church of poetic tradition, of stories, and of emotions, inseparable from their first expression, passed on from generation to generation by poets and painters with some help from philosophers and theologians.

Yeats believes that art is not for the crowd; he believes in the liberation of the arts from life, leaving the crowd free to lose themselves in beauty and busy themselves like all the great poetry of the past and live religions of all times, with old faith, myths, dreams. In his poem 'Upon a House shaken by the Land Agitation' (1910), he reaches for the tradition of 'The Big House', as Molly Keane does in her novel *Good Behaviour* (1981), describing the tragedy of the demise of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy:

How should the world be luckier if this house,
Where passion and precision have been one
Time out of mind, became too ruinous
To breed the lidless eye that loves the sun?
And the sweet laughing eagle thoughts that grow
Where wings have memory of wings, and all
That comes of the best knit to the best? Although
Mean roof-trees were the sturdier for its fall,
How should their luck run high enough to reach
The gifts that govern men, and after these
To gradual Time's last gift, a written speech
Wrought of high laughter, loveliness and ease?

(W.B. Yeats, 'Upon a House shaken by the Land Agitation, Selected Poetry, 1991:68)

Therefore, as this extract shows, Yeatsian aesthetics proposes that the arts (poetry, painting and music) are the only means of connecting with eternity left to the men on earth.

Although he does not like science, Yeats agrees that knowledge is merely a process of recognition. His doctrine of a Great Memory – a parallel to Plato's anamnesis – is an artistic doctrine, which dispenses with science. Truth cannot be reached by induction; we ourselves are a part of the Great Memory and truth runs in our veins like blue blood (like Plato's anamnesis, Yeats's doctrine of the Great Memory is combined with the doctrine of re-incarnation). Great memory is a part of the great universal mind that lives and flows through individuals. A.G. Stock (1961: 80) cites Yeats's transcendental "*Credo*":

I believe in the practice and philosophy of what we have agreed to call magic, in what I must call the evocation of spirits, though I do not know what they are, in the power of creating magical illusions, in the visions of truth in the depth of the mind when the eyes are closed; and I believe in three doctrines, which have, as I think, been handed down from early times, and been the foundation of nearly all magical practices. These doctrines are:

- 1) That the borders of our minds are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, to create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.
- 2) That the borders of our memories are shifting, and that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature itself.
- 3) That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols.

Those symbols can be found in the metaphorical nature of poetry. One of them is a symbol of the Rose, a symbol of spiritual and eternal beauty, and also an occult symbol used in Kabalistic practice and the practice of the Rosicrucians of the conjunction with the rose and cross that forms a mystical marriage between the male and female principles. In the poem, entitled *To the Rose Upon The Rood of Time* (1895), Yeats seeks through the symbolical image of rose the long forgotten universal truths:

Come near, come near, come near – Ah, leave me still
A little space for the rose-breath to fill!
Lest I no more hear common things that crave;
The weak worm hiding down in its small cave,
The field-mouse running by me in the grass,
And heavy mortal hopes that toil and pass;
But seek alone to hear the strange things said
By God to the bright hearts of those long dead,
And learn and chaunt a tongue men do not know.
Come near; I would, before my time to go,
Sing of old Eire and the ancient ways:
Red Rose, Proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days.

Charles Craig (1982:164) points to the criticism Yeatsian doctrine of a Great memory arises in Eliot aesthetics:

What Eliot attacks in Yeats were the qualities he found in all Romantic art: isolation from some central tradition of culture leads to an over-evaluation of the personal and an inflation of the poetic ego at the expense of the true awareness of the world? Yeats was unable to maintain the balance between self and outside world, which Eliot constantly sought in great art. For Eliot,

Yeats's art never achieves objectivity. What joins Yeats, Eliot and Pound together is their effort to found their poetry on a different basis from the Romantic imagination. For Yeats, the conflict was between his aesthetic and his romantic conception of the purposes of art; for Eliot it was the rejection of a poetic style that he saw as integral to romantic escapism.

Eliot's (1888-1965) views on tradition in literary criticism are mainly expressed in his essay 'On Tradition and The Individual Talent' (1920). He suggests the impersonal theory of poetry. When a poet is aesthetically judged, there is a tendency to find what is individual, what is his difference from his predecessors, what is the true essence of that man? But, very often, the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. This poetics of memory is clarified in Eliot's *Sacred Wood* (1920:48), from which this quotation is taken:

Tradition is therefore a matter of much wider significance. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense; and a historical sense involves a perception. It compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional.

Moreover, Eliot's concept of aesthetics is its inextricability from the poetics of memory. Consequently, any understanding of poetry is dependent upon an appreciation of poetic lineage:

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this

as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical criticism. (Eliot, 1920, 48-53)

In other words, individual talent is a part of tradition, the memory of which is embodied in each new work of art. The other aspect of the impersonal theory of poetry concerns the relation of the poem to its author:

The poet's mind is a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together. A poet has not a "personality" to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in particular and unexpected ways (Eliot, 48-53).

For T.S. Eliot, the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative" – in other words, a poet must find a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which are a formula for that particular emotion, such as when the external facts, which must terminate sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.

...The intense feeling, ecstatic or terrible, without an object or exceeding its object, is something which every person of sensibility has known...the ordinary person puts these feelings to sleep or trims down his feeling to fit the business world; the artist keeps it alive by his ability to intensify the world to his emotions. (Eliot, 1920:100-102)

Charles Craig, in *Yeats, Eliot, Pound, and the Politics of Poetry* (1982) argues that the work of art is not "objective" by being entirely divorced from the authorial consciousness, but by being a completely coherent amalgamation of feelings: it is a whole into which many elements have been subsumed. It is a world of poetic imagination. One's personal memories are irrelevant to the associational

process. They play no part in history, and poetry that only depends upon personal memory can never be universal. This theory is criticised for repeating the mistakes of Romanticism, which, in the concentration on the imagination fail to develop the powers of memory and the sense of history that goes along with it. But, for Eliot, as for most classical critics, art is much more philosophical than history.

Pound's (1885-1972) need for memory is more technical than Eliot's, and memory, as a technique represents an index of civilisation. The progress in that technique is equivalent to the progress in other areas in scientific knowledge, and it means recapturing something that goes to the beginnings of human consciousness. The associationist theory demands that each forward movement of the mind in reverie is a return to the depths of the past as in Pound's poem 'De Aegypto' (1908:45-46):

I, even I, am he who knoweth the roads
Through the sky, and the wind thereof is my body.

I have beheld the Lady of Life,
I, even I, who fly with the swallows.

Green and grey is her raiment
Trailing along the wind.

I, even I, am he who knoweth the roads
Through the sky, and the wind thereof is my body.

Manus animam pinxit,
My pen is in my hand

To write the acceptable word....
My mouth to chant the pure singing!

Who hath the mouth to receive it,
The song of the Lotus of Kumi?

I, even I, am he who knoweth the roads
Through the sky, and the wind thereof is my body.

I am flame that riseth in the sun,
I, even I, who fly with swallows.

The moon is upon my forehead,
The winds are under my lips.

The moon is a great pearl in the waters of sapphire,
Cool to my fingers the flowing waters.

I, even I, am he who knoweth the roads
Through the sky, and the wind thereof is my body.

For Pound, a return to origins involves a return to nature and reason. To return to nature is for the man or woman who want to behave reasonably, intuitively, in harmony.

Pound stresses the importance of precision in using words. Clear thinking and precise expression are inseparable parts of the same process, and they are both determined by accurate perception. There is a magical relationship between the thing and its correct name, like a Chinese ideograph, which should be the “picture of the thing”.

The Art gives us a great percentage of the lasting data regarding the nature of man, of immaterial man. It is of tremendous importance because it incarnates the truths, which are always valid and new. Literature is news that STAYS news. (Pound,1934:25)

Words have meanings which have ‘grown into the race’s skin’, and the meaning comes with associations:

Literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree. The charging of the language is done in three principal ways: you receive the language as your race has left it, the words have meanings which have “grown into the race’s skin”. And the good writer chooses his words for their “meaning”, and it comes up with roots, with associations, with how and where the word is familiarly used, or where it has been used brilliantly or memorably (Pound,1934:36).

In Pound’s stylistics, the language of poetry is charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree. You can charge words with meaning in three ways, called *phanopeia*, *melopeia*, and *logopeia*. The word can be used to throw a visual image on to the reader’s imagination, or charge by it by sound; or groups of words are used to do this.

The ultimate example of *phanopeia* (throwing a visual image on the mind) is probably reached by the Chinese, owing to their particular kind of written language. The highest stage of *melopeia* is reached in Greek. *Logopeia*, the dance of the intellect among words, employs words not only for their direct meaning, but it takes account, in a special way, of habits of usage, of the concept one expects to find with the word, of its usual known acceptances, and of ironical play. It holds the aesthetic content, which is the domain of verbal manifestation and cannot be possibly contained in plastic or music. It is the most “tricky” and undependable mode. It cannot be translated locally, only by having determined the original author’s state of mind. (This idea of *phanopeia* links up with the Eliot’s idea of poetical use of stored images, feeling and metaphors).

According to Pound, European civilisation or “culture” can perhaps be best understood as a medieval trunk with wash after wash of classicism going over it. That is not the whole story, but to understand it, one should think of that series of perceptions, as well as of anything that has existed or subsisted unbroken from antiquity. Aligning himself with Eliot’s notion of poetic memory, Pound insists that

Without the foregoing minimum of poetry in other languages you simply will not know where English poetry comes from. (Pound, 1934: 36-58)

True art revitalises personal memory, and equally its acceptance by the memory is the standard of the truly valuable in culture. For Pound, as for Yeats too, poetic memory also means memory of the gods, because the gods symbolise man’s relation to the natural world, and this premise resuscitates the classical point of view on memory.

Furthermore, Pound’s poetry contains a comparable technique to that applied in the *stream of consciousness* novel, where the thoughts and images are being casually determined by significant associations rather than by objective casual connections in the outside world.

The term *stream of consciousness* was coined by William James in *Principles of Physiology* (1890), to denote the flow of inner experiences. It is generally applied to the novel as a genre, in which sense perceptions merge with conscious and half-conscious thoughts, memories, feelings and random associations. But, for Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), one of the most distinguished authors who applied

the stream of consciousness technique in her literary opus, there is a fusion between the twentieth century's novel and its poetry. The future of the novel lies in its approach to poetry. It is a symbolical indication of the liberation of the archetypal and emotional powers of human nature, in giving shapes, as it is in poetry, but not details (as it is in the realistic mode), in pointing to the relation between consciousness and general ideas.

And it is possible that there will be among the so-called novel one, which we shall scarcely know how to christen. It will be written in prose, but in prose which has many of the characteristics of poetry. It will have something of the exaltation of poetry, but much of the ordinariness of prose. It will be dramatic, and yet not a play. It will be read, not acted. It will resemble poetry in this that it will give not only or many people's relations to each other and their activities, as the novel hitherto done, but it will give the relation of the mind to general ideas and its soliloquy in solitude. (Woolf, 1966:224-225)

This extract is particularly applicable to the present study (Chapter Four) which argues that Molly Keane's *Good Behaviour* is just such a novel.

Virginia Woolf was "the high priestess of the Bloomsbury" movement, which flourished in the time of the great modernist ferment of the early twentieth century – the world of the First Post-Impressionist Exhibition, of Freud, Proust, Joyce and T.S. Eliot. Mirrored in post-impressionism, classicism, modernism, and the theory of the senses, the truth of the human soul in her literary opus was cocooned in impressions and memories. Recollection is triggered by impression and through the dream-like movements of consciousness exceeds reality:

Recall, then, some event that has a distinct impression on you – how at the corner of the street, perhaps, you passed two people talking. A tree shook; an electric light danced; the tone of the talk

was comic, but also tragic; a whole vision, an entire conception seemed contained in that moment.

But when you attempt to reconstruct it in words, you will find it breaks into a thousand conflicting impressions. Some must be subdued; others emphasised; in the process you will lose, probably all grasp upon the emotion itself. (Woolf, 1940: 259-260)

A tendency to develop from a metonymical (realistic) to a metaphorical (symbolistic) presentation of the experience may be followed in Woolf's literary development, through the novels *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To The Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931). Reducing the plot-story element of the novel-writing, she captured the essence of human sensibility. For Woolf, memory is a part of the personal, inner experience, and time is measured through the internal movements of the consciousness of both present and absent figures. Carried through the stream of consciousness, objective reality was transformed into a universal comprehension of the truth of life, and beyond it, which is illustrated in the following extract from *To The Lighthouse*:

So with the house empty and the doors locked and the mattresses rolled round, those stray airs, advance guards of great armies, blustered in, brushed bare boards, nibbled and fanned, met nothing in the bedroom or drawing room that wholly resisted them but only hangings that flapped, wood that creaked, the bare legs of tables, saucepans and china already furred, tarnished, cracked. What people shed and left – a pair of shoes, a shooting cap, some faded skirts and coats in the wardrobes – those alone kept the human shape and in the emptiness indicated how once they were filled and animated; how once hands were busy with hooks and buttons; how once the looking-glass had held a face; had held a world hollowed out in which a figure turned, a hand flashed, a door opened, in came children rushing and tumbling; and went out again. Now, day after day, light turned, like a flower reflected in water, its clear image on the wall opposite. Only the shadows of the trees, flourishing in the wind, made obeisance on the wall, and for a moment darkened the pool in which light reflected itself; or birds,

flying made soft spots flutter slowly across the bedroom floor.
(Woolf, 1927:359)

Like T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf thus sees tradition as something immensely ancient, complex and continuous, where all past poetic experiences resurrect through the voices of new ones, and in this circle of memory a new truth emerges. This “sensitive scholasticism” connects all mentioned nineteenth and twentieth century authors to Philip Larkin (1922-1985) and Molly Keane (1904-1996) alias M.J. Farrell. Memory as a literature, memory as a place, memory as a childhood or feeling which triggers the search for a lost time and truth is the undercurrent that flows through the literary work of both Philip Larkin and Molly Keane.

However, Philip Larkin’s aesthetic approach is antiformalistic (the form holds no interest – content is everything), and unlike Yeats, Pound, Eliot and Woolf, he has no belief in literary tradition. Being a part of “The Movement of the Angry Young Men” who witnessed changes in English culture and society after the Second World War, but at the same time part of this very same tradition he was arguing against, he chooses to deal with the dry, ordinary, realistic experience of everyday life:

What I want readers to carry away from the poem in their minds it is not the poem, but the experience; I want them to live something through the poem, without necessarily being conscious of the poem as a poem. (Philip Larkin, 1974:15)

The poet's task is to move the reader's feelings by showing his own, not to display his learning, the notes of his predecessors. Paradoxically, Larkin's poetry itself belonged to the aesthetic climate of his predecessors, and has grown on the rich ground of the western European cultural tradition, which includes a whole genesis of ideas from ancient times to the twentieth century. And, similar to or in inversion of Virginia Woolf's comprehension of the modern novel, Larkin's poems show how twentieth century poetry and prose merge.

In his essay 'Methonymical Muse' (1988), David Lodge considers Philip Larkin's poetry "experimental", and daringly unpoetic, when traditionally lyric poetry is considered as a metaphoric mode. However, this does not mean that Philip Larkin does not use metaphors – many of his poems are based on extended analogies, as can be seen in a short poem 'Going' or 'Dying Day' written in 1946:

There is an evening coming in
Across the fields, one never seen before,
That lights no lamps.

Silken it seems at a distance, yet
When it is drawn up over the knees and breast
It brings no comfort.

Where has the tree gone, that locked
Earth to the Sky? What is under my hands,
That I cannot feel?

What loads my hands down?
(‘Going’ or ‘Dying Day’, February 1946)

However, some of Larkin's poems have no metaphor at all, and some are characterised by low diction and colloquial language ('High Windows',

'Afternoons', 'Party Politics', for example), as is discussed in detail in the next chapter, but they are still poetry and part of the metaphoric poetic tradition.

As in the poetry of T.S. Eliot and Yeats, beauty in Larkin's poems is most often associated with a past misremembered: a past filtered through nostalgia and lack of sublime heroism in an alienated modern world destroyed by industrialisation. Through the power of memory, Larkin's poetry searches for something missing, and this negativism becomes symbolic, as will be seen in the further discussion in Chapter Two of this study.

The very similar atmosphere associated with past is to be found in Molly Keane's masterpiece, *Good Behaviour*. (1981). Stylistically, Molly Keane and Philip Larkin's link can be traced through the above mentioned theories and representative authors, particularly in the aesthetics of the Bloomsbury movement and in the pointed link between prose, poetry and the work of the stream of consciousness made. Memory is, therefore, one of the most powerful tools that both authors use in their search for the space between the world of dream and reality, between the physical and the metaphysical.

CHAPTER 2

PHILIP LARKIN'S 'MEMORATIVE' POETRY

Larkin's relation with tradition is not the one preferred by Eliot, Pound or Yeats. On the contrary, Larkin consciously tries to break the ties with any school of thought or any particular poetic style. In an interview with Ian Hamilton (1964:71), Larkin declares that his poetry is influenced by the poets to whom technique is less important than content, that the poetic forms are inherited only to express the unique and new content (like Thomas Hardy, for example). He also rebels against the frequent use of "mythkitty" (to the extent of an abuse) and the western European cultural heritage in themes of twentieth century poetry. The "mythkitty" practice induces an almost mechanistic view of poetry in which every single poem must include all previous ones. For Larkin, this practice is wrong:

I can't take this evolutionary view on poetry. One never thinks about other poems except to make sure that one isn't doing something that has been done before – writing a verse play about a young man whose father died and whose mother has married his

uncle, for instance. I think a lot of this “myth-kitty” business has grown out of that, because first of all you have to be terribly educated, you have to read everything to know these things, and secondly you’ve got somehow to work them in to show that you are working on them. But to me the whole of the ancient world, the whole of classical and biblical mythology means very little, and I think that using them today not only fills poems full of dead spots but dodges the writer’s duty to be original. (Ian Hamilton, 1964: 72-73)

Nevertheless, Clive James (1974:65) points to the other dimension in Larkin’s approach to tradition saying: ‘the essence of the decaying civilisations can be preserved in a soul of a man of his own.’

Yet, reminiscence still stands out as one of the undercurrents in many of Larkin’s poems. As evidence to the point about the importance of the experience made in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, he believes that writing a poem is to construct a verbal device that will preserve an experience indefinitely – by reproducing it whenever the poem is read. However, he also believes that nowadays nobody trusts poetic subjects any more than poetic diction. Larkin’s insistence on experiencing the poem already quoted, warrants repeating:

What I want readers to carry away from the poem in their minds is not the poem, but the experience; I want them to live something

through the poem, without necessarily being conscious of the poem as a poem. ('Speaking of Writing' – XIII, *The Times*, 20 February 1974)

So, for Larkin (in contrast to Yeats's beliefs), the days when one could claim to be the priest of mystery appear to be gone. Today, more often than not, mystery means – ignorance. Yet, writing a poem is not an act of the will, and poems that are written please that mysterious something in man that has to be pleased. Moreover, memory is a part of it. In the quoted extract above, Larkin is at the same time implicitly recognising the divine qualities of poetry throughout the history of poetry-writing. And, he tries to play with or subvert these very qualities by using free verse, low-diction and irony that sometimes turns into sarcasm. However, the beauty of the ideas, the memories and the dreams can still be followed, turning the individual poetic experience into symbolic and universal statements, as can be seen in the following poem.

On longer evenings,
Light, chill and yellow,
Bathes the serene
Foreheads of houses.
A thrush sings,
Laurel-surrounded
In the deep bare garden,
Its fresh-peeled voice
Astonishing the brickwork.
It will be spring soon,

It will be spring soon –
And I, whose childhood
Is a forgotten boredom,
Feel like a child
Who comes on a scene
Of adult reconciling,
And can understand nothing
But the unusual laughter,
And starts to be happy.
(Larkin, 'Coming', *Collected Poems*, February, 1950)

The mood of Larkin's remembrance, here as elsewhere, is characteristically somber, archetypal and dramatic. It indicates a message of a soul tormented by alienation and self-examination; one looking for the answer, the truth of the moment, of the feeling, and finding the bliss in silence between the rhymes, in tragic misunderstanding, without the action.

Anthony Thwaite (1978:105) notices that 'there are poems in which time, and death as a yardstick of time are seen in an abstract or generalised context'. 'Träumerei' (1946) is one such poem where Larkin uses condensed, symbolic, almost Jungian images of the ordinary, dissolving it into the extraordinary; in doing so, Larkin's metaphor lingers in the grotesque or surrealistic border between the dream and reality, or life and death:

In this dream that dogs me I am part

Of a silent crowd walking under a wall,
Leaving a football match, perhaps, or a pit,
All moving the same way. After a while
A second wall closes on our right,
Pressing us tighter. We are now shut in
Like pigs down a concrete passage. When I lift
My head, I see the walls have killed the sun,
And light is cold. Now a giant whitewashed D
Comes on the second wall, but much too high
For them to recognize: I await the E,
Watch it approach and pass. By now

We have ceased walking and travel

Like water through sewers, steeply, despite

The tread that goes on ringing like an anvil

Under the striding A. I crook

My arm to shield my face, for we must pass

Beneath the huge, decapitated cross,

White on the wall, the T, and I cannot halt

The thread, the beat of it, it is my own heart,

The walls of my room rise, it is still night,

I have woken again before the word was spelt.

(Larkin, 'Träumerei', *Collected Poems*, September 1946)

Nature is another motif used as a powerful metaphor of Larkin's poetry and also as a filter of his recollection of time, as seen in many of his poems such as: 'Going'(1946), 'Coming'(1950) – already quoted, 'And the Wave sings because it is moving'(1946), 'Absences'(1950) and 'Water'(1954). A vast, post-romantic, almost scary and sublime landscape is 'remembered' – revisited and linked to the moment of soul-searching and then paradoxically blended in destructive and wakening details:

Rain patters on a sea that tilts and sighs.
Fast-running floors, collapsing into hollows,
Tower suddenly, spray-haired. Contrariwise,
A wave drops like a wall: another follows,
Wilting and scrambling, tirelessly at play
Where there are no ships and no shallows.

Above the sea, the yet more shoreless day,
Riddled by wind, trails lit-up galleries:
They shift to giant ribbing, sift away.

Such attics cleared of me! Such absences!
(Larkin, 'Absences', *Collected Poems*, November 1950)

Although Geoffrey Harvey (1986:97-123) links Larkin's poetry to the tradition of Romanticism, Larkin's nature is more abstract than Wordsworth's as this poem shows. It is almost symbolic and Kantian in its grandeur, compared to this man unable to act; as he says in 'Wants' (1950): 'beyond it all, desire of oblivion runs'. There is a philosophical approach to nature where the man who sees and feels it (the poet himself or the reader) vanishes into the sublime and eternal memory of the landscapes themselves. As can be seen in the two poems just quoted, there is an almost tragic mode in his approach to nature, and a sarcastic mode in his approach to 'man'. This tragic mode in Larkin's relation with nature, as Christian Dreyer (1982:196) points out, may stand:

....in the absence of a belief in transcendence or the hope of a spiritual after-life not even Nature, so comfortingly available to poets of the previous century, is allowed by Larkin to be of much reassurance.

Sometimes Larkin's landscape is a winged metaphor that takes the reader into the higher spheres, contemplating philosophical, metaphysical or ethical categories. In the following poem, Larkin clearly feels the link between nature and perpetual changes of the universe:

Cut grass lies frail:
Brief is the breath
Mown stalks exhale.
Long, long the death

It dies in the white hours
Of young-leafed June
With chestnut flowers,
With hedges snowlike strewn,

White lilac bowed,
Lost lanes of Queen Anne's lace,
And that high-built cloud
Moving at summer's pace.
(Larkin, 'Cut Grass', *Collected Poems*, June 1971)

Larkin also uses social, everyday issues to oppose the profane and the profound in the mechanism of free association-remembrance play – as in 'Wedding-Wind'(1946); 'Hospital visits'(1953); 'Autobiography at an Air-Station' (1953); 'Maiden Name'(1955); 'Church Going'(1954); 'Whitsun Weddings' (1958); 'MCMXIV' (1960); 'Ambulances' (1961); 'Vers de Soci  t  ' (1971). The power of his irony lies in this sobering, grotesque contrast (knowledge which he shares with the reader) showing the lack of heroic values in the modern world. Geoffrey Harvey (1986:101) points to the aspect of Larkin's poetry concerning embarrassment (often filtered with searching through the past experience), both in the poetry and life, embarrassment as a moving force contrasted to emotion and universal morality. Harvey concludes (1986:103):

Embarrassment is a potent force in Larkin's poetry because it registers the speaker's moral sensibility operating at the point

where social and moral values impinge on his view of himself, a process which in a real sense helps to define and validate his humanity. Larkin pays careful attention to the creative opportunities provided by embarrassment because, for him, to know acute embarrassment is to realise, often in a profound way, both one's own humanity and the humanity of others.

Yet, the heroism of the modern man seem to lie in Larkin's quest to understand life and compares it with the almost forgotten memory of eternity:

That was a way to live – newspaper for sheets,
A candle and spirit stove, and a trouble of shouts
From below somewhere, a town smudgy with traffic!
That was a place to go, that emaciate attic!

For (as you will guess) it was death I had in mind,
Who covets our breath, who seeks and will always find;
To keep out of his thought was my whole care,
Yet down among sunlit courts, yes, he was there,

Taking his rents; yes, I had only to look
To see the shape of his head and a shine of his book,
And the creep of the world under the sparrow-trap sky
To know how little slips his immortal memory....
(Larkin, 'Unfinished Poem', *Collected Poems*, 1951)

The above quotation leads into Larkin's fundamental truth: the meaning of life could lie in the innumerable impressions we have been collecting since we were born (experience, as Freud asserts, turns into subconscious knowledge), which we use combined with reality and different aspects of time. This memorative process is also evident in 'The Daily Things We Do'(1979):

The daily things we do
For money or for fun
Can disappear like dew
Or harden and live on.
Strange reciprocity:
The circumstance we cause
In time gives rise to us,
Becomes our memory.
(Larkin, 'The Daily Things We Do', *Collected Poems*, 1979)

What this poem implies is that we are the products of our own actions, which, in turn, constitute our memories. Here, too, we witness the interplay between the profane and profound, just discussed. The ironic tension between time past and time future conflated into time present is indeed sobering. Larkin's poetic time 'remembers' past and future simultaneously and this gives a new dimension to reality.

The impressions of his poetic memory are conscious and at the same time subconscious, making his poetry stand on the verge of prose, just as Woolf's prose (quoted in Chapter One) as well as Keane's prose (discussed in Chapter Three) verges into poetry:

Waiting for breakfast, while she brushed her hair,
I looked down at the empty hotel yard
Once meant for coaches. Cobblestones were wet,
But sent no light back to the loaded sky,
Sunk as it was with mist down to the roofs.
Drainpipes and fire-escape climbed up
Past rooms still burning their electric light:
I thought: Featureless morning, featureless night.

Misjudgment: for the stones slept, and the mist
Wandered absolvingly past all it touched,
Yet hung like a stayed breath; the lights burnt on,
Pin-points of undisturbed excitement; beyond the glass
The colourless vial of day painlessly spilled
My world back after a year, my lost lost world
Like a cropping deer strayed near my path again,
Bewareing the mind's least clutch. Turning, I kissed her,
Easily for sheer joy tipping the balance to love...
(Larkin, 'Waiting for breakfast, while she brushed her hair',
Collected Poems, December 1947)

Larkin plays with reality dissolving it through the prism of his emotions, experiences and ideas to the core of nothingness. The alienated man of Larkin's verses attempts to hide from the loneliness playing social games or living a life far from heroic, a life even wasted. But that man could still feel that something was missing and Larkin's man strives to find this special something. The poet's bitter negativism might be a call for a turning point from where the world would wake up and change as Larkin suggests in the following extract from 'Negative Indicative' (1953).

Never to visit the lame girl who lives three doors
Down Meeting -House Lane – 'This pile is ready; these
I shall finish tonight, with luck' – to watch, as she pours
Tea from a gold-lined jubilee pot, her eyes,

Her intelligent face; never walking away
As light fails, to notice the first star
Pulsing alone in a long shell-coloured sky,
And remember the year has turned, and feel the air

Alive with the emblematic sound of water-...
(Larkin, 'Negative Indicative', *Collected Poems*, December 1953)

These verses picture a moment in the past, when loneliness has been chosen, and the effects of the wasted life are felt. Without the actual spoken words, if one reads between the lines, it is clear that Larkin here points to his decision to withdraw into his solitude. 'Emblematic sound of water' pictures the dialectic of the new beginning, linking the past and the future.

Other perspectives in his poems from *Collected Poems* merge into the philosophical – so perceptions of memory, time, life and death are filtered through his poetic message. However, Larkin never creates any form of philosophical system in his poetry, (poetry and philosophy are often contradictory to each other), but his meaningful and metaphorical words could lead to a deeper search beneath the surface of phenomenal things. This can be seen in the following poem:

For nations vague as weed,
For nomads among stones,
Small-statured cross-faced tribes
And cobble-close families
In mill-towns on dark mornings
Life is slow dying.

So are their separate ways
Of building, benediction,
Measuring love and money
Ways of slow dying.
The day spent hunting pig
Or holding a garden party,

Hours giving evidence
Of birth, advance
On death equally slowly.
And saying so to some
Means nothing; others it leaves
Nothing to be said.

(Larkin, 'Nothing To Be Said', *Collected Poems*, 1961)

Ian Almond in his essay 'Larkin and the Mundane: Mystic without a Mystery' (J. Booth, *New Larkins for Old*, 2000:183) compares Larkin's philosophical 'system' with Nietzsche's (where the word is seen as a lack of integrity for both authors):

It is not certain that Nietzsche would have enjoyed reading Larkin. There is a certain other-worldly feel even to the most worldly of Larkin's texts, the possibility that Real Life is happening somewhere else, that Real Meaning lies somewhere off the page, sometimes not compatible with what Nietzsche called "his-worldly consolation". The fact that Nietzsche repeatedly fell prey to similar moments of other-worldliness throughout his own career (from the passages on myth in *The Birth of Tragedy* to his allusion to the Dionysian mysteries in *Twilight of the Idols*) may serve to underline the irony of a man who refutes the premises of transcendental reality but continues to seek its "special effects" in his own. To what extent can Larkin's poems be seen as the works of a mystic, if a mystic is understood to be one who sees the world around him as a metaphor for another, as yet untasted reality?

(Almond, 'Larkin and Mundane: Mystic without a Mystery', *New Larkins for Old*, 2000:182)

Larkin did not hide the fact that Thomas Hardy influenced his poetic style and thought. The following stanzas, written by Hardy, contain the atmosphere of that influence:

A time there was – as one may guess
And as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell—
Before the birth of consciousness,
When all went well.

None suffered sickness, love, or loss,
None knew regret, starved hope, or heartburnings;
None cared whatever crash or cross
Brought wrack to things.

If something ceased, no tongue bewailed,
If something winced and waned, no heart was wrung;
If brightness dimmed, and dark prevailed,
No sense was stung.

But the disease of feeling germed,
And primal rightness took the tinct of wrong;
Ere nescience shall be reaffirmed
How long, how long?
(Hardy, 1982, *The Complete Poetical Works*, Vol I, 'Before Life and After')

Almond also notices that, in a text such as *Twilight of The Idols*, metaphysics and religion are based on denial of the immediate, on denial of all that believes in the senses, in a denial of human efficiency to understand the world around. In Larkin, the metaphysics and religion are represented more through their inhibitive nature.

Furthermore, according to Ian Almond (2000:19), Larkin's mystery is here, in the reality of this profane world, and not somewhere else waiting to be found and solved:

Just as the medieval mystics sought to discern the divine within the secular, so Larkin sees the serious within the trivial, the metaphor within the mundane.

This can be seen, for example in 'Days':

What are days for?
Days are where we live.
They come, they wake us
Time and time over.
They are to be happy in:
Where can we live but days?

Ah, solving that question
Brings the priest and the doctor
In their long coats
Running over the fields.
(Larkin, 'Days', *Collected Poems*, August 1953).

The tendency to neglect the importance of eternal life in the literature and philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries brings out the doubtful and non-significant man. And that man might be Eliot's Sweeney, Prufrock or any of Becket's, Joyce's or Larkin's characters. This man is taken from the masses, left alone in his nothingness, the slowly dying ordinary man, the product of our 'civilisation'. Larkin's man is left without God, without the mercy of time, without an answer, as Larkin said, 'words at once true and kind, or untrue and not unkind' ('Talking in Bed' August 1960).

In the essay 'Postmodernism and Postcolonialism in the Poetry of Philip Larkin' (J. Booth, *New Larkins for Old*, 2000:156), John Osborne finds a link between Larkin's point of view and the thought of the Existentialistic philosophers, Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre. There is a necessity to reject the conventional morality of the crowd, or society:

.... This is the proposition that we lead sham, inauthentic lives by endlessly deferring real decision taking of the kind that would bring us face to face with the insoluble enigma of ourselves. Instead, we seek consolation in fantasy projections of what we will do one day...

The enlightenment, the ultimate truth modern man finds in absurd moments is, with some humour, when Larkin interlocks with the universal past, the archetypal. This can be seen in the following extract from 'Ambulances':

And sense the solving emptiness

That lies just under all we do,
And for a second get it whole,
So permanent and blank and true.
The fastened door recede. *Poor soul*,
They whisper at their own distress;

For borne away in deadened air
May go the sudden shut of loss
Round something nearly at an end,
And what cohered in it across
The years, the unique random blend
Of families and fashions, there
At last begin to loosen. Far
From the exchange of love to lie
Unreachable inside a room
The traffic parts to let go by
Brings closer what is left to come,
And dulls to distance all we are.
(Larkin, 'Ambulances', *Collected Poems*, January 1961)

These verse lines prove the hypothesis that Larkin's poetry could share the ideas of Existentialism or, as John Osborne calls them, 'the pathos of action' (Osborne, 2000 :157). The same panicking fear of making a choice, and the absurdity of it links Larkin to Samuel Beckett and to his Theatre of The Absurd or his poetry in *Echo's Bones* (1936). "The Theatre of Absurd" is a term derived from Albert Camus's essay 'Myth of Sisyphus' (1942), where he denies the human situation as meaningless and absurd. Absurd plays aim to shake the audience out of their comfortable life of everyday concerns through the strong link to mythology, surrealism and the subconscious mind. The tone of the chosen verse lines from Larkin's 'Ambulances' can emotionally match the following extracted verses by Beckett from 'Serena II' (1935)

Sodden pair of Churchman
muzzling the cairn
it is worse than dream
the light randy slut can't be easy
this clonic earth
all these phantoms shuddering out of focus
it is useless to close the eyes
all the chords of the earth broken like a woman pianist's

the toads abroad again on their rounds
sidling up to their snares
the fairy-tales of Meath ended
so say your prayers now and go to bed
your prayers before the lamps start to sing behind the larches
here at these knees of stone
then to bye-bye on the bones

In 'Three Dialogues' (1949), Beckett claims that 'there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express' (Fletcher, 1965:25). Reflecting Beckett, Larkin's poems try to fix circumstantial memories, old crises of the tormented soul, tied to times and landscapes. Nevertheless, in reality, as Derek Walcott (1998:165) notes, Larkin sneeringly rejected his contemporary Beckett in theatre, as he rejected Picasso in painting.

Harvey pinpoints the importance of the sentiment of embarrassment in Larkin (possibly based on the gap between his literary and social status as a poet and university librarian and the reader of his poetry). According to Harvey (1986:99), this gap created his rejection of Modernism, 'particularly T.S. Eliot's notion of the poet writing for the one hypothetical "Intelligent Man".'

On the other hand, to approach Larkin's poetry through the pattern of his verses, his stylistics or lexical patterns is one of the ways to show that indeed his roots and inspirations lie in the poetic tradition he usually denies. In 'Four Conversations' (1964:73), Ian Hamilton asks Larkin whether there is any existing discomfort or 'technical unrest' in his attempt to alter the traditional metre with free verse. The poet replies:

I haven't anything original to say about metre. I've never tried syllabics; I'm not sure I fully understand them. I think one would have to be very sure of one self to dispense with the help that metre and rhyme give and I doubt really if I could operate without them. I have occasionally, some of my favorite poems have not rhymed or had any metre, but it's rarely been premeditated,

Speaking in terms of rhetoric, the majority of Larkin's poems, (similarly to Beckett's poem 'Serena II' just quoted) have partially 'low' style, which is modelled on the rhythms and associations of ordinary language, but combined with a highly poetic style. By using specific metric patterns and metaphors, Larkin creates his own euphony, which conveys his aesthetic message and creates his own poetic style.

Derek Walcott (1998:163) gives the anatomy of Larkin's verse:

The patience and subtlety with which he succeeded in writing "the Larkin line" were not achieved by tricks. There are tricks in modulation as well as tricks of bombast.

Larkin continued to rely on the given beat of the pentametrical line throughout his career. He shadowed it with hesitations, coarsened it with casual expletives, and compacted it with hyphens – when the hyphenated image had always been considered a mark of desperate inertia...., with its casual aural-visual fusion, was powerful enough to contain a minipoem in itself.

Examining his poem 'Coming' through the prism of "close reading" (a term used by The New Critics) some of the characteristic elements of his style can be distinguished. The poem is structurally divided into three movements: introductory, intermediate and conclusive, each of them carrying a different rhythm, pattern and meaning, leading to the climax which surpasses the message. The first four lines in the introductory movement start with the description of the landscape in metre that changes its regularity from line to line, giving the poem its unusual rhythm. (This metric anarchy links Larkin strongly to the methods that Modernists employ). The first line, for example, is written in trimetric iambs. The second line is, by contrast, unconventional. It is a dimeter and begins with a spondee. Line three consists of two trochees, but line four is again totally unconventional:

x / x / x /

1) On | longer eve|nings

/ / x / x

2) **Light, chill** and **yellow**

/ x / x

3) **Bathes** the | **serene**

/ x x / x

4) **Foreheads** | of | **houses**.

The rhythmic irregularity characterises the next quatrain to complete the introduction, which situates the beginning of the poem in the changing of the fluid reality of nature that Larkin so loved, already starting to mix with the symbolism of his associations:

- 5) A thrush sings,
- 6) Laurel surrounded
- 7) Its fresh-peeled voice
- 8) Astonishing the brickwork.

According to R. Wellek and A. Warren in *Theory of Literature*, 'Euphony, Rhythm and Metre' (1973:169): 'The time of verse language is a time of expectation'. After a certain time the reader expects certain rhythmical signals. Larkin breaks the 'time of expectation' with an onomatopoeic effect of a bird call, which is also the climax of the poem, turning the language of nature into the language of emotions as the intermediate lines show:

- 9) It will be spring soon,
- 10) It will be spring soon –

The conclusive verses are free verse lines chosen to underline the passing of sentimental truth:

- 11) And I, whose childhood
- 12) Is a forgotten boredom,
- 13) Feel like a child
- 14) Who comes on a scene
- 15) Of adult reconciling,
- 16) And can understand nothing
- 17) But the unusual laughter,
- 18) And starts to be happy.

In the given lines, Larkin's poetry aligns itself with the Russian Formalist opinion that free verse is 'organised violence' committed on everyday language. This technique has been used by many of the poets in twentieth century poetry to achieve more profound effects in expression. Most free verses have irregular line length and lack rhyme, but rhythmically are much more dynamic than prose.

In the final, conclusive part of 'Coming', Larkin uses free verse to approach the emotional core closer and faster. Association follows the description of nature through the sound of bird song to the poet's personal feelings clearly expressed in the personal pronoun 'I'. The metaphor of childhood as a forgotten boredom revives a gloomy image of his loveless or unhappy past: then suddenly there is a comic turn to happiness based on ignorance or non-understanding of reconciling adulthood. What stays behind is a feeling of nothingness, a symbol of the lost generation. In Coleridge's terms, Larkin creates the symbol where

...A symbol is characterized by a translucence of the special [the species] in the individual, or of the general [genius] in the special...above all, by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal.
(Wellek and Warren, 1973:189).

Some of Larkin's poems have more regular prosody. In 'Home is so Sad' (1958), for example, Larkin uses rhyme and a more regular rhythm to achieve an effect closer to the classical:

Home is so sad. It stays as it was left,
Shaped to the comfort of the last to go
As if to win them back. Instead, bereft
Of anyone to please, it withers so,
Having no heart to put aside the theft

And turn again to what it started as,
A joyous shot at how things ought to be,
Long fallen wide. You can see how it was:
Look at the pictures and the cutlery.
The music in the piano stool. That vase.
(Larkin, 'Home is so Sad', *Collected Poems*, December 1958)

The rhyme of these stanzas is regular, in ababa cddc scheme. Pauses in reading occur irregularly, breaking the rhyme and bringing the reader to the dynamic point of the expression. In the first line the first pause occurs naturally at the end of the thought. The rest of the line one, line two and beginning of line three are run-on lines. Then the rest of the lines: lines four, five, six and seven are without pauses until the middle of the line eight. Line eight slows down the rhythm; then line nine is end-stopped. Line ten is end-stopped twice.

In this poem, Larkin is experimenting with the rhyme-rhythm connection, creating his photographic, almost cinematographic approach to reality. The simple picture of emptiness in the thought 'Home is so sad' (home is a place not supposed to be sad) allows us to enter the world of alienation, which mirrors the past of the things which were supposed to be joyous but somehow went wrong, had 'long fallen wide'. Desperation and pain are hidden behind the recognised pieces of furniture that once made this home, and at the same time there is sarcasm in simplifying things to be called just by the names of the objects. The final chosen words: 'That Vase' could mean the end. It adds something almost surrealistic to the image of the home, a surrealistic *deus ex machina* to escape memories.

Language is used to underline the ambiguity of the uncertain feelings that oscillate from potentially tragic to potentially comic. For example, Larkin repeats the word 'as' several times: as a conjunction in line one – 'as it was left', and line three – 'as if to win them back'; and as an adverb in line six – 'what it started as' to point to the climax and comparison with 'a joyous shot at how things ought to be' – but they are not.

Looking back to the history of stylistics, Larkin's poetry shows that there is a parallelism between linguistics and content. In *Theory of Literature*, Wellek and Warren (1973:183) quote Leo Spitzer talking about psychological stylistics:

Only to writers who think of the "individual genius", of an individual manner of writing, that is, to writers of the eighteenth and later

centuries, in previous periods the writer (even a Dante) sought to express objective things in objective style.

'No Road' (1950) is another poem in which rhythm of rhyme is used as a link to the content. It expresses the flow of time, the metastability of human nature, linked to the greater instability of the universe in which everything moves endlessly like a tide. It is also a very intelligent, emotional riddle in which many questions have been asked, where things are, at the same time, posed as final and then allowed the possibility of continuing.

Since we agreed to let the road between us
Fall to disuse,
And bricked our gates up, planted trees to screen us,
And turned all time's eroding agents loose,
Silence, and space, and strangers – our neglect
Has not had much effect.

Leaves drift unswept, perhaps; grass creeps unmown;
No other change.
So clear it stands, so little overgrown,
Walking that way tonight would not seem strange,
And still would be allowed. A little longer,
And time will be the stronger,

Drafting a world where no such road will run
From you to me;
To watch that road come up like a cold sun,
Rewarding others, is my liberty.
Not to prevent it is my will's fulfilment.
Willing it, my ailment.
(Larkin, 'No Road', *Collected Poems*, October 1950)

The poem consists of three regular sestet (6 lines) rhyming ababcc. Its highly lyrical content suggests that Wordsworth could also have written something in a similar style, which again shows Larkin's link to the tradition of English literature.

The poem consists of three movements, three different metaphoric and emotional pictures of individual time. In an impressionistic manner, silence, space, strangers, drifted leaves, unmown grass, measure Larkin's time. His love of nature and unknown addressee, as well as his emotions are fighting time. The

emotion grows stronger measured by the choices which could or could not be made. Time can bring people together or part them. The poem gradually leads to its climax, in the third stanza, where the reader is faced with the absurd and tragic power of the words:

To watch that world come up like a cold sun,
Rewarding others, is my liberty.

He gives up the possibility of action; he willingly chooses nothingness and that is his 'ailment'.

In 'No Road', Larkin uses the language of aesthetic metaphors that create a dramatic atmosphere, in which the reader and the poet are the witnesses of the same ritual. And again, that is the field where he meets tradition, and the cultural atmosphere of the period in which he wrote. As already indicated, his language is simple yet symbolic. The metaphor of the 'cold sun' encapsulates the atmosphere of unnamed human pain in the terrifying world of reality captured in any expressionistic painting. Larkin's poetry thus contains the spirit of twentieth century art, and traces of ideas shared with the artists who lived and worked in the same period.

The short poem 'This is the first thing' (1943) is written as an epitaph:

This is the first thing
I have understood:
Time is the echo of an axe
Within a wood.
(Larkin, 'This is the first thing', *Collected Poems*, October 1943)

It clearly expresses his idea of the softness of material from which man is made in comparison with an axe of time. 'This is the first thing' has very simple language, which helps the symbols to stand out even more clearly. By its simplicity, the form of this poem could be compared to a haiku, but again, like the majority of Larkin's poems, it sets itself free of convention.

In 'Poetry of Departures' (1954), his poetic expression is even more unconventional and runs even more towards prose. This can be seen in following stanzas:

Sometimes you hear, fifth-hand,
As epitaph:
He chucked up everything
And just cleared off,
And always the voice will sound
Certain you approve
The audacious, purifying
Elemental move.

And they are right, I think
We all hate home
And having to be there
I detest my room,
Its specially chosen junk
The good books, the good bed,
And my life, in perfect order
So it hear it said

He walked out on the whole crowd
Leaves me flushed and stirred,
Like *Then she undid her dress*
Or *Take that you bastard;*
Surely I can if he did
And that helps me stay
Sober and industrious.
But I'd go today,

Yes, swagger the nut-strewn roads,
Crouch in the fo'c'sle
Stubbly with goodness, if
It weren't so artificial,
Such a deliberate step backwards
To create an object:
Books; china; a life
Reprehensibly perfect.

(Larkin, 'Poetry of Departures', *Collected Poems*, January 1954).

All these stanzas are almost free of rhyme in the pattern abcdefgf, with the eye-rhymed words spelled alike. This method brings regularity to the free-verse style, softening the manner of modern poetic expression to a more traditional one.

In this poem, Larkin uses simple, colloquial language, playing with the words put into italics, words taken out of the context as they belong to somebody else (or echo the words of the split personality). These words in italics create a movement of time inside the poem (they represent past experience), more characteristic of drama than of poetry; they are also bravely sticking out of the hopeless atmosphere bringing out passion, fighting for the action, as in the following lines:

*He chucked up everything
And just cleared off ...*

Or

He walked out of the whole crowd

Or

Like Then she undid her dress

Or Take that you bastard.

The language of the last stanza is hermetically archaic, as if Larkin's intention was to ritually invoke the past (tradition saved in books or objects of art – 'china') and then to recreate a life which he calls 'reprehensibly perfect':

It weren't so artificial
Such a deliberate step backwards
To create an object:
Books; china; a life
Reprehensibly perfect.

Once again, Larkin uses the dead metaphor of connate objects, 'specially chosen junk' (books, china, bed, vase) to underline the ambiguity of time. There is a time measured by the actions of ordinary life, and simultaneous time measured by associations, day-dreams, emotions, like Proust's involuntary memory, or Woolf's stream of consciousness. Out of that ambiguity, or duality of time, Larkin creates sarcastic 'life reprehensibly perfect' for an ordinary hero who carries on the same path of living, contrasted by the picture of a mythical hero who departs and chooses Odysseus's life.

'Heaviest of flowers, the head' (1943-4) is an allegoric contemplation of time:

Heaviest of flowers, the head
Forever hangs above a stormless bed;
Hands that the heart can govern
Shall be at last by darker hands unwoven;
Every exultant sense
Unstrung to silence-
The sun drifts away.

And all the memories that best
Run back beyond this season of unrest
Shall lie upon the earth
That gave them birth.
Like fallen apples, they will lose
Their sweetness at the bruise,
And then decay.

(Larkin, 'Heaviest of flowers, the head', *Collected Poems*, 1943-4)

This poem rhymes in pairs with a pattern aa bb cc d, linking the author to the Neoclassical favourite metre, through the transformation of heroic couplets. The rhyme is regular, creating symmetry in the comparison between the short life of the flower and the shortness of human life, where memories:

Shall lie upon the earth
That gave them birth.

'Decay' is the final word for flowers, humans and memories. In the fatality of the word 'decay' lies a simple reminder of our mortality.

By contrast to the previous example, Larkin's poem 'Portrait' (1945) is a prose-like poem, without any rhyme. It is a good example of the twentieth century literary aim to bring together poetry and prose. Its poetic language and line divisions makes it look like poetry:

Her hands intend no harm:
Her hands devote themselves
To sheltering a flame;
Winds are her enemies,
And everything that strives
To bring her cold and darkness.

But wax and wick grow short:
These she so dearly guards
Despite her care die out
Her hands are not strong enough
Her hands will fall to her sides
And no wind will trouble to break her grief.
(Larkin, 'Portrait', *Collected Poems*, November 1945)

But, if written differently, the text could be read as dream-like, automatic prose, as the example shows:

Her hands intend no harm: her hands devote themselves to sheltering flame; winds are her enemies and everything that strives to bring her cold and darkness. But wax and wick grow short; these she dearly guards despite her care dies out; her hands will fall to her sides and no wind will trouble to break her grief.

Nevertheless, whether this is poetry or prose the language behind the poet's idea pictures the inner portrait of a fragile and helpless female principle fighting the winds of time and change. It ends in the tragedy of allowing that other force to win. The pain of Larkin's negativism is materialised in the following lines:

Her hands are not strong enough
Her hands will fall to her sides
And no wind will trouble to break her grief.

Emotionally condensed, these lines are a cry for help to stop the grief, but the grief cannot be stopped. In this sad detachment lies the tragedy of mankind. In this poem time stops, creating the vacuum of bad forces.

Clive James (1974:66) points to Larkin's attempt to preserve experience, both for himself and for others, putting the stress on his own experience first. Larkin's poetry has a dimension of déjà vu experience of time.

The language used in *Collected Poems* has been analysed in *A Concordance to the Poetry of Philip Larkin* (1995), edited by Prof. R.J.C Watt. Watt closely analyses Larkin's poetic vocabulary, the frequency of the words used, or newly

coined words. The result of this close linguistic approach is a better understanding of both the author's inner portrait and its relation to specific ideas presented through the language in his literary opus. That Larkin deals with the idea of time and reminiscence through many levels and characteristics of his language use, is specified by Watt.

There are negative words to describe the atmosphere of Larkin's world: unbreakfasted, uncalled-for, undated, unchallenged, unable, unaided, unaware, unanswerable and unavoidable, with their possible link to the idea of frozen time, unable to undertake any action, which could again possibly convey the message of helplessness and meaninglessness.

Also, another characteristic of Larkin's style lies in his usage of the passive voice (which could represent the passive approach to life and the future). Then, it is followed by the frequent usage of the *-ing* form of the of present participle, which could convey continuity: ribbing, noticing, dancing, reading, threading, bedding, bleeding, gliding.

The repetition of the suffix *-less* describes the deprivation of things: powerless, soundless, shadeless, shapeless, nameless, shoreless, lightless, anchorless, sceneless, starless, selfless, proving the link with the *credo* of The Theatre of The Absurd, mentioned before.

New compounded words are typical of Larkin's poetic style; blizzard, quickly spawning, specially-chosen, balloon-man, rained-on, juggling-balls, million-petalled, time-honoured, stressing the strong link to the work of the stream of consciousness. These words are mainly nouns or adjectives.

In conclusion, the words 'time' and 'memory' show a prominent significance in Larkin's opus. Time is mentioned seventy-six times, described as: the cave of time, the face of time, time's apology, bright drops of time, triple time, our

element is time, time-honoured irritant. Nevertheless, time lives in Larkin's poetry even when unspoken. It lingers in the silence between every written stanza, as indicated in the analysed poems throughout this chapter.

Memory, memories, memorabilia and memoranda have been mentioned twenty times in *Collected Poems*: memories strike home like slaps in the face, memories plague ears like flies, quickly consulting memory, ambered in memory from mythology, wolves of memory. Looking at it from another perspective, it is clear that Larkin's poetry becomes universal in the moment when it becomes our memory.

CHAPTER 3

MEMENTOS OF MOLLY KEANE'S *GOOD BEHAVIOUR*

The previous chapter closed by highlighting the centrality of memory in Larkin's oeuvre implicitly pointing to the sometimes-prosaic mode in which he writes. This chapter examines Molly Keane's poetic novel, *Good Behaviour*⁴(1981), attempting to show how mode of writing relies on and manifests the characteristics of poetry and how her narrative is likewise informed by the poetics of memory.

Although Anglo-Irish by descent, Molly Keane's relation to Ireland is undeniable; her novels resonate with multiple memories of this land off the coast of England. In his Introduction to *The Dictionary Of Irish Literature* (1985:3), Robert Hogan describes Ireland as a small, wet island a few hours to the west of England, yet one which has, for centuries, attracted the world's attention, and produced so many extraordinary artists – Swift, Wilde, Shaw, Yeats and Joyce, Bowen, Beckett and Keane, and many more. Hogan (1985:3) tries to picture the ideal Ireland the way its emigrants see it:

The world's view is somewhat similar: Ireland is an ideal; we regard its fields as greener, its virgins purer, and its poets wittier than any others

Keane, Molly, 1981, *Good Behaviour*, Second Edition by Sphere Books 1982, London: Abacus. This edition is used throughout this study and hereafter it will be referred as G.B., with the number of the page cited.

anywhere ever were. It is the repository of whimsy, charm, and geniality, and yet.... And yet something diabolical is always going on in that little bit of heaven.

The picture of Ireland as a mythical ancestral land is an archetype that every piece of Irish art contains. Here, myth is blended with history, religion and reality to produce a living picture of an Irish soul – tormented by the always alive memory of the past.

There is also “the Irish stereotype” in literature – as Milada Frankova (1998:129) calls it. It is either the negative racial image in the way the English have presented Ireland throughout the centuries (which again falls in the larger stereotypical frame of the specifics of colonial literature); or the way the Anglo-Irish present Ireland themselves. In Anglo-Irish literature, there is the difference between the Catholic Irish (portrayed mainly in the characters of servants or peasantry, hungry for revenge and land, or totally depersonalised) and Anglican English (portrayed as the dying class). The Irish servant figures, in particular, as Frankova notices, are always pictured through the eyes of their masters’ characters, and are very often exposed to ridicule. This aspect is parodied by Molly Keane in *Good Behaviour*.

In *Good Behaviour*, Molly Keane seems to be fighting the stereotypes and searching for just that “something diabolical” pointed to by Hogan, which could be a dark side of the people from the ‘emerald isle’. She starts from her characters’ hearts, for Aroon St Charles epitomizes such incipient evil when she poisons her

own aged mother, then proceeds nonchalantly to take her lunch at the family's dilapidated house, 'Gull's Cry', situated on the coast. As Hogan has argued, the Irish landscape has influenced the temperament of its nation, which he describes as 'subliminally schizophrenic' (1985:5). This duality defines the essential tone of Irish literature, which manifests itself as 'a depressed elevation, a dull delight briefly shot through with instants of manic joy' (1985:4).

Ireland's history, particularly the remembrance of the Anglo-Irish war is, moreover, still a matter of utmost importance for keeping the national past and pride alive as evidenced in John Kells Ingram's 'The Memory of the Dead', the opening stanza of which reads:

Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?
Who blushes at the name?
When cowards mock the patriot's fate,
Who hangs his head for shame?
He's all a knave or half a slave
Who slights his country thus:
But a true man like you, man,
Will fill your glass with us.

The Past has to be remembered and lived again and again by every new generation – it is an Irish blueprint for survival:

Yet, the most quietly telling evocation of all was that until very modern times the cities, towns, and countryside changed little, and so the past was noticeably ever present; one lived in the middle of it. (Hogan, 1985:5)

Written in just such a spirit, Keane's novel is strewn with this complexity of reminiscences: nobility tinged with a kind of madness. What is noticeably absent

from Keane, however, is the fiery patriotic sentiment of Ingram. Yet pride in Ireland's history and culture penetrates the narrative as Keane charts to demise of this part of this socio-historical past.

First of all, there is a grand memory of the Anglo-Irish nation – which won the right of tenure in Ireland under the Commonwealth between 1642 and 1660. This memory is embodied in the heads and hearts of the members of its aristocracy in the times of change. Irish philosophers and writers – from Burke to Berkeley, Yeats to Keane – characteristically use remembering as a weapon in their fight against modern times in which the new landed gentry lost their status and influence. Set some three hundred years after the Commonwealth, Keane's novel portrays characters who somehow seem to lose the thread of reality and continue to live in measurements of what they regard as their ancestral time. For the landed gentry, this ancestral time is centred on the ownership of large mansions, giving rise to the theme of the Big House genre in Irish literature. *Good Behaviour* pictures the whole spectrum of individual psychological palettes of the representatives of the dying class. One of the extreme illustrations of this sort is described by Keane as follows:

The Crowhurst sisters were almost identical twins; Nod and Blink were the baby names they still went by, although at that time they were almost thirty, nearing middle age. Everybody was kind to them because they had no money, nothing but Good old Blood, and deft inventive ways. They did their own horses, and everything for themselves as well. They almost made their own boots. They could not make their bowler hats, which were green and belonged to their aunts, but their neat double-knitted waistcoats of canary yellow were bright and new and lined with chamois leathers meant for cleaning silver.(G. B., 81)

The St Charles family likewise epitomizes 'Good Old Blood' but as if sabotaging the convention they no longer occupy 'Temple Alice' (the family seat). Their abode, as mentioned earlier, is the ruined 'Gull's Cry'. And yet, even in terms of genre, *Good Behaviour* is structurally and ideologically linked to the characteristics of the Big House novel – especially in Keane's treatment of its literary and aesthetical dimension of time. Writing about Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*, Christina Hunt Mahony (1988:22) in *Contemporary Irish Literature* provides a useful definition of the Big House genre:

Bowen's classic Big House novel, *The Last September*, both relies upon and revivifies the Big House trope of nineteenth-century fiction, which depicted life on Ireland's largely Protestant-owned country estates. The world of Big House was often like that of a small town, and as such it was a microcosm of the greater world. The Big House novel delineates social and class distinctions, and emphasizes religious differences and the social and political fall out from different sets of beliefs. Mainly, however the Big House novel, and Bowen's *The Last September* is no exception, charts the disintegrative process of a house, an estate, falling gradually to ruin through neglect, impoverishment, or significantly, poor marital choices. The disintegration in these novels is also meant to mirror the erosion of power of the Anglo-Irish ruling class since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the decline of prominent families.

From this common point of dealing with historical time in the Big House genre, Keane gradually unfolds the private world of the characters of her novel, each of them searching for his or her own place in time, comparing this to the stable and universal reality of the House. Milada Frankova (1997:97) points out that many European literatures have a motif of a grand ancestral home put into a variety of

different contexts. Nevertheless, in the following paragraph, she distinguishes what makes the Irish Big House novel specific:

While most of the Big House novels of the past map out the Irish political and cultural climate of their time to at least some extent, whether we think Maria Edgeworth in the early nineteenth century or Elizabeth Bowen much more recently, the contemporary additions to the tradition are centred around the symbolism of the house, the memory and effect of its divisive past and the crumbling present, marking the end of an era and a class.

The “embodied narrator” tells a story of Iris Aroon St Charles’s life, merged with the history of her house and her class. It is subconsciously an almost apologetic story of a wasted life, although the pathos is missing, for she is not quite aware of how tragic it is. Consider, for example, Aroon’s naïve belief that she can earn the respect of the housemaid who loved her mother by raising her salary, buying her loyalty.

As if she were a disciple of Aristotelian philosophy, Molly Keane chooses her heroine to be of noble origin, someone who falls into the tragic error of killing her own mother (a plot similar to the tragedies of Aeschylus or Euripides on Orestes and Electra). Reminiscent of Electra’s love for her father Agamemnon and her brother Orestes, Aroon St Charles’s love for Papa and her brother Hubert drives her into the madness of non-acceptance of reality and as a consequence she hates and murders her mother. Electra’s words could be Aroon’s, when she says:

My mother, you who brought me into the
world,
You killed and you were killed:
You destroyed our father, and
Destroyed us too, the children of your blood.

We share the death we dealt you; we are
dead.
You dwell in the lifeless world;
My greater part of life is spent already
In cries of sorrow, night-long tears.
Husbandless, childless, I drag out my life
In misery from year to endless year.
(Euripides, *Orestes*, 1972:307)

Aroon and Electra have a similar morbid fascination for the blood that gave them life, precisely, hatred mixed with disgust for the person who happens to be their own mother. This is the way Aroon introduces Mummie:

Once she had a show of her pictures in a London gallery. During a whole year she painted it. No art critic noticed it. Hardly anybody came in to look – one picture was sold. Even that disastrous experience did not stop her painting. She went on with it, making almost anything she painted look preposterous and curiously hideous too. Give her bunch of roses to paint – lovely June roses with tear-drops of morning rain on their petals – and she reproduces them as angular, airified shapes in a graveyard atmosphere, unimaginably ugly; but in a crude way you could not forget roses as you looked in this picture in speechless dislike. She would laugh and rub her little hands and shiver – it was deathly cold in her studio. (G. B., 11)

Likewise, the traditional tragic magnitude of the murder scene from the very beginning of the novel is interrupted with grotesque moments. Attention focuses on funny, insignificant, unnecessary details that add new symbolism and turn feeling from the tragic to the comic and even the grotesque – the characteristics of postmodern or post-structuralist literature. The feelings of empathy and pity

are interrupted by the feeling of the absurd – so the catharsis is missing, as the following extract shows:

“What must I do now?” I was asking myself. Rose had turned her back on me and on the bed. She was opening the window as high as the sash would go – that’s one of their superstitions, something to do with letting the spirit go freely. They do it. They don’t speak of it. She did the same thing when papa died.

“You must get doctor at once, Miss Aroon, and Kathie Cleary to lay her out. There’s no time to lose”.

She said it in a gluttonous way. They revel in death...Keep the Last Rites going...She can’t wait to get her hands on Mummie, to get me out of the way while she helps Mrs Cleary in necessary and nasty rituals. What could I do against them? I had to give over. I couldn’t forbid. Or could I ? (G. B., 7)

Orestes and Electra had a comparable ill-fated family history of murders, so killing their own mother (in god-sent ecstasy) to avenge the death of the father (an order from Apollo) was an ethical question. By contrast, as representatives of their class, members of the St Charles family show unnecessary heretical ignorance and cruelty in dealing with people (hungry servants, the governess and even their own children).

Every member of Agamemnon’s family acted in accordance with his god-protector, and committed crimes for the higher reasons. Members of the St Charles family commit their crimes ignoring the high principles of Christianity. They are portrayed as having no concern for the suffering of the others, so there

is no real pity watching them being punished in the same way; the only feeling left is a feeling of disgust.

After spilling the blood that gave them life (which is an ancient taboo), Orestes and Electra (who did not directly commit the murder) were in agony and haunted by the Furies for blood-guilt, and also exposed to the judgment of the court. In Aroon's case, even the remorse is missing. The only witness to the crime and the voice of common sense, Rose Byrne, the housemaid, does not have any powers or the words to reach the heart of the Aroon-person who is possessed by the Aroon-monster. So, murder remains unpunished and only the Big House's decomposing forces of time will put an end to the St Charles family.

The opening scene of the novel, in the manner of a prologue, is a scene when Aroon St Charles introduces herself. She is a sort of person who 'can use the tone of the voice which keeps people in their places' (G. B.,1), who does not trust anybody and likes things to be right (from her point of view). That sort of righteousness, Keane investigates through the flashback scenes of her character's life.

In the process of introducing the world of the Big House, Keane combines Aroon's psychological characteristics with the architecture of the house where she lives, symbolically called 'Gull's Cry', as already indicated. The shape of the

house reminds one of a big bosom of a ship, similar to Aroon's big bosom – but almost every comic association is diluted later with one that is more serious and much more sombre, specially in a ghostly shadow of Temple Alice's presence in Gull's Cry:

....Gull's Cry, where Mummie and I live now, is built on the edge of a cliff. Its windows lean out over the deep anchorage of the boat cove like bosoms on an old ship's figurehead. Sometimes I think (though I would never say it) how nice that bosoms are all right to have now; in the twenties when I grew up I used to tie them down with a sort of binder. Bosoms didn't do then. They didn't do at all. Now, it's too late for mine. (G.B.,4)

Preparing the scene for murder in a manner of a gothic novel (which generally develops an atmosphere of gloom and terror, represents events that are uncanny, or macabre, or melodramatically violent, and often deals with aberrant psychological states) Keane tints it with some almost invisible humour:

Our kitchen and dining-room are on the lowest level of this small Gothic folly of a house. The stairs, with their skimpy iron banister, bring you up to the hall and the drawing-room, where I put all our mementos of Papa when we moved here from Temple Alice. The walls are papered in pictures and photographs of him riding winners. Silver cups stand in rows on the chimneypiece, not to mention the model of a seven-pound sea-trout and several rather misty snapshots of bags of grouse laid out on the steps of Temple Alice. (G. B., 4)

The opening scene is really happening in the kitchen where Aroon blends the rabbit mousse that chokes her mother to death with particular attention, while listening to their servant Rose's story about a woman in Kilmacthomas who burned to death in an electric blanket (G.B., 4).

Combining the contrasting elements of the different genres, switching from tragedy and comedy, the gothic and the eighteenth century novel, symbolism and postmodernism, Keane breaks the purity of the literary genre. By doing this, her literary technique brings out the specific effects of epiphany (moments of revelation and deep understanding of the essence of life) and so approaches something akin to but yet not pure catharsis in the Aristotelian sense. Keane's melding of the tragic and comic reflects that "something diabolical" that Hogan refers to (quoted at the beginning of this chapter). This technique is close to an aesthetic of the ugly.

Comedy, says Aristotle in *On Poetics* (Chapter 4,5: 1449b),

...produces a dramatic picture of the Ridiculous, an imitation of the men worse than average; worse, however, not as regards one particular kind, the Ridiculous, which is a species of the Ugly. The Ridiculous may be defined as a mistake or deformity not productive of pain or harm to others.

This definition of the genre matches some aspects of Keane's novel, especially the ridiculous and ugly aspect – but it does not correlate completely because this sort of mistake does cause pain and harm to others, so it exceeds the comic genre and goes beyond it into its own category. In her article 'The Persistent Pattern: Molly Keane's Recent Big House Fiction', Vera Kreilkamp (1987:453-460) says:

With age, Keane has achieved a chilling distance from her Anglo-Irish heritage, a distance which allows her to cast a cold eye on life and view it with comic detachment.

An illustration of this 'chilling distance' coupled with 'comic detachment' is where Aroon prepares a delicate dish of rabbit mousse knowing in advance how it sickens her mother. She perseveres in trying to spice up the dish and decorate it and set it on the silver dish and tray 'straight from Harrods' (G.B.,5). The absurd element lies in a fact that the proper way to poison somebody is to use something more venomous than a rabbit mousse. Apart from being ridiculous in the conversation between Rose and herself, the whole scene has the weight of a tragic event lingering in the air. Aroon enters the gallery where her mother is lying in bed, symbolically pulls the curtains down 'all the way' (G.B.,5) and forces her to eat the mousse. Moments later Mummie is dead. This is the highest point of the prologue to the story of the life of Aroon and her family. It is the point when the tragedy of her life starts to unfold. The magnitude of the horrible deed is immense; even Aroon herself is stunned by it for a moment, and she does sound like a serious tragic heroine in a genuine moment of pathos:

"Take that tray away", I said. I picked Mummie's hand up out of the sick and put it down to the clean place. It was as limp as a dead duck's neck. I wanted to cry out. "Oh, no —" I wanted to say. I controlled myself. I took three clean tissues out of the cardboard box I had covered in shell-pink brocade and wiped my fingers. When they were clean the truth came to me, an awful new-born monstrosity. I suppose I swayed on my feet. I felt as if I could go on falling for ever. Rose helped me to a chair and I could hear its joints screech as I sat down, although I am not at all heavy, considering my height. I longed to ask somebody to do me a favour, to direct me; to fill out this abyss with some importance – something needful to be done.

“What must I do now?” I was asking myself. (G.B.,6-7)

In Greek comedy the character called *‘the eiron’* was a ‘dissembler’, who characteristically spoke in understatement and deliberately pretended to be less intelligent than he was. In most of the critical uses of irony the sense of dissembling remains or a difference between what is presented and what is actually the case is foregrounded. Usually the meaning of irony is very complex. In Keane’s literary opus, the irony is a balance between the tragic and comic aspects of life. This irony brings out the pain and suffering and then ridicules it trying to overcome it.

Theoretically speaking, the novel exhibits structural irony, and to some extent Aroon could be a naïve heroine, as intimated earlier. It could be her life and family history (or upbringing) that leads her to persist in putting an interpretation on affairs, which the knowing reader – who penetrates the complexity of all aspects of affairs – can alter and correct. A related device for sustaining ironic qualification is the use of the *fallible narrator*, in which the teller of the story is also the participant in it. Somehow Aroon manifests the failure of insight, viewing her own motive and actions, as well the actions of the others, through the distorting perspective of her prejudice.

The angry words of the devoted family servant (Rose) add balance and common sense to Aroon’s point of view. Rose sees the truth as a whole, as she has

always seen it, through all the years of service to the St Charles family. She raises her voice calling things the right names, and this throws a new light onto the perspective of Aroon's psychological portrait, as the following extract shows:

“Your lunch,” she said. “You can eat your bloody lunch and she lying there stiffening every minute. Rabbit – rabbit chokes her, rabbit sickens her, and rabbit killed her – call it rabbit if you like. Rabbit’s a harmless word for it – if it was a smothering you couldn’t have done better. And – another thing – who tricked her out of Temple Alice? Tell me that –“

“Rose how dare you”. I tried to interrupt her but she stormed on..

“...and brought my lady into this mean little ruin with hungry gulls screeching over it and two old ghosts (God rest their souls) knocking on the floors by night –“

I stayed calm above all the wild nonsense. “Who else hears the knocking?” I asked her quietly. “Only you.”

“And I heard roaring and crying that night when you parted Mister Hamish from Miss Enid and put the two of them in hospital wards, male and female, to die on their own alone.”

“At the time it was totally necessary.”

“Necessary? That way you could get this house in your own two hands and boss and bully us through the years. Madam’s better off the way she is this red raw minute. She is tired from you – tired to death. We’re all killed from you and it’s a pity it’s not yourself lying there and your toes cocked for the grave and not a word more about you, God damn you!” (G.B.,8)

This moment rises in its magnitude and the words of suffering are so sharp that they almost awakened grief and remorse in Aroon. But – they do not. Minutes later – while waiting for the telephone line - Aroon restores the perspective of her own time and protects herself from any responsibility or guilt. She has mastered

the game of pretending, the game of 'good behaviour' itself, a legacy of the past remembered:

While I waited for exchange (always criminally slow) to answer, I had time to consider how the punctual observance of the usual importances is the only way to behave at such times as these. And I do know how to behave – believe me, because I know. I have always known. All my life so far I have done everything for the best reasons and the most unselfish motives. I have lived for the people dearest to me, and I am at a loss to know why their lives have been at times so perplexingly unhappy. I have given them so much, I have given them everything, all I know is how to give – Papa, Hubert, Richard, Mummie. At fifty-seven my brain is fairly bright, brighter than ever I sometimes think, and I have a cast-iron memory. If I look back beyond any shadow into the uncertainties and glories of our youth, perhaps I shall understand more what became of us. (G.B.,9-10)

At this point, Aroon's search for lost time begins in a memory that borders on fantasy. Kreilkamp (1987:453) argues that the whole world of Keane's characters in two of her novels *Good Behaviour* (1981) and *Loving and Giving* (1988) 'rests on carefully constructed patterns of delusion, on willfully [*sic*] misinterpreting the past in order to construct self-protecting illusions of stability.

In this complex process of remembering and interpreting moments of her lifetime, Aroon defines how her class dealt with many other issues, creating a graphic picture of a decadent society crying for revolutionary change. Again, Kreilkamp (1987:456) points to the importance of understanding the profile of Keane's characters, analysing them through the socio-historical context:

A historically literate reader of Keane's fiction places the personal maladjustment of her characters in the larger world of the political and economic impotence of twentieth-century Anglo-Ireland; but Keane ignores any overt confrontation with political forces which lie behind those psychological eccentricities charting the breakdown of the family, class and culture.

For Keane, memory of any event is blended through the prism of ugliness or even the disgusting, pointing to a postmodern aesthetic and the fall of the classical aesthetic categories. Keane's way of dealing with memory takes the genre of the Big House beyond its earlier boundaries. For example, in her text 'Abjection in the "very nasty" Big House Novels of Molly Keane', E.L. O'Brian (1999:36) deals with the abjection as one of the aspects of ugliness:

...."Abjection" describes Keane's careful deployment of faeces, vomit, urine, spit, decay, excess, and/or physical deformity in all her novels. A theoretical framework of abjection – using the intersecting theories of Julia Kristeva, Mikhail Bakhtin, Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek – highlights Keane's process of "materializing the subject" (to borrow the phrase from Linda Charnes) by which she investigates the Anglo-Irish subject and the symbolic structures which produce and secure it....

....The proliferation of abjection in the lives of her characters allows Keane to illustrate the relationship between the material body and the establishment of subjectivity, class, and language to challenge the way in which these bodies have been previously presented.

....Kristeva uses the term abjection to refer to decay, rot, excrement and corpses.

Apart from abjection, the grotesque and morbid are the other aspects of the aesthetic of ugliness. Aroon feels her big physical body as a grotesque she is forced to live with. Keane paints the morbid pictures of the corpse of mother

falling in 'the nest of pretty pillows [after] she gave a trembling, tearing cry, vomited dreadfully' (G.B.,6) or Mrs Brock's drowned body 'swollen almost to bursting the frilled bathing costume' (G.B.,64). Aroon uses the same term (grotesque) as a vehicle to play with the meanings hidden behind the words saying that she is 'no unwanted grotesque' (G.B.,142), having enticed Richard to have sex with her; but she can be 'the fat woman in the fairground; the man who chews up iron; the pigheaded woman; anything to escape from hopeless me' (G.B.,85). Even the sound of her new nickname 'Piggy-wig' enables her to experience 'a shudder of bliss' (G.B.,86). These aspects of the morbid and the grotesque serve to illustrate Keane's parodic mode in this text.

Keane often combines irony with the grotesque and abjection. This can also be seen in the way that Aroon defines her mother as a 'recluse'; and her paintings as 'preposterous and curiously hideous' (G.B.,11), as quoted earlier. When Mummie paints a portrait of her son Hubert,

It was the first time she had painted him seriously and she put all she knew about angles and ugliness into the portrait. Hubert was neither amused nor pleased. He turned away.

"It's not a photograph, you know; it's a composition." Mummie sounded faintly apologetic.

"A broken bicycle with two heads and one tiny eye – that's me". Hubert laughed sourly. (G.B.,77-78)

Hubert's scoffing tone as he looks at the composition shows that he shares his sisters' views on their mother art work. Aroon describes 'Mummie's relationship

with her father as 'unable to endure the anxiety about him' (G.B.,11), finishing with the conclusion:

I don't understand what it was that held them together – they never had much to say to each other. He had no more understanding of her painting or gardening than she had of horses or fishing or shooting – so what can they have to talk about? (G.B.,11)

Aroon's memories are grouped and linked to the stages of her life and to certain people (Mrs Brock, Hubert, Richard); but only Mummie's, Papa's, and Rose's presence are constant, a presence which forms real, fat, unloved or unwanted Aroon. However, a gentler, loving, artistic side of her is linked to Mrs Brock, Hubert and Richard, and each of these characters' relation to Papa. Throughout the novel, Aroon strives to prove that she has grown up, in order to bridge the 'absolute distance in our childhood separating children from adults'. (G.B.,71)

Like a modern 'whodunit', the novel opens with a dead body and the rest of the story is told retrospectively, that is, from recollections of childhood and early adulthood to sad adulthood. The first stage was linked to childhood and Mrs Brock, the children's governess. She brought with herself an era 'of desire and satisfaction' (G.B.,14) in Aroon's life. She was a special person, and belonged to the different world. After her tragic death, Aroon kept traces of that world in the softest corners of her heart, and the memory is embodied in many significant moments of her life. Symbolically, after Mrs Brock left Richard's family (for her mistake of being affectionate towards the young boy, and for teaching him to love

poetry instead of pony-riding) Richard prophetically recites the poem 'She is fading down the river' to the old crying servant Walter (G.B.,43). Humiliated, abused, ignored, there was even a worse way for Mrs Brock to go in the St Charles family. The only way not to 'embarrass the convention' (G.B.,36) was to drown in the ocean. Mrs Brock's cruel and desperate death and her constant eerie coming back to the minds of her young charges brings a new, almost supernatural dimension to Keane's treatment of unpunished crimes. As Aroon reminiscences, Mrs Brock's name 'had been buried under the silences and unspoken questions for so long that mystery, like the sea, had swallowed her up' (G.B.,90).

The recollections of childhood for Aroon, Hubert and Richard were tied to the memory of Mrs Brock. She acted like a fairy-godmother to all three of them, teaching them to love animals, music and poetry, and introducing them to the warmth of love they were deprived of by their own parents. Years later, they would play the strange game of defacing Mrs Brock's memory; and Aroon remembers how 'we would piece her together; it was a game in which our memories interlocked or contradicted recollections' (G.B.,19). They were morbidly obsessed with this cruel and heart-breaking game:

Richard, creator of the game, enjoyed recalling every level of life at Stroke Charity in that era of childhood when he lost his first love, Mrs Brock. We joined in, despoiling our memories of her with horrid fun. Beyond the decorations and inventions of the game, essential to laughter, behind the lengths and colours of days, or the remembrance of a glance, revealing hidden loves or spites, we

taunted the separate childhoods, which had left us the people we were. (G.B.,31)

The unique few moments of absolute happiness in Aroon's life are at first always directly or indirectly tied to Mrs Brock's presence. Unexpectedly, however, Aroon and Hubert later find their father's love thanks to the horrors of the World War in which he loses his leg; and in those days of father's recovery, Aroon confesses that 'we had all forgotten Mrs Brock; we never gave her a thought these days – just a dead governess' (G.B.,70). The children's sinister but happy memories of Mrs Brock are supported by the equally sinister and happy "game" of taking their one-legged Papa for rides on Buddy, the pony, as they enter young adulthood.

At that time their negation of memory of Mrs Brock's existence was equal to the negation of childhood – that was the level of their initiation into becoming adult representatives of their class. The abyss between childhood and adulthood had been successfully bridged and father's love won, and it was one of the happiest yet macabre times.

The appearance of Richard Massingham represents another level in Aroon and Hubert's initiation into adulthood, as they become a special trio of conspirators and lovers, linked by ghostly Mrs Brock's presence. Richard wakes up a woman in Aroon, and her passion and longing for him is real, magnificent and tragic. She ignores the signs of reality in which he transforms into her brother's lover and

possibly becomes the reason for his death. And she also ignores the fact that he represents a higher class, which Aroon can never belong to.

Her memory of Richard is constant, forming a vacuum in time in which Aroon daydreams of becoming a different person, beautiful and loved, kind and unselfish, and one whose life has a call, a hope and a future. She recalls the day she first saw him:

I was appalled when I met the present Richard. In him I saw the embodiment of all the young men who had paralysed me into the maintenance of a silence broken only at rare intervals by some vicious platitude. Here he was, and for five days and five nights he would have to endure my company, my size, and my countrified simplicity. I rocked a little on my Louis heels of my strapped lizard shoes as I stole looks at him between the business of marking my catalogue and thinking of anything to say about any horse being judged in Ring 4. Long legs I saw (I expected that), eyes discriminating and critical as a bird's; small ears; crisp hair; rolled umbrella, swinging stylishly as a sword; he came straight from the middle pages of the *Tatler and Bystander*. The right family, the right school, the right regiment had all been his. I was stunned between fear and admiration. (G.B.,85)

In that moment of flash-back in involuntary memory Aroon recollects the history of Richard's origins, his attractiveness and their inability to be equal. Through the process of the reconstruction of the past Aroon subconsciously explores links between nature, social events and the emotional milestones of her own life.

In her Master's dissertation 'An Introduction to the Fiction of Molly Keane', Katherine-Lilly Gibbs (1993:20) also points to Keane's use of nature. She argues

that Keane 'will often juxtapose images from nature to those of the designed environment, both in their death throw'.

Another such example is the link between two visits to the sea-shore. On the first occasion, Aroon reminisces about Mrs Brock:

We drove the fat Iceland pony five miles to our nearest sea; the sun shone, the wind twined the long gold sands like feathers on a bird's back. How seldom we got to the sea; how rarely we found so many cowrie shells, fat little wet pigs, scarce as pearls among the pebbles, as we did that afternoon. Intoxicated, braced with pleasure and the magical change from dark, inland July, I stuffed my dress into my knickers and ran yelling out of my freedom like a sea birds. (G.B.,49-50)

The second time is with Richard and Hubert, when Aroon acknowledges that she has cast in her memory, forever, that afternoon as the last happy hour before the death of Mrs Brock. Years later, *déjà vu* moments come back in the same spot:

Our sea picnic was on an afternoon more encompassed by summer than any summer's day. The haze between water and land carried the one into the other. Cornfields, dry sand, rocks, sea merged in some sort of embrace, denying the summer's end. And we denied the idea that we should ever part. We swam. I felt a kind of abandon in the water and I showed it by letting my hair flow out in the sea. Richard ascertained Mrs Brock's rock and dived off it, turning about in somersaults and clasping his knees under the sea. Hubert swam out and away. (G.B.,99)

Again, there are some symbols that shadow the happiness as Hubert assumes the role of Mrs Brock:

...He [Hubert] was being Mrs Brock. After tea I buried his feet in sand, and we remembered something: Mrs Brock toes coming up through the sand like huge pearls; like young pigs. I sanded his feet up again and patted them down.

“You’re tickling my feet for burial,” Hubert said. When Richard shivered and said he must walk and run again, Hubert caught my hand this time and said: “Stay with me”. He didn’t really seem to need me, only to stop my going with Richard.” I want to talk to you Aroon”. He was lying back in his hole, games over. “I want a serious talk. You’re a big girl now.” (G.B.,100)

The two picnics are equally doomed. The first one represents the last happy summer spent with Mrs Brock before her death, the second one was shared with Hubert and Richard in the early autumn years later, symbolizing the end of a happy era and more approaching deaths. The narrative style is poetic and symbolic, dealing with the memory of the landscape connected to the memory of the events in life.

Aroon almost always remembers Richard and Hubert simultaneously, as a part of a duo that warms her heart with the joy of living, laughter and dance. But, Hubert is not present on the night when Richard comes to Aroon’s bed. Richard excludes Hubert from the game when he visits the latter’s sister in the middle of the night asking to rest his head on her bosom ‘just to see what it is like’ (G.B.,107). For both Aroon and Richard this again becomes an association with Mrs Brock:

“You have such enormous bosoms.” His voice came from a distance in place and time, but still too loud. “Shall I lay my head on them just to see what it’s like?”

Why did I [Aroon] have to think then of Mrs Brock's game? I denied the thought. (G.B.,107)

Richard had in mind the memory of the unforgettable moment of consolation in Mrs Brock's arms, which he wanted to revive with Aroon:

Mrs Brock folded him to her breast where he burrowed his head into the dark comfort of that strictly clothed bosom. For ever afterwards he remembered the smell of security in an embrace where Rimmel's toilet vinegar and *papier poudré* fought a losing battle with warm, merciful human flesh. He sobbed on in measureless relief. (G.B.,33)

In Aroon's memory, another moment of Hubert and Richard's detachment is Hubert's death. It leaves a tragic illusion (and is the beginning of Aroon's love delusion) in the thought that: 'Hubert's death must link us more closely' (G.B.,111). After Hubert's funeral, on the day when Aroon receives a long awaited letter from Richard, she revives Hubert's dying one more time. Aroon is almost happy about her decision that life must go on – concentrating all her desire to be loved on Richard :

Through all this, having recovered from my blush, I had floated unheeding in the happiness which I would not tell. Held within like this it transcended grief or jealousy. I felt as nearly as could be back in the moment when I had run along the wet sand, when he had touched the inside of my salty arm. Linked with this was the other afternoon when I had first learned to swim, when the sea water had borne me up and Mrs Brock's delight in my achievement had shone from her to me, joining us blissfully, keeping Hubert out. He was out of this too. I denied the thought, lapping it up in proper grief for him. (G.B.,137)

Furthermore, the reality of Richard's gifts warms an illusion of her link with him. In Aroon's desolate world, bared in sentences such as: 'I stood outside in a black frost of my own' (G.B.,115), or 'I turned away, my loneliness walking with me, taller than my own height as a shadow is tall – and irremediable as my height was' (G.B.,120), Richard's gifts are only material proof of how she used to be happy. Aroon confesses her obsession: 'I know how to build the truth' (G.B.,142), but "building the truth" is only another name for lying to oneself. In reality she has nothing but the memories, Richard's gifts and the endurance of 'the abyss of beautiful days' (G.B.,134).

Aroon's "real" time is thus already time past. Using memory as a tool, she builds a reason for her existence. On the night of Hubert's funeral, the time-vacuum swallows her again:

"Now the Day is Over"...the hymn I had chosen for Hubert's funeral, Mrs. Brock's hymn ..."With thy tender blessing may our eyelids close"...Hubert's eyelids would have been burnt: forbid all that. Forbid the private ecstasy in the thought of Richard – he was no more than a great retreating symbol of happiness – a longing now far distant from reality. No fetish, as when I held his present in my hand, could give him back to me. I was as much alone as the curlew I heard crying from a far-away bog. (G.B.,130).

There are very few moments when the spell is broken, when Aroon clearly sees reality, but somehow she always finds a new sign to make her believe in a truth of her own. In this way, Keane involves her reader in the study of the

psychological anatomy of a dying class-consciousness and its powerful, protective guises.

In *Theory of Narrative*, Franz K. Stanzel (1984:126-127) provides a definition of the methods of presenting consciousness in modern fiction:

It is a genre-specific feature of narrative that the presentation of the consciousness of a fictional character can create the illusion of immediacy....

...The form of presentation of consciousness which corresponds to external perspective is the summary and analysis of internal experience provided by an authorial narrator.

Stanzel argues that the presentation of consciousness is the way of controlling the reader's feelings of sympathy. Contrasting abjection, humour, irony and poetic language, Keane shows the battle between the world of reality and the world of fantasy in Aroon's consciousness, and so, channels the reader's reaction.

The third retrospective cycle in Aroon's life represents her mature years dealing with memories that merge Richard, Hubert, Mrs Brock, Papa, Mummie and Rose into the ultimate consequence of creating the mind of a person who 'knows how to behave' and yet is capable of killing her own mother.

Aroon is aware of traces of her own delusion in a genuine reaction to Richard's letter. He writes about his African safari:

Richard's letter was an absolute reality.

I read it again and again to find all that was there – unwritten. For instance: the river, the moonlight, the old bull elephant – and me. That was what he indicated of course, of course. Anything that brought me to his mind was welcome, but the idea of the old bull elephant and its bulk in the moonlight seemed too much in focus with my own big body. An echo whispered: You're such a big girl...then he had been lying in my arms. No – only in my tilted bed. No. It must have been in my arms. It was in my arms. All the same, I wished it had been a gazelle, or a herd of gazelles, drinking in the moonlight. Then I would have known he remembered our running on the sands and that he had kissed my salty arm. Had he? Once, said the echo. And once was enough, I answered myself, enough to tell me. I don't need to have everything spelled out. I know how to build the truth. (G.B.,142)

In the process of recreating her life, it is a matter of utmost importance to remember everything. However, as the above extract shows, her memory is fallible; it cannot be trusted; it turns beyond the reality of events – into a fantasy. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, Proust tries to define the domain of fantasy by opposing and interacting it with past and present. In *Time Regained* (1927: 254) he writes:

...this fantasy, if you transpose it into the domain of what is for each one of us sole reality, the domain of his own sensibility, becomes the truth.

This world of fantasy is the last refuge for Aroon, for the coming events are, one by one, the gradation of what Kreilkamp (1987:457) calls 'the genetic decay' or transformations in herself and in the people around her.

After Hubert's death, and the news of Richard's safari to Kenya, the family seat of Temple Alice transforms into a gloomy place of 'unspoken mourning' (G.B.,115):

Our good behaviour went on and on, endless as the days. No one spoke of the pain we were sharing. Our discretion was almost complete. Although they feared to speak, Papa and Mummie spent more time together; but, far from comforting, they seemed to freeze each other deeper in misery.

There was to be no sentimentality. It was the worst kind of bad manners to mourn and grovel in grief. They avoided his name when possible, but if necessary to speak it, they did do in over-ordinary tones of voice. (G.B.,114-115)

Aroon's parents become too weak to confront the truth – their world crumbles; their future dies with the death of their son: there is no money, no hope. Daddy escapes through over-drinking and over-eating; Mummie spends more time in the garden and in her cold workshop. Similar to the pitiful Crowhurst girls in this novel, the St Charles family puts a lot of effort into rejecting the limits of poverty.

Here, the mood of Keane's fiction aligns itself with the heritage of The Big House genre. As Coleman mentions in his article 'The Big House, Yeats and the Irish Context' (1985:35), the Anglo-Irish heritage is ambiguous and unbalanced:

The predicament of the Anglo-Irish, separated from “the meer Irish” by religion and language, bound to the English crown in loyalty, has been described as chronic ambivalence. By ambivalence is meant the condition of having two homes – one historic (Ireland), the other atavistic (England), two loyalties – one immediate (Anglo-Ireland), the other ultimate (Crown and Empire), and two cultures – one improvised (Anglo-Irish) the other absolute (English).

Frankova (1997:97-98) describes even further that general historical moment:

The general similarities in the rise and decline of the English and Anglo-Irish gentry, their lifestyle at the time of their glory and since, have been affected by the different political situations and events in Ireland especially since 1920s. While the English gentry in the twenties and thirties were still wielding substantial power and influence in the British Government and Parliament, their Anglo-Irish counterparts in independent Ireland found themselves in complete political isolation. These developments had been preceded by the precipitous events in the Irish struggle for independence and the Republican and pro-Treaty battles, when between 1921 and 1923, 192 Big Houses were burned down and many of the Anglo-Irish left the country, particularly the south of Ireland, after Partition. Although allowed to stay in the country and hold on to their property, the Anglo-Irish gentry experienced a sudden collapse of regard for their values....

...Ironically, the very isolation of gentry, whether created suddenly or gradually by outside circumstances, and abetted by their exclusivism from inside, appears to have helped to preserve the class. Shared values, including norms and rules of behaviour, remain an important cohesive factor.

These facts could confirm the hints of a positivistic approach to the theory of literary criticism, termed the New Historicism, which focuses on a better understanding of psychological portraits described in the novel, situated within a particular historic moment in time.

In two scenes of a visit to the neighbours, Keane illustrates the gradual decay of class at that time, linked to the fall of the St Charles and the Crowhurst families. The first one is on the day before Papa's first stroke. The second one is after the stroke, when Aroon goes to the Crowhursts with her 'Mummie'. The first scene happens after Aroon and her father's unpleasant and unsuccessful attempt to order some groceries and to repair the car without paying. They visit the Crowhurst girls. Both sides try to maintain dignity, and the whole scene opposes their real states and is ironically set like 'a Walter Crane picture – a picture of two lives of innocent content and industry, full of birds and flowers and dogs, not to mention dear old horses and minute tapestry works' (G.B.,127). The next visit is not so dignified. The Crowhurst sisters are caught unprepared. Keane juxtaposes this image of the house with the previous one:

I realised, as the minutes passed, a change in the room since that day when Papa and I had visited the girls. Then the room was bright and dignified. It had a gleam in its eye. Today a sticky dust of cold wood-ash hovered on the tables. The fire was not only cold and dead, it had the look of a fire not cleaned out or set or lighted for days. Flower arrangements had died in their vases, poised to the last dead leaf. The dogs, on that previous day neat and sweet and dangerous, now steamed and smelt in a tousled basket. A glass sat on a book, near to where Blink had sat among the knitting. I smelt that, too. Gin. Gin and what? I dipped in a finger. Just gin. All the small shapeliness and delicate contrivances in the room were overlaid by this new sluttish ambiance. (G.B.,154)

During the first "dignified" visit to the Crowhurst sisters, Aroon's father also suddenly transforms into:

a tired, middle-aged, worried gentleman, with bags under his eyes, licking lips uncertainly. A gentleman on a stick, gaiety spent, his

son dead – a thought to be escaped: Hubert's horrible death never confronted. (G.B.,127)

That evening by accident Aroon sees him horribly drunk, almost causing a fire in the house, but saved by Rose in another attempt to preserve the dignity of the St Charles family. It is just too much suffering for Daddy. Aroon observes:

He had endured Hubert's death and burial, Mummie's grief, his own grief, deadly anxiety about me – and not a word spoken. To crown it all, today's morning of stress and worry with that solicitor. No wonder if he is drinking. No wonder if his morning sessions with Rose stood, for a brief moment, between his own suffering and Mummie's sad possessiveness. (G.B., 140)

He suffers a seizure at the graveyard, which leaves him with extensive brain damage, utterly helpless, partially without power to speak or walk. Aroon loses her last real refuge and gets completely exposed to Mummie's 'tyranny' in tightening the food budget and forbidding fires to warm the rooms.

The powers of "genetic decay" become exposed through Aroon's quest to catch the essence of the lost time. Kreilkamp (1987:457) links the physical disabilities and psychological deformities of Keane's characters to the state of the Anglo-Irish nation.

Keane again uses the language of the grotesque and of abjection to pinpoint the symbolism of physical impotence and bodily decay underlined by potential suffering for old unpaid moral dues. The description of father's illness is part of

this macabre anatomy of abjection, which includes morbid, almost necrophilic descriptions of corporal decay and physiological necessities (including sexual satisfaction). Through Aroon, Keane plays with diabolical forces in her depiction of father's physiological dependency and sexuality. Keane tries to restore the balance in Aroon's heroic gesture of selling Richard's gift (a brown horse) to the solicitor and by confronting and dismissing the nurse, but she cannot deny the odour of decay, of rotten flesh and brandy:

....My rejoinder was both neat and dignified, but as she went out of the room a peculiar curiosity, an unspoken unpleasant surmise, stayed with me. It was as if her body, clean and fresh as pine needles, had left a smell behind it in the air, a clinging smell, which I would rightly ignore. (G.B.,169)

So, the seeds of dark forces are already planted in Aroon's heart. An example of this is her reaction to the news that the Crowhurst sisters have sold their house and fled the country:

The reason I enjoy other people's disasters is because they involve my understanding and sympathy in a way their success never can – I like feeling genuine pity. Even when I know they are unworthy of my interest, I don't think I am ever ungenerous to friends more unlucky than myself. I would have loved to go and see what the Crowhursts' dear little house looked like, felt like, smelt like now. (G.B.,173-174)

Kreilkamp (1987:457) points to the curse of the Big House children, 'the victims of an institutionalized system of child abuse'. Aroon is their typical representative. She remembers how she met her bad luck in the year when even Christmas was ignored at Temple Alice:

...we were too bogged down in disaster for any jollity. We kept our heads above the morass, stifled screaming despairs only by the exercise of Good Behaviour. Good Behaviour shrivelled to nothing as a support in my insensate longing for Hubert and Richard as the night of the Hunt Ball drew nearer... (G.B.,191)

That fatal winter (when Christmas was ignored) at the Hunt Ball, Aroon is destined to lose Richard and Papa and her good behaviour. It is a night of triple demystification, forever sealed in her memory, to transform her into the killer of her own mother and her own future.

While searching through Aroon's consciousness, Keane uses three dimensions of time (past, present and future), blending them through the new aspect of the intermediate. In that intermediate time, Aroon subconsciously feels the spectrum of possibilities which could speed her future towards different dimensions of life. Although those moments have an almost infinite length, as if counting of innumerable possibilities, they are magnificently tragic, for seconds later, the future unfolds.

Firstly, it is a flash-back moment which describes the second before the Aristotelian-style tragic Discovery:

For me, as I looked, a transport in time took my breath. I have been here before, I have heard this before, where? when? The answer came to me clear and comfortable: Mrs Brock's happy days, and her tales about Lady Grizel and the jolly little boys, and the dogs.

Behind this picture there existed a certain past, and a future when a world of love should enclose me in just such precincts. The moment

could not be endless. I let my breath go. I turned the page over. (G.B.,207)

Aroon's future then takes the shape of news of the announcement of Richard's engagement:

For a minute I disbelieved. I denied myself a second look. I put the paper down. I found myself hiding it. When I had done this I knew that it was true, but I could accept nothing. I was on the floor bowing my head, rocking myself against acceptance; I was a rooted thing, torn about in a volume of storm. (G.B.,207)

Like Mrs Brock on receiving the news that she is to be fired, Aroon reacts in the same way – physiologically, vomiting. Ellen O' Brien (1999:42) points to the use of a cycle of food ingestion and a matching abjection, that is, vomiting, in the novel:

Like Mrs Brock, Aroon is restored by the expelling of her own abjection. Aroon, dripping in vomit, does not identify with it; the abject is expelled, banished, and she is once again Aroon St Charles, the entitled member of an élite family.

Restored by the cold night and back home, Aroon has her second revelation under the dark dome of Temple Alice:

In the cold of the hall I loomed to myself, a great creature within limitless suffering. I took off my shoes before I went upstairs. Step by stockinged step I padded past Mummie's door. Lemon-shaped above my head, the dome held the perfect form of winter air, as it had held the light and breath of summer evenings. I gave up my dream, its core of fact, its wings of hope, shrivelling to absurdity; I knew that here stood the changeless me, the truly unwanted person. (G.B.,211)

That freezing cold night is chosen to symbolise the end of the dream, the end of hope, the end of an era. And only the desperately repeated question remains: 'What must I do, I thought, standing in my own room again, what must I do now, tomorrow and forever?' (G.B.,212) The depth of Aroon's despair is profound and there is no answer to it; it reaches towards the universal metaphor of human suffering. She tries to comfort herself with a cup of tea, daydreaming about the past, and remembering Mrs Brock as a refuge. And it again happens in some intermediate, innocent time broken by another tragic scene, the third in Aroon's steady progression towards the abyss of despair. After seeing Papa and Rose in bed together, Aroon recalls a moment in her childhood state of innocence:

In the space of waiting there came a reunion with a moment nearer than the present, when mice had flickered in their cages and I could smell the faint appropriate marriage of hot milk and Marie biscuits. Then love and trust swelled the air round me, and there had been a wild nonchalance expressed by a hat flung down with its wet pink roses. For a breath I was held in that time before love and trust had failed me. Now, as before, the moment broke into ugliness and terror.

It was Rose, plunging along the passages, crying, calling; throwing her body across the kitchen table, howling; dispossessed of all authority, a wild creature, just as Mrs Brock had been on the evening of her drowning.

"He is going...he doesn't know me..." she was gasping. (G.B.,213)

She speechlessly witnesses the transformation of her father, 'lessening every moment from a person to a thing' (G.B.,213-214). And again facing the absurdity of good behaviour, she is almost challenging divine intervention. But there is no pity, and no answer:

Out again in the dark corridor, alone with the thought of my cold bed, I felt a sick shivering go through me. I thought what a crash there would be if I fell, and I almost wished for a disturbance that would bring me some pity. But there was no such a thing. Only good behaviour about Death. So I sat down on the floor before I fell down and waited for the weakness to pass over. Sitting there I felt my grief for Papa and my lost love for Richard joining together. Only Papa had known that we were lovers. Now half my despair was my own secret. (G.B., 215)

An unexpected turn, a *deus ex machina* from the other side of the grave transforms Aroon into the heiress of Temple Alice. O' Brien (1999:44) argues that in a cycle of happenings Aroon's Mummie also turns into the abject in the moment Aroon inherits Papa's wealth: 'that moment functions as a symbolic birth for Aroon; her new symbolic identity affords her power'.

In this climate of reminiscent abjection and decay, Aroon arises with the strength of a fully-grown Baudelaire's '*le fleur de mal*' capable of continuing punishing the world for her lost dreams, using the powers of once having had money and good behaviour.

The following chapter continues to explore the possible parallel, in dealing with the limitless aspects of memory, in the opus of two chosen authors: Larkin and Keane.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARDS THE INFINITE MEMORY

The discussion so far has highlighted Larkin and Keane's interest in the operation of memory. This chapter explains this aspect of their respective writing further as well as shared techniques, such as genre slippage. Being contemporaries, Philip Larkin⁵ (1922-1985) and Molly Keane (1904 -1995) could not have avoided the influences of the same general historical and cultural climate under which they developed their own literary styles and personal messages, chosen to express a variety of ideas. Those aspects, which sometimes overlap, and are sometimes different, will be explored in this chapter

Having as a background a history of Western thought, particularly the modern aesthetic streams of the second half of the twentieth century – ranging from modernism to the deconstruction of post-structuralism, Larkin and Keane share a common ground of feelings of negativism, nihilism, alienation and atheism. Expressing themselves in the different mediums or literary genres of poetry and the novel, respectively, Larkin and Keane use the relation between the past and the present as a symbol that connects the text and the complex possibilities of its interpretation. Their work reveal they both navigate a search for the soul through the aspects of their chosen genre. In Larkin's case, it is the force of the poetry

⁵ Larkin Philip.1988. *Collected Poems* (Introduction by Anthony Thwaite. London: The Marvell Press and Faber &Faber. Throughout this chapter poems are referred to as C.P., with year of publication and the page number. The same system of notation is used for Molly Keane's *Good Behaviour*. Their respective dates are cited here again to foreground their contemporarity.

and, in his case, its absence of conventional metaphors and its use of colloquialisms. In Keane's case, it is the novel, and the use of irony and abjection, as seen in Chapter Two and Chapter Three of this study.

However, the significance of the unspoken language, contained in both authors' work points towards their encounter with semiology, an almost Derridian principle of deconstruction of the text, with its embedded signs and symbols. Each of these signs or symbols contains a certain meaning, and within it, its own opposition. The symbols, although seemingly absent, actually create present time, and the interplay of the absence and the presence creates new meaning. Each present moment exists in its private relation to a past as its own opposite and continuation, also forming the uninterrupted flow towards the future, as seen in Larkin's poem 'Disintegration':

Time running beneath the pillow wakes
Lovers entrained who in the name of love
Were promised the steeples and fanlights of a dream;
Joins the renters of each single room
Across the tables to observe a life
Dissolving in the acid of their sex;

Time that scatters hair upon a head
Spreads the ice sheet on the shaven lawn;

Singing an annual permit for the frost
Ploughs the stubble in the land at last
To introduce the unknown to the known
And only by politeness make them breed;

Time over the roofs of what has nearly been

Circling, a migratory, static bird,
Predicts no change in future's lancing shape,
And daylight shows the streets still tangled up;
Time points the simian camera in the head

Upon confusion to be seen and seen. (C. P., 1942)

Here, time, as an ultimate symbol of the finite overcomes the personal sorrows of fallen love and other human failures and alters 'over the roofs of what has nearly been' with immeasurable infinity. The definition of time as a 'simian camera in the head' takes the reader back towards the encounter with unconscious mind, disappearing into the ambiguity of primordial images of a collective past where the images of inborn intuitions are stored.

The multiple levels of meaning in poetic language also match some aspects expressed in Saussure's *'Course in General Linguistics'* (1916). Saussure's language analysis reveals the example of the complexity of linguistic signs contained in language, which are profoundly psychological and work on a principle of associations and mental comparisons of opposites.

In Keane's opus, a similar simulation of the present or reality follows through the flow of the stream of Aroon's consciousness, as already noted. The symbols of abjection are usually altered, and then transformed from organic meaning into the unconscious and then again back into reality. This is shown in a moment of demystification when Aroon, paging through a glossy magazine, finds the picture announcing the engagement of her beloved Richard to somebody else, and all her dreams are drowned in a second:

Not tears, but pain, seized on me, my insides griping and loosening. The absolute need of getting to the lavatory possessed me. Even my terrible distress had to find this absurd necessity. As I walked carefully down the long, warm room, I had the idea that the light had changed like a short winter afternoon, and the room and my life were both spread with sand and salt. (G.B., 207-208)

This moment symbolises reality with the lost past and lost future. It consists of the variety of facts, which the extract quoted above does not contain (the history of Aroon's and Richard's relationship and her hopes of them getting married).

These facts, which are not present, could be perceived as existing in opposition to what is depicted. Larkin's and Keane's philosophy of life starts with hidden despair and points to the signs of the struggle and possible fall of modern civilisation.

Looking at both authors from a psychoanalytical perspective, the dimension of the unconscious gains an even stronger meaning. As in the post-Freudian psychoanalysis of Jung or Lacan, consciousness speaks through the dreams, metaphors and symbols of the subject. Larkin's poetry and Keane's prose meet in that unconscious level where the symbolics of waiting is translated into unfulfilled desires and defeats in the battle of living in this world, governed by civilised manners. Conscious of her intense pain after the humiliation Aroon experiences in learning of Richard's engagement, for example, she acknowledges:

I would take it [the pain] home with me, and go to bed with it, and suffer it always, for it would never change. I knew. Grief possessed me, but I must behave. (G.B.,209)

Fragile sentiments of the soul are too inadequate to be expressed in the normative and artificially created social situations. Both authors appear to be trying to convey the message – in modern man, sincere feelings are choked to nothingness, and life itself transforms into a meaningless count of days. There are only memories left (voluntarily or involuntarily induced), memories in the Platonic sense, where through daydreams, the soul remembers heavenly beauty, or the sublime beauty of nature. However, there is little beauty left in the

present or in the deeds of men, except the simple beauty of being alive. (Keane pictures this idea with a chain of predicaments. After the ball, drunk humiliated and devastated Aroon tries to start her car, without luck, and Mr Kiely' appears offering her drive home, even pitying her and offering an invitation to attend a race. Her further predicament is in letting him down politely without revealing her inherent snobbishness (because he is simply 'not known')):

How to answer him within politeness? No one could possibly call me a snob, but some situations promise only total embarrassment. Papa's friends and the kind Mary Anns would pass me by with a word, or without a word. None of them, none of us, knew Mr Kiely. (G.B.,210)

Aroon resolves the humiliation and embarrassment of the situation bursting into tears of humiliation and shame. This is what she feel when he tries to comfort her:

I couldn't see him, sitting there beside me, but his voice had the wrong texture, the wrong colour; it was as wrong to me as a false note of music. Ashamed of myself as I felt, his sympathy was unattractive, even alarming. (C.P., 211)

A comparable Larkin poem, 'Story' (February 1941) deals with similar sentiments of unease, and even indifference or boredom encountered within the familiarity of social life, reflected even in his recollection of nature and love for solitude:

Tired of a landscape known too well when young
The deliberate shallow hills, the boring birds
Flying past rocks; tired of remembering
The village children and their naughty words,
He abandoned his small holding and went South,
Recognised at once his wished-for lie
In the inhabitant's attractive mouth,
The church beside the marsh, the hot blue sky.

Settled. And in the mirage lived his dreams,

The friendly bully, saint, or lovely chum
According to his moods. Yet he at times
Would think about the village, and would wonder
If the children and the rocks were still the same.

But he forgot all this as he grew older.

In one of his rare glimpses into literary genres, interviewed by Ian Hamilton, Larkin pointed out that, 'A very crude difference between the novels and poetry is that novels are about other people and poetry is about yourself' (Hamilton, 1964:75). If this is so, could it be a kind of "mental autism" (a similar term used by Jung to describe Joyce's style in *Ulysses*) which some of Larkin's poetry contains; or could it be a reflection of his own mental isolation from life measured with its own perspective of time? The examination of Larkin's poetry in Chapter Two as well as what follows attempts to explore these aspects of his poetry more fully.

One further example of the poet's voice that is intensely personal leads into 'Triple Time', where consolation is found only in the sublimity of nature. 'Triple Time' evokes some of the isolation in which the author is a distant spectator whose solitude puts him above the change of seasons, missed opportunities and the passing of time. Past, present and future are ironically measured with emptiness and revived blame. Missed chances from a childhood perspective are translated into missed chances in adulthood, regressing hope through seasonal decrease:

This empty street, this sky to blandness scoured,
This air, a little indistinct with autumn
Like a reflection, constitute the present –

A time traditionally soured,
A time unrecommended by event.

But equally they make up something else:
This is the future furthest childhood saw
Between long houses, under travelling skies,
Hears in contending bells –
An air lambent with adult enterprise,

And on another day will be the past,
A valley cropped by fat neglected chances
That we insensately forbore to fleece.
On this we blame our last
Threadbare perspectives, seasonal decrease.
(C.P., 1953)

The suppressed emotionalism condenses 'a time unrecommended by event' as the author gradually pulls the reader into the labyrinth of the landscaped moment. There is an 'empty street', and the 'travelling sky' is 'scoured', 'indistinct with autumn', a solitude of the child distanced even from the air he breathes 'lambent with adult enterprise'.

The 'threadbare perspectives' of the future equal the past 'valley cropped with fat neglected chances'. Time thus denotes both decadence and decrease.

In some of Larkin's poetry ('The Old Fools', 'The Building', 'Mother, Summer, I', 'Two Portraits of Sex', for example), the stream of the poet's consciousness is also locked into the sacredly private world of the self:

My mother, who hates thunderstorms,
Holds up each summer day and shakes
It out suspiciously, lest swarms
Of grape-dark clouds are lurking there;
But when August weather breaks
And rains begin, and brittle frost
Sharpens the bird-abandoned air,

Her worried summer look is lost.
(‘Mother, Summer, I’, C.P., 1953)

Nevertheless, this consciousness echoes in the reader’s consciousness through the intuitive level, loosening the boundaries of reality. The effect goes even further, expanding into the unreal sphere of time and space. In ‘Time and Space were only their disguises’, there is some of that atmosphere:

Time and Space were only their disguises
Under which their hatred chose its shapes
From swords in bushes, flowers like periscopes,
And mirrors that revealed themselves as faces.

And later, clouds flew past me as I sat;
Stations like ships swam up to meet the train
And bowed; all time was equal like the sun;
Each landscape was elaborately set.

But now this blackened city in the snow
Argues a will that cannot be my own,
And one not wished for: points to show

Time in his little cinema of the heart
Giving a première to Hate and Pain;
And Space urbanely keeping us apart.
(C.P.,1941)

The performance in the ‘little cinema of the heart’ is a movement of recollected scenes of life through the emotions, where time and space are only choreography of unconsciousness. The process through which time transforms into other, almost surrealistic or hyper-realistic reality where ‘Mirrors revealed themselves as faces’, ‘clouds flew past me’, and ‘stations like ships swam up to meet the train’ is sacredly dream-like and private. Then the world of the poet’s emotions could be only partly reached, lingering in mystery.

In his book *Philip Larkin*, Andrew Motion (1982:70) notices how 'the two parts of his [Larkin's] poetic personality are constantly in negotiation with each other'; indeed, it is a battle between unexpressed sentiments and the sharp critical mind free of illusions. They meet at a point when the approach to life becomes cynical and alienated, expressing the poet's exploration of the link between his personal life experience and the infinite ambiguity of language.

As if challenging Larkin's distinction between poetry and prose and showing a comparable poetic sensitivity, Keane evokes a parallel exploration of the same link via Aroon's stream of consciousness reflection on precisely what her loss of the past amounts to:

In the shape of the word "lost" my grief bore me down – what had I lost? Nothing, for I had nothing, and my heart was bursting for nothing. But burst it would, and into loud crying. (G.B.,210)

This point of battle into the poet's/novelist's unconscious mind, when creation occurs points back to Plato's parable of the cave (Plato, *The Republic*: 388-389) challenging the idea of the reality of things around us, and our knowledge of the "real" perception of time and space.

Another way to explore the abyss of the unconscious often expressed by art is through the scientific method of psychoanalysis. In his text *On the Relation of Analytical Psychology in Poetry* (1922:3), Jung tries to explore the boundaries of psychoanalysis applied in examining the structure of a work of art. According to

Jung, with regard to Freud's 'reductive method' of stripping the text of all other aspects but pathological, psychoanalysis could represent

...'a medical technique for investigating the morbid psychic phenomena,....going through the conscious to reach the psychic background or the unconscious,....and it is based on the assumption that the neurotic patient represses certain psychic contents which are morally incompatible with his conscious values.'
(*ibid.*)

In other words, all repressed psychic contexts occur in past time, make their mark upon consciousness and are ultimately related to memory.

In application to Keane's novel *Good Behaviour*, the above-mentioned medical aspect of psychoanalysis finds its 'neurotic patient' in the character of Keane's anti-heroine – Aroon St Charles. Looking at her purely psychological image through Freud's reductive method, it becomes clear that she suffers from the state of *erotomania* or *De Clerambault Syndrome* (delusion of love), which is one of the delusional paranoid disorders. Her beliefs are not totally based on reality, so she wrongly believes that somebody else, in this case Richard Massingham, who is from a higher social level, is in love with her and will marry her. Keane illuminates the workings of Aroon's delusional mechanisms through a method of flash-back images filtered through the streams of Aroon's consciousness. When Richard secretly came to Aroon's bedroom, and when he saw her naked 'enormous bosoms' (already referred to) the reader can follow how the situation turned into the grotesque: 'You are a such a big girl... Why do you have to flounce about like that? Every time you move you tilt the bed over' (107). These words cannot belong to a man in love. The truth is that Aroon was totally

unattractive to him. Here is an example of how she consoles herself after he has left:

My anger and anxiety at the appalling noise he made getting back to his room suffocated and choked down a different sense in me: one of absolute loss. But we had both known how to behave. We had behaved beautifully. No pain lasts. And another thing: I can never look at myself as a deprived, inexperienced girl. I've had a man in my bed. I suppose I could say I've had a lover. I like to call it that. I do call it that. (G.B, 108)

This intimate and insistent confession shows the way Aroon's delusional mind works and how the images of the past play an important role of creating present statements and conclusions. Furthermore, it contains the deeper symbolism of the mental degeneration of the dying class, mentioned in the opening of Chapter 3, and is a consequence of another disorder formed in Aroon in the early days of her life – the *Electra Complex*.

Her relation to her mother is, in Freudian terms, hostile – in opposition to her attachment to her father. Apart from the actual similarity between the two literary and psychological personalities of Aroon St Charles and Electra, already examined in Chapter 3, Keane presents a picture of a life-span of mental torture that Aroon endures from her mother in *Good Behaviour*, and then is conveyed to the reader via Aroon's memory of past events.

Considering the well-known Freudian belief that the superego of a person is set at a very young age, and thus it represents the parental voice, Aroon's superego is formed by the remembered pictures of an unloving childhood. Aroon recalls that 'Mummie looked at her studio as her escape from responsibility' (12), while

'the food in the nursery was poisonously disgusting' (12). Aroon paints a disturbing picture of her early days (she could have been anything between four and six years of age at that time):

I am again in the darkness of the nursery, the curtains drawn against the winter morning outside. Nannie is dragging on her corsets under her great nightdress. Baby Hubert is walking up and down in his cot in a dirty nightdress. The nursery maid is pouring paraffin on a sulky nursery fire. I fix my eyes on the strip of morning light where wooden rings join curtain to curtain pole and think about my bantams.... Even then I knew how to ignore things, I knew how to behave. (G.B.,13)

Aroon's delusions start in that very moment when she starts disintegrating truth and calling things by the wrong names. The picture of a dark, cold nursery with dirty, hungry and neglected children is tragic enough. The little girl, Aroon, is apathetic and aware that Mummie does not really love them. She protects herself from reality, by either resorting to make-believe stories or 'ignoring' things. Obviously, there is no child who can ignore the lack of a mother's love (without consequences). Keane adds the element of absurdity to Aroon's early switching between emotions, opting for good behaviour, so that the idea of good behaviour replaces true emotions or even any feelings at all. The inner conflicts and the fundamental need for love are already suppressed, but later subconsciously recalled, resulting in anxiety.

Keane shows how Aroon's mind works juxtaposing the above scene from the nursery with a "logical" explanation of the adult Aroon, which also sounds absurd, for there are few mothers in this world who neglect their helpless children in that way. Keane pictures Aroon's escape from unloving reality into

contemplation about her bantams – which could be another symbol. (Mummie did not feel broody for them; she neither looked after them nor protected them in a sheltering mother-hen way). Aroon gives a short psychological portrait of her mother's indifference:

I don't blame Mummie for all this. She had had us and longed to forget the horror of it once and for all....She didn't really like children; she didn't like dogs either, and she had no enjoyment of food, for she ate almost nothing. (G.B.,13)

Somewhat paradoxically, the image of an unloving, anorexic mother is at once suppressed, but not forgotten. A second memory from childhood is even more shocking:

She [Mummie] was sincerely shocked and appalled one day when the housemaid came to tell her that our final nannie was lying on her bed in a drunken stupor with my brother Hubert beside her in another drunken stupor, while I was lighting a fire in the day nursery with a help of paraffin. (G.B.,13)

Keane again opposes this shocking scene – every mother's nightmare – with the absurd explanation of how Mummie settled the whole scandal in her own way, giving another glimpse into her character:

The nannie was sacked, but given quite a good reference with no mention of her drinking; that would have been too unkind and unnecessary, since she promised to reform. Her next charge (only a Dublin baby) almost died of drink, and its mother wrote a very common, hysterical letter, which Mummie naturally put in the fire and forgot about it. (G.B.,13)

A conclusion is that Aroon's mother was an unloving person who suffered from an eating disorder (*anorexia nervosa*), and who did not feel any responsibility

towards her own family or moral responsibility towards society. Keane's ironic style unfolds through the wording of the above paragraph:

1. Nannie was 'sacked' – shows that Mummie could be rude, apart from being 'well-behaved'.
2. Mummie gives a good reference to a chronic alcoholic to continue her work as a child minder – the idea is too perverse, even more so as it is underlined with a hideous explanation that behaving any other way would be 'too unkind and too unnecessary, since she promised to reform'. Consequently, mother's carelessness almost resulted in the death of the nannie's next charge, nonchalantly referred to as 'only a Dublin baby' as if it were a thing, not a human being, somebody else's child.
3. Her heartless reaction to the 'hysterical' letter sent from the mother of that child – Mummie 'naturally put it in a fire and forgot about it' alludes to the sarcastic shortcomings of the *Good Behaviour*. . It is also telling that she 'naturally' and deliberately causes pain and suffering – another idea thrown in the face of the reader, asking where have human and Christian values gone in representatives of the upper class.

Mrs St Charles shows the absence of maternal feelings towards Aroon many times. This kind of mother's behaviour towards her daughter is so rare, absurd and sarcastic that it goes beyond irony and shares its boundaries with parody. This can be seen in the following example: in the dialogue between Aroon and Mrs St Charles on cutting their costs of living, including doctor's fees:

- “And Dr Coffey’s bill – can you imagine what that will amount to?...He charged ten pounds when you were born. It was quite a ridiculous price.” She looked through me, and back into the past. “Nothing’s worth it”, she said. (G.B.,181)

If examined through the psychoanalytic prism, Larkin’s memories of childhood also sound unusually negative. The tender years of childhood are often glorified in the works of the Romantics, and generally, childhood is referred to as the best time of somebody’s life. Andrew Motion (1982:22) provides a background to Larkin’s approach to his young life in *Philip Larkin*.

...Larkin has always been at pains to make his life seem at best unremarkable and at worst dull. On one occasion he [Larkin] claimed that his biography could begin when he was twenty-one and omit nothing of importance; on another he described his childhood as “forgotten boredom” (*Less Deceived*, p17)....

...By obliterating his childhood, Larkin has asserted his independence as an adult – in “I Remember, I Remember” he shakes free from his former self and at the same time denies popular Romantic and Lawrentian notions of childhood....

Larkin drowns the recollection of his childhood mostly using negation and the past tense; he strips its values and sentiments to absurdity:

...A whistle went:
Things moved. I sat back, staring at my boots.
‘Was that,’ my friend smiled, ‘where you have your roots’?
No, only where my childhood was unspent,
I wanted to retort, just where I started:

Or

....”You look as if you wished the place in Hell”
My friend said, “judging from your face.” “Oh well,
I suppose it’s not the place’s fault”, I said.

‘Nothing, like something, happens anywhere.’
(C.P., ‘I Remember, I Remember.’ January 1954)

In *Collected Poems*, Larkin pulls the idols down. He disintegrates the mockery of common values, especially human relations based on the family. He offers solitude as a gift from childhood, the only thing that remained to cleanse the dirt of civilisation.

In 'Best Society' (C.P.,1951), Larkin refers to that solitude of childhood, which gives rise to the question of identity, it 'unfolds, emerges, what I am'⁶:

When I was a child, I thought,
Casually, that solitude
Never needed to be sought.
Something everybody had,
Like nakedness, it lay at hand,
Not specially right or specially wrong,
A plentiful and obvious thing
Not at all hard to understand.

In 'Marriages' (C.P.,1951), Larkin seemingly answers the question as to the effect of an unhappy childhood or identity which is 'nailed-up'. He also pictures a grotesque mockery of marriage. The final stanzas sound almost Nietzsche-like in their negativity:

Scarecrows of chivalry
They strike strange bargains –
Adder-faced singularity
Espouses a nailed-up childhood,
Skin-disease pardons
Soft horror of living,
A gabble is forgiven
By chronic solitude.

² The myth of the ideal family as a typical family probably was a part of post-war socio-historical context. Larkin, the poet of the 'Lost Generation', and Keane subvert these social values, using dark colours to shadow a family portrait.

Although arguably more elusive than Larkin's poem, an extract from *Good Behaviour* (1981:71) likewise alludes to an unhappy marriage and memories of a 'nailed-up' childhood:

This recovery and reinstatement were a way back for him [Papa] to his separate life, where all his charm and wandering habits found other adventures and intimates to whom Temple Alice was only a distant name, and Mummie a dim legend. The fitting of his wooden leg provided endless occasions for short stays at Cavalry Club, which meant, as often as not, a night spent not at the Club but with some friend's sleek and willing wife. It was the day of the shingle and straight paletted dresses and huge pearl chokers; gardenias in velvet boxes; white ladies before dinner; and a night-club afterwards. Dancing was beyond him; but that melancholy uncomplaining stare of his, far into the eyes of his partners, never failed him of his purpose. The wooden leg and the wonder of his recovered horsemanship added interest to the encounters between him and his women.

Aron recollects one of the happiest times of her life comparing it to the 'nailed-up' childhood:

When he [Papa] did well I wanted to touch him and caress him; so did Hubert. But we compromised on laughter and long glances. The absolute distance in our childhood, separating children from adults, was bridged. (G.B., 71)

A close examination of the selected prose and poetry reveals that Keane and Larkin share a disappointment in humankind. It seems that the previously mentioned scene when Keane's character Aron learns about Richard's engagement has strangely déjà vu echoes in Larkin's poem 'He Hears that his Beloved has become engaged' (C.P., 1953):

When she came on, you couldn't keep your seat;
Fighting your way up through the orchestra,
Tup-heavy bumpkin, you confused your feet,
Fell in the drum – how we went ha ha ha!
But once you gained her side and starting waltzing

We all began to cheer; the way she leant
Her cheek on yours and laughed was so exalting
We thought you stooging for the management.

But no. What you did, any of us might.
And saying so I see our difference:
Not your aplomb (I used mine to sit tight),
But *fancying you improve her*. Where's the sense
In saying love, but meaning interference?
You'll only *change* her. Still, I'm sure you're right.

As in Keane's novel *Good Behaviour*, Larkin's poem deals with the same kind of delusional situation. Both writers react similarly, distancing themselves from the absurdity of situation through irony. Keane uses a grotesque motif of the purgative cleansing of Aroon's intestines, discussed earlier; Larkin uses a clumsy scene (hiding behind a group of friends) when everybody laughs as the man stumbles hurrying towards his bride-to-be. However, both scenes have the hidden despair of their respective collapsing worlds and both continue in a serious and somber tone about the change, or adjustments the 'day after'.

In a continuation of this detachment from life, there is a sublime and a symbolic approach to nature, already alluded to. It seems that both Keane and Larkin treat nature in accordance with their Modernist heritage; nature is seen as a continuation of romantic-symbolic tradition, spread through the nineteenth and into the beginning of the twentieth century, and having an equal influence on poetry and prose. It results in adding a metaphysical quality to the literature from that period whether it is poetry (Yeats, Eliot, Pound, and of course, Larkin) or the novel (Joyce, Woolf, Bowen and such writers as Keane).

Keane and Larkin use descriptions of nature as that trans linguistic vehicle to outline their metaphysics. In *Good Behaviour*, for instance, Keane's landscapes provide a balance to the ironic stance, a sign that could indicate that Aroon takes notice of the serious beauty of nature (which, in turn, suggests that there might still be some hope for her). Consider, for example, the following passage:

I wondered if I could go on breathing naturally, through the delight that lifted me. Twice over now this euphoria of love had elevated my whole body; I was its host. Then the vision changed; it was as though the face of my old world turned away from me – a globe revolving – I was looking into a changed world, where I was a changed person, where my love was recognised and requited. Through the long assuring breaths that followed my sobbing I drew in the truth; that Papa loved me the most. Explicit from the depths of my breathing, like weed anchored far under sea water, I knew a full tide was turning for me. Love and trust were present and whole as they had been once on a summer afternoon. Inexactly present, inexactly lost, the memory fled me as a seal slides into the water with absolute trust in its element. A disturbance on the water closes and there is nothing again. (G.B.,243)

Such sensual impressionistic landscapes map the unspoken feelings of past and future happenings.

The first landscape and the first season is the spring when Papa came back from the war. The following description of the landscape could be the metaphor for the greatest need in Aroon – the need to be loved:

Every day was a perfect day in April. The scrawny beauty of our house warmed and melted in the spring light. Through the long screens of beech and ash plantations blackbirds flew low to the ground, calling high and scuttling low about their love affairs. All the blackbirds in the country seemed to be courting and mating in those coverts; with piercing sweetness they screamed, morning and dull eternal hours of evening, for love. (G.B., 68)

The happiest summer in Aroon's life, the summer when she fell in love with Richard, is like a perfect Gauguin's picture: on the canvas of consciousness, not the oil, but the words are used as a medium to picture the joy of living. This new feeling of carelessness and cheerfulness is profound and innocent, not spoiled yet with the tragedies to come:

Each day of early September was more perfect than the last. Grapes were ripe in the battered vinery – those muscatels Mummie knew how to thin and prune. Butterflies – fritillaries, peacocks – spread their wings on scabious, sedum, and buddleia, waiting heavily, happily for death to come. We sat among them, eating grapes, the sun on our backs. (G.B., 99)

Even Temple Alice is gracefully transformed under the summer sun:

Until now I had been aware of Temple Alice only as our cold comfortless home – large; full of ill-placed furniture; loud with the echoes of feet on thinly carpeted boards or a chill clatter on a black and white tiles; a roof leaking winter, or summer, rain, hard beds; soft, cold bathwater. These were my familiar thoughts about the house...But in this eternal August the place took on a sumptuous quality. Every day the lean, deprived face of the house blazed out in the sunlight. Sun poured onto damp-stained wallpaper, through the long windows. It shone on us when we woke until we changed for dinner. (G.B.,89)

One of the sublime descriptions of nature triggers the involuntary memory at end to a happy era, a preserved moment in which shapes of approaching misfortune shadow the end of a perfect day:

Leaving the sea at evening is a death – a parting of worlds. We turned inland, past the Round Tower and the roofless church, where small primitive carvings of apostles were worn by time and sea-winds to blunt thumbs among its stones. In the cove small boats, drawn up on the beach, leaned about awkwardly as swans out of water. Lobster-pots were piled each on each, building netted castles in the evening; and, plain as cooking on the air, the salty rot of seaweed came with us along the road. Mrs Brock whacked the pony with an ashplant; the dust flew round us and lay back heavy on the dog roses in the banks as we turned inland. (G.B., 52)

There are many signs to follow in this labyrinth predication of the landscape: to leave the open sea and choose the inland path (going towards one's true self), past the lighthouse and boats out of water, and an ancient church demolished by elements, where images of apostles turn primitive and archaic, proceeding deeper and deeper inland followed by the 'salty rot of seaweed' and dust. Poetry and prose meet bounded by the mythical memory of past and future.

Keane gradually deepens Aroon's losses opposing them to the changing seasons – a literary technique similar to the one Virginia Woolf uses in *The Waves* (1931;1987), referred to in Chapter One of this study. The seasons or the waves are used to symbolise the perpetual movement of time, measured by the mind and emotions, life and death. In *The Common Reader* (1940:149), Woolf examines the anatomy of the mind:

Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. Let us take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small.

The essence of this theory could be read between the lines in this quotation from *The Waves* (1931;1987:35):

Let me recollect. It has been on the whole a good day. The drop that forms on the roof of the soul in the evening is round, many-coloured. There was a morning, fine; there was the afternoon, walking. I like views of spires across grey fields. I like glimpses between people's shoulders. Things kept popping into my head. I was imaginative, subtle. After dinner, I was dramatic. I put into concrete form many things that we had dimly observed about our

common friends. I made my transitions easily. But now let me ask myself this final question, as I sit over this grey fire, with its naked promontories of black coal, which of these people am I? It depends so much upon the room. When I say to myself “Bernard”, who comes? A faithful, sardonic man, disillusioned, but not embittered. A man of no particular age or calling. Myself, merely. It is he who now takes the poker and rattles the cinders so they fall in showers through the grate. “Lord,” he says to himself, watching them fall, but with some sense of consolation, “Mrs Moffat will come and sweep it all up –“ I fancy I shall often repeat to myself that phrase, as I rattle and bang through life, hitting first this side of the carriage, then the other, “Oh, yes, Mrs Moffat will come and sweep it all up.” And so to bed.

“Rowing” through the waves of thoughts Virginia Woolf runs through Bernard’s mind showing how it works. Through Bernard’s mind, she visits places, notices the most subtle nuances of things around him measured by his own sentiments, and changes the rhythm of the perception of time by freezing it in the moment of recollection. In this way, she simultaneously ‘walks through the fields’, ‘sits by the fire’, ‘plays poker’, and contemplates the past, present and future. In doing so, she gives a vivid sample of life in all of its aspects, spanning space and time.

Keane examines the mind of her characters in the similar manner freezing the moments of recollection. The morning when Richard and Hubert pack for their journey could be the last, shadowless day of summer in Aroon’s mind:

The engine throbbed its great heart out, splendidly ready for the journey; still they delayed, although we had no more goodbyes to exchange. Nobody kissed. Nobody shook hands. At last they were gone. We looked after them for a minute as they were gone. Eleven o’ clock in the morning, and no shadows on the grass. The trees stood shadowless, neat and clear as tin trees in a child’s zoo. We were thrown out of balance by the leave-taking. (G.B., 109)

Aroon’s perception of present time is ‘thrown out of balance’ with the emotional observation of the landscape. The presence of the ‘shadowless trees neatly in

rows as in the child's zoo' adds a dimension of hyper-reality to the landscape, picturing emptiness or Aroon's unconscious apprehension of approaching doom. Later that day they were to receive the telegram. The simplicity of the words underlines the finality of Hubert's death:

REGRET TERRIBLE NEWS STOP CAR ACCIDENT STOP
HUBERT KILLED STOP (G.B.,111)

The absence of punctuation adds to the intensity of the words, making them as sharp as arrows, signs that one huge part of Aroon's refuge is lost in nothingness. Her brother's death marks the change into the other colder season of her life.

The other milestone, autumn afternoon, builds up as a wave, beginning with the innocent impressions of an ordinary day:

...the silence of the house consumed the afternoon... The smell of past hours was in the library: flowers, cigars, polish on wood. Newspapers lay baking in the sun... Everything was in the trance of the usual. (G.B.,142)

But 'the trance of the usual' is broken and Aroon rushes to the graveyard where another déjà vu image confronts her:

In the dog-shaped shadow cast by the solid little church on grass and graves I found him. Rose was sitting on the grass, her knees spread, holding him in her arms. His head was lolled back absurdly against her breast and shoulder. Her blouse was ripped out at the armpit from dragging and holding him. The coat of her navy-blue suit was across his foot. There was a brooding look about her, melancholy and wild. Her flowered hat was lying on the grass. There was a mushroom dew on it and on the graves. I remembered Mrs Brock's hat, dripping from the wet grass, one silly hat recalled the other, clear and meaningless, conjuring together that night with this evening. (G.B.,145)

In the above paragraph, Keane presents nature as a bridge between the past and present, sickness and health, life and death. Rose looks like a caricature of The Pietá holding her fallen brain-damaged master, among the graves. Parody goes even further with the chain of association: dew – silly hat – Mrs Brock's silly hat – meaninglessness – absurd. And yet, behind all of this play of tragic and comic is Aroon's heart, full of fear that that is the end of her father.

At the end of the cycle of seasons comes the winter with the Christmas season of hunt balls as if challenging Aroon to see if she really is a tragic heroine destined to lose everything she ever had for the high moral purpose. Winter forms the background to the grand scene of Aroon arriving at the Hunt Ball:

I drove under a stone archway, high as a railway bridge, on which the family coat of arms stood out, gross and gigantic. Beyond the archway, round tree sides of a courtyard, Gothic battlements and towers thrust upwards and bellied outwards. Smaller archways squatted before dark doorways. Windows bulged on the vast spread of walls. It was Grimm's fairytales gone mad in stone, and like a fairytale, light shone from all the windows. For all the light I found it hard to tell which was the hall door. (G.B.,195)

Aroon enters the sublime world of this magnificent house (the castle and title dated from the 1890s) opposed to the severely cold winter night outside. She starts to feel intuitively the uncomfortable difference of that particular night compared to the other nights of her life:

I stood there waiting. There was nobody to tell me where to go, I was the lost girl in the fairy story. I dared myself to go forwards. I opened a door, its architrave crowned by a bunch of swords. Then I was going headlong through a chain of rooms – large, smaller, smallest. In each room a fire was burning, not very brightly. Light came through deep parchment lampshades. Knole sofas, heavily

tasseled, waited empty. Huge jardinières were filled with hyacinths and freesias. Photographs in lavish leather frames stood on every table. Photographs of children, race-horses, dogs, brides. I recognised a royal face, set apart from the rest, its modest isolation calling for attention. (G..B, 197)

Such a grand and picturesque scene of the house presents the world Aroon longs for – the world she could be part of, marrying Richard. Later that evening when she learns that he is already engaged to somebody else the glamorous house becomes the trap from which Aroon escapes into the ultimate coldness of the night.

Coldness is a conventional metaphor for death. Death is following Aroon taking, one by one, everybody she loves and whom she related herself to. Again, Keane pictures the depth of finality and the absurdity of death, contrasting them with the colours, sounds and smells of nature or the profane things that make everyday life.

One of these metaphysical moments is described in the scene when Aroon and Major Massingham (father's best friend) arrive at Temple Alice at the moment Papa's body has been carried out:

He [Major Massingham] stopped the car on the further side of the gravel sweep from the house, then scrabbled up his orchids and got out to stand rigid and bareheaded, waiting, forgetting me, his eyes only on a farm cart drawn up at the foot of the steps, its paint blue as eucalyptus leaves, the spokes of its wheels crispy pink in the morning light. Volumes of breath from the quiet horse stayed low on the air while four of the men on the place carried Papa down the steps; slowly, awkwardly as great crabs, they went sideways, directing each other in ordinary voices. (G.B.,233)

The mystery of this scene is immense. In the crisp light of the winter morning finality is presented – the end of life, the end of an era: coffin, car and horses'

breath visible in the cold air and the absurdity of the undertakers carrying the heavy load of the remains of a man. The sublimity of this scene awakens the medieval images of the dance macabre and the somber words in Latin: *Memento Mori!*

Coincidentally, remembering eternity is one of the ultimate messages of Larkin's poetry. Larkin's metaphysics is hidden between profound descriptions of the landscapes opposed to ugliness or indifference to the ordinary. There are the times, when figuratively speaking, Larkin dares to cross the river between this world and the infinite, taking the reader to the strange land, as in 'Night-Music' (C.P.,1944):

At one the wind rose,
And with it the noise
Of the black poplars.

Long since had the living
By a thin twine
Been led into their dreams
Where lanterns shine
Under a still veil
Of falling streams;
Long since had the dead
Become untroubled
In the light soil.
There were no mouths
To drink of the wind,
Nor any eyes
To sharpen on the stars'
Wide heaven-holding,
Only the sound
Long sibilant-muscled trees
Were lifting up, the black poplars.

And in their blazing solitude
The stars sang in their sockets through the night:
'Blow bright, blow bright

The coal of this unquickened world’.

The onomatopoeic rhythm of the rhymes catches the sound of the blowing wind and the dramatic movements of waving poplars bridging the space between the earth and sky, this world and another world, present and infinity. The intense, spell-like chanting of the wind through the trees “flies” the reader to the magnitude of eternity and back to solitude and nothingness. The textures of expressed images condense into the picture and feeling of that invisible but existing world on the other side of real. David Coetzee (1990:29) points to young Larkin’s belief expressed in his correspondence to Wellington:

Visions are what one lives by....the life of an artist should be a continual polishing of that inner lens which perceives these visions.

In ‘Bridge for the Living’ (1975), Larkin grandiosely links descriptions of the city and surrounding landscape with his observation of life and beyond life as in these extracted stanzas:

1) Isolate city spread alongside water,
Posted with white towers, she keeps her face
Half-turned to Europe, lonely northern daughter,
Holding through centuries her separate place.

2) Behind her domes and cranes enormous skies
Of gold and shadows build; a filigree
Of wharves and wires, ricks and refineries,
Her working skyline wanders to the sea.

...6) While scattered on steep seas, ice-cruled ships
Like errant birds carry her loneliness,
A lighted memory no miles eclipse,
A harbour for the heart against distress.

...9) Lost centuries of local lives that rose
And flowered to fall short where they began
Seem now to reassemble and uncloze,
All resurrected in this single span,

10) Reaching for the world, as our lives do,
As all lives do, reaching that we may give
The best of what we are and hold as true:
Always it is by bridges that we live.

In this poem, Larkin measures the time that makes history with the impressions the change of seasons and past years leave, linking them to the memory of being a long time dead. That moment of merging past and present, recollection and reality happens in his poetic language, through metaphor. Loneliness is 'a lighted memory no miles eclipse', 'a harbour for the heart against distress' and human life is an attempt to bridge that loneliness in the cycle of living and dying.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has deliberately been restricted to a study of Larkin's poetry and Keane's masterpiece novel in order to explore the correlations between the techniques and concerns of the two writers. As implied by references to Virginia Woolf's work, a further study could include at least Woolf's novel *The Waves*. Likewise, an entire study could be devoted to an exploration of the poetics of memory as a literary theory, or the complete works of Molly Keane, alias M. F. Farrell. Many studies already exist on the corpus of both Philip Larkin and Virginia Woolf, but I have encountered none that have selected my own combined topic. This study has, therefore, sought to break the new ground in the chosen field.

What this study has attempted to show is that although differing in literary genres, both Keane and Larkin's art leans on tradition and touches infinity through metaphor. Metaphor is generally more attached to the theory of poetry, going hand in hand with metre as Wellek and Warren (1949:186) point out in their *Theory of Literature*. On the other hand, this research project recognises the inadequacy and the limitations of the genre when poetry or the novel are examined separately. The tendency to merge the two genres highlights the

complexity of the undercurrent issues both writers have dealt with, such as the sublimity of nature, loneliness, the mockery of morality in social norms or death.

The most striking example of how the poetic language of Keane and Larkin unifies in the use of a particular word, or a particular image mirrored as a metaphor, is contained in and about the word “myxomatosis”. Originating from the noun “myxoma” defined in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1964:722) as a tumor of mucous or gelatinous tissue, it develops into the vivid metaphor in Keane’s *Good Behaviour* (1981:6) through Mummie’s last words, as she departs from this world:

“Myxomatosis”, she said. “Remember that? – I can’t””The smell – I’m –“ She gave a trembling, tearing cry, vomited dreadfully, and fell back into the nest of pretty pillows.

Keane leaves Mummie’s last sentence unfinished and unspoken, giving it space to develop further possible meanings.

Larkin’s ‘Myxomatosis’ (C.P.,1954) carries a heavy impression similar to Keane’s:

Caught in the centre of a soundless field
While hot inexplicable hours go by
What trap is this? Where were its teeth concealed?
You seem to ask.
I make a sharp reply,
Then clean my stick. I’m glad I can’t explain
Just in what jaws you were to suppurate:
you may have thought things would come right again
if you could only keep quite still and wait.

These verses sound like a continuation to the recollection of murder, dying and guilt described by Keane; there is no punishment, no remorse – just silent waiting for the end. The symbiosis between these stanzas from Larkin's poetry and the description of mother's dying in Keane's novel serves to foreground that which typifies their shared mode: be it of thought, image or ideology in their comparable treatment of the aesthetics of memory.

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