

The abbreviations of the titles of Irving Layton's books, as they appear in this thesis, are as follows:

HN.	<u>Here and Now/1945</u>
NIP	<u>Now Is The Place/1948</u>
BH	<u>The Black Huntsmen/1951</u>
C	<u>Cerberus (with Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster)/1952</u>
LCW	<u>Love The Conqueror Worm/1953</u>
MF	<u>In The Midst Of My Fever/1954</u>
LP	<u>The Long Pea-Shooter/1954</u>
BP	<u>The Blue Propeller/1955</u>
CGE	<u>The Cold Green Element/1955</u>
BC	<u>The Bull Calf and Other Poems/1956</u>
MK	<u>Music On A Kazoo/1956</u>
IB	<u>The Improved Bionoculars/1956</u>
LM	<u>A Laughter In The Mind/1959.</u>
RCS	<u>A Red Carpet For The Sun/1959</u>
SF	<u>The Swinging Flesh (Poems and Stories)/1961</u>
BFOJ.	<u>Balls For A One-Armed Juggler/1963</u>
LR	<u>The Laughing Rooster/1964</u>
CP	<u>Collected Poems/1965</u>
PM	<u>Periods Of The Moon/1967</u>
SP	<u>The Shattered Plinths/1968</u>
SEL	<u>Selected Poems/1969</u>
WBB	<u>The Whole Bloody Bird/1969</u>

NP	<u>Nail Polish/1971</u>
CP	<u>The Collected Poems of Irving Layton/1971</u>
LLM	<u>Lovers and Lesser Men/1973</u>
PV	<u>The Pole-Vaulter/1974</u>
FMBJ	<u>For My Brother Jesus/1976</u>
TC	<u>The Covenant/1977</u>
TD	<u>The Tightrope Dancer/1978</u>
DFM	<u>Droppings From Heaven/1978</u>
FMNH	<u>For My Neighbours In Hell/1979</u>
LP	<u>The Love Poems of Irving Layton/1980</u>

ABSTRACT

LOVE AND LOATHING: THE ROLE OF WOMAN IN IRVING LAYTON'S VISION

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Layton's poetry presents a vision of reality which focuses on the inherent tension between the basic life-forces of creativity and destruction as manifested in man and in the universe. He has written more than 300 love poems wherein woman emerges as a central figure in his vision of reality. Her role must be seen against the background of man's world. Although Layton's view of reality is consistently pessimistic, redemption is possible through love and art. Woman, who is intrinsically connected to life, becomes the necessary source of redemption for man. She serves as a source of inspiration to man and poet. For Layton, poetry emanates from real experience; therefore, salvation through woman is found in the experience of sensual love.

The thesis explores the complexity of the role of woman as she relates to man and poet in Layton's love poetry. For Layton the most important role of woman is to serve as a medium for man or poet to achieve his highest goals in life -- the discovery of the inner self and unity with the Cosmos.

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LOVE and LOATHING: The Role of Woman in
Irving Layton's Vision

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CHAPTER I

LOVE AND IMAGINATION: REDEMPTIVE POSSIBILITIES

"How to dominate reality? Love is one way,
imagination another.

"The Fertile Muck"

Layton's poetry from his earliest work to his latest book of poems, For My Neighbors in Hell (1979), manifests a consistent concern with the inherent tension between the creative and destructive forces of life and death, or sex and death. In his "Foreword" to The Tightrope Dancer, (1978), the poet claims that the central concern or theme in his work is "sex and death". The problem for the poet or the artist is to learn how to live "poised on a rope stretched tautly between sex and death". Reflecting on the human condition and the nature of man, Layton adds:

Perhaps the poet's tightrope is not stretched between sexuality and death, but between love and loathing for the human race.

The imagery in the poem "The Tightrope Dancer" (TD, 1978) vividly presents the basic tension between the antagonistic forces of creativity and destruction in life and in man in the lines, "Awareness of death's pull/into nothingness", contrasted with "...the prod, the harsh shove of love...". The important theme which emerges in this poem is Layton's consistent affirmation of love, sexual love, as a creative force which opposes the destructive forces in life.

Layton's concern with the destructive forces of death is a concern not only with the process of natural death manifested in the cyclical pattern of nature - life, death, and rebirth - but also with death as a form of death-in-life. His poem "Late Invitation to Dance" (TD 1978) presents the dialectical tension between the two antagonistic forces in the symbolic image of the fragile butterfly contrasted with the images of death and destruction:

(---) disenchantment with the human race that has hardened like cement or settled like a freshly dug grave over which hovers a single butterfly.

The poet's disenchantment is presented through images of death, destruction and alienation:

Revolutions, wars, assassinations, and the deaths of great and famous men--all the familiar troubles. And explorations into space to find God wandering among the galaxies and to bring him back to his creatures dying of loneliness and anomie.

Nevertheless, the poet's personal attitude to life remains one of celebration and affirmation of the creative principle in life. He concludes:

Under the white stars I carry in my headpiece the same unshakable faith in the holiness of reason, beauty, and love.

The poet, with "unshakable faith", confirms that "reason, beauty, and love" remain the indestructible creative forces which oppose man's self-destructive nature and present a form of redemption to man. In "Poetry" (TD 1978) the butterfly image is used again to explore a similar theme outlining the tension between the poet's excremental vision of reality and the redemptive powers of love and art:

Fresh horse droppings
 on the dusty road to Eftalou:
 brown on light beige;
 and a single butterfly
 giving wings to a smashed bun.

"Poetry"

Layton presents the image almost as a painting on a canvas. The mundane ("smashed bun") is transformed by love and imagination ("single butterfly"); love and art (imagination) give "wings" to reality. (These two forms of redemption are represented by the butterfly image in numerous poems such as "Butterfly on Rock" (BFOJ 1963), "For Aviva Because I Love Her" (BFOJ 1963), and "Blue and Lovely" (LR 1964). Although the image of the two-winged butterfly represents redemption through love and art, the specific theme in "For Aviva Because I Love Her" and "Blue and Lovely" concerns the poet's struggle against the destructive powers of woman, discussed in Chapter III and IV:

Layton's poetry affirms that the Dionysian man, or the creative artist, must "dance" upon the tightrope between two antagonistic realities. Man and artist must commute between the two realities: his "everyday reality"¹ (the awareness of the tragedy of man's human condition and his destructive civilization as illustrated in "Late Invitation to Dance") and the "Dionysian reality"² (the realm of man's artistic imagination, the powers of illusion through art, and the process of transformation through sensual love). Through the power of sensual love and the power of art, man is able to transcend the limits of his ordinary world. Through the process of transformation in love and art, man is able to redefine his reality to give it form and meaning.

Wynne Francis in "Layton and Nietzsche" states:

The most powerful life is the creative life... The human Dionysian poet is therefore both the creation and the analogue of the divine artist, since he recreates himself and the world in every poem he writes.³

Layton resembles the "human Dionysian poet" in that his poetry consistently affirms the sensual life of the body as a source of redemption and inspiration to man. In his poem "Signs and Portents" (LLM 1973) dedicated to Eli Mandel, the poet states: "It has taken me all these years to discover that everything except writing poems and making love ends up by finally boring me."

One of the central themes which emerges from Layton's poetry is that sensual love must be appreciated as a source of redemption to man from the destructive forces of death-in-life, and that it must be experienced as a source of creative inspiration, as illustrated in the poem "Against This Death" (MF 1954).

The structure of the poem sets up the dialectical tension between the two antagonistic forces in the contrasting imagery in the two stanzas. The image of "this burly sun" represents the creative life force in opposition to "ice", as in "ice cubes", representing the forces of death and destruction. Ice ("served up") is a symbol of the decay of modern man's civilization. It is a symbol of death-in-life, not natural death, as in the cyclical process of life. The images of death-in-life such as:

I have seen respectable
 death
 served up like bread and wine
 in stores and offices,
 in club and hostel,
 and from the streetcorner
 church
 which faces
 two-ways;
 I have seen death
 served up
 like ice.

"Against This Death"

These images manifest the poet's ironic awareness of the destructive force in man's civilization. As the poem states, this form of death-in-life stifles man's sensuality, his creativity, and consequently his creative joy in life.

In contrast to the images of "respectable death" in the first stanza, stanza two evokes strong and vibrant images of Dionysian joy, "Against this death, /... the body, / this burly sun, / the exhalations of your breath, / your cheeks / rose and lovely", which affirm the creative process of life emanating from the experience of sensual love. The poet further states that it is through sensual love that the creative life of the imagination is set free, "and the secret / life of the imagination / scheming freedom / from labour / and stone." In conclusion, the poet once again confirms that love and imagination, as symbolized in the unity of the butterfly image with its two wings, are the two sources through which man can attain a creative life. Love and imagination in their unity comprise the creative force which can challenge and overcome the destructive forces of death-in-life in modern man's civilization.

Several poems such as "Sourwine Sparkle" (WBB 1969), "Discothèque" (FMBJ 1976), and "On Revisiting Poros After An Absence of Ten Years" (FMBJ 1976) illustrate the tension between the forces of death-in-life as manifested in modern man's civilization and Eros, the creative life-giving force. The poet states:

...If sex is the wine
of life, as I think it is, in which the ego bathes
and floats and swims in its nectar light and poises
itself joyously between exaltation and extinction,
if it is the unalloyed, self-intoxicating expression of
egotism--the animal flesh with its odours,

"Sourwine Sparkle"

The poet consistently affirms that through Eros, the experience of sensual love in Dionysian joy, man may liberate his imagination and achieve a creative life. And again, in his poem "Discothèque" in a modern, realistic setting of a discotheque, Layton sees the movement on the floor of the discotheque as bodies fusing into one movement, becoming the one, universal muscle of a pulsating heartbeat affirming the sensual life of the body:

On the floor of the discothèque
it's the tough heart-muscle
of the universe
I see
pounding eternally away

"Discothèque"

In the forceful movement of the "relentless thump", the poet notes that, "all the quaint escritiores/of the past/are being carted off/& dumped into the waves below:/religion government philosophy art/". In this image the poet becomes aware of the forceful demand of the body to assert itself in the present moment as an existing life force which challenges/

the historical forces of intellectual power.

In the poem "On Revisiting Poros After an Absence of Ten Years" (FMBJ 1976), the poet praises the god Priapus (Dionysus) for giving him "that one/tyrannous appetite Sophocles was glad to be freed from:/I mean 'lust for a woman's warm limbs ...". As the poet stated in "Sourwine Sparkle", he once again affirms the experience of sexual joy, "Sex has given the world more ecstasy than the Phaedrus", as being dominant over any other human experience. For the poet, sensual love is the central creative force which dominates man's life and inspires his creative imagination. He claims that it is within the affirmation of the sensual life of the body, that the body and spirit are united. As a consequence, man experiences a sense of unity within himself and a sense of unity with the cosmos.

The theme of celebration and affirmation of the Dionysian elements in life is contained in the poem "Logos" (CP 1965), one of Layton's strongest images of life celebration:

I laugh and praise the Dionysian
 Everywhere irrational thrust
 That sends meteors spilling into dust,
 This enchantment risen in the bone.

"Logos"

Yet another poem of equal intensity in tone and imagery which celebrates the creative life and extends the affirmation through the dance image is the poem "For Mao Tse-Tung: a meditation on Flies and Kings" (LM 1959). The poet says:

They dance best who dance with desire,
 Who lifting feet of fire from fire
 Weave before they lie down
 A red carpet for the sun.

"For Mao Tse-Tung: a meditation on
 Flies and Kings"

The fire imagery in the poem represents the creative fire of life, the energy of life as contained in the symbol of the sun. The sun, as in "this burly sun" ("Against This Death"), is a central symbol in Layton's poetry which represents the union of sensual love with the creative life of the imagination as expressed in Dionysian joy. Laughter and dance in Layton's poetry are two forms of expression of Dionysian joy as illustrated in "Logos" and "For Mao Tse-Tung: a meditation on Flies and Kings".

In conclusion, the complex poem "The Fertile Muck" (BFOJ 1963) defines the poet's position on the importance of love and art (imagination) as a source of redemption to overcome or "give wings" to man's tragic reality. The poem explores the theme of the role of art (imagination) and the ability of the artist to create "illusion", transforming reality and giving it meaning beyond appearances: "There are brightest apples on those trees, /but until I, fabulist, have spoken/ they do not know their significance/...The wind's noise is empty...". Through love and imagination (art) man can "dominate" or transform reality. Love and art present a source of redemption to man from his tragic predicament and from the oppressing death-in-life forces of his modern civilization.

How to dominate reality? Love is one way,
 imagination another. Sit here
 beside me, sweet; take my hard hand in yours.
 We'll mark the butterflies disappearing over the hedge
 with tiny wristwatches on their wings:
 our fingers touching the earth, like two Buddhas.

"The Fertile Muck"

In these poetic lines Layton presents a profound and striking image which symbolically illustrates the Dionysian state: man and woman in unity of sensual love, "Sit here/beside me, sweet; take my hard hand in yours". The poet affirms their unity with the Cosmos within (microcosm) and the unity with the greater Cosmos without (macrocosm), in full acceptance of the cycle of life, the natural process of life, death and rebirth: "We'll mark the butterflies disappearing over the hedge/with tiny wristwatches on their wings:/our fingers touching the earth, like two Buddhas." The "butterflies", love and imagination, are wearing "wristwatches" which indicate that they are also caught in the Cosmic order and process of nature--time: life, death, and rebirth. The universe is in a constant process of change and flux which includes all creation. The poem also manifests the paradox in the inherent unity in the tension of the opposing forces of life and death.

The important theme which emerges in "The Fertile Muck" is the poet's observation that love and art not only transform or "dominate" man's reality, but that only through love and art (imagination) is man able to transcend himself. The essential aim for man or artist is to fulfill himself as a human being and to achieve a sense of unity with the Cosmos outside. In the image of the "two Buddhas" with "our fingers

touching the earth", Layton affirms the redemptive function of love and art in man's life.

In conclusion, the poet affirms the importance of sensual love and the creative life of the imagination as the necessary forms of redemption to man from his tragic predicament and from the destructive forces of death-in-life manifested in modern man's civilization. Layton sees sensual love and the creative life of the imagination inspired by Eros (creative life force) as opposing and "dominating" reality. Through the creative union of sensual love and imagination (represented in the butterfly symbol), man is able to discover his inner universe (microcosm) and achieve a unity with the greater Cosmos (macrocosm).

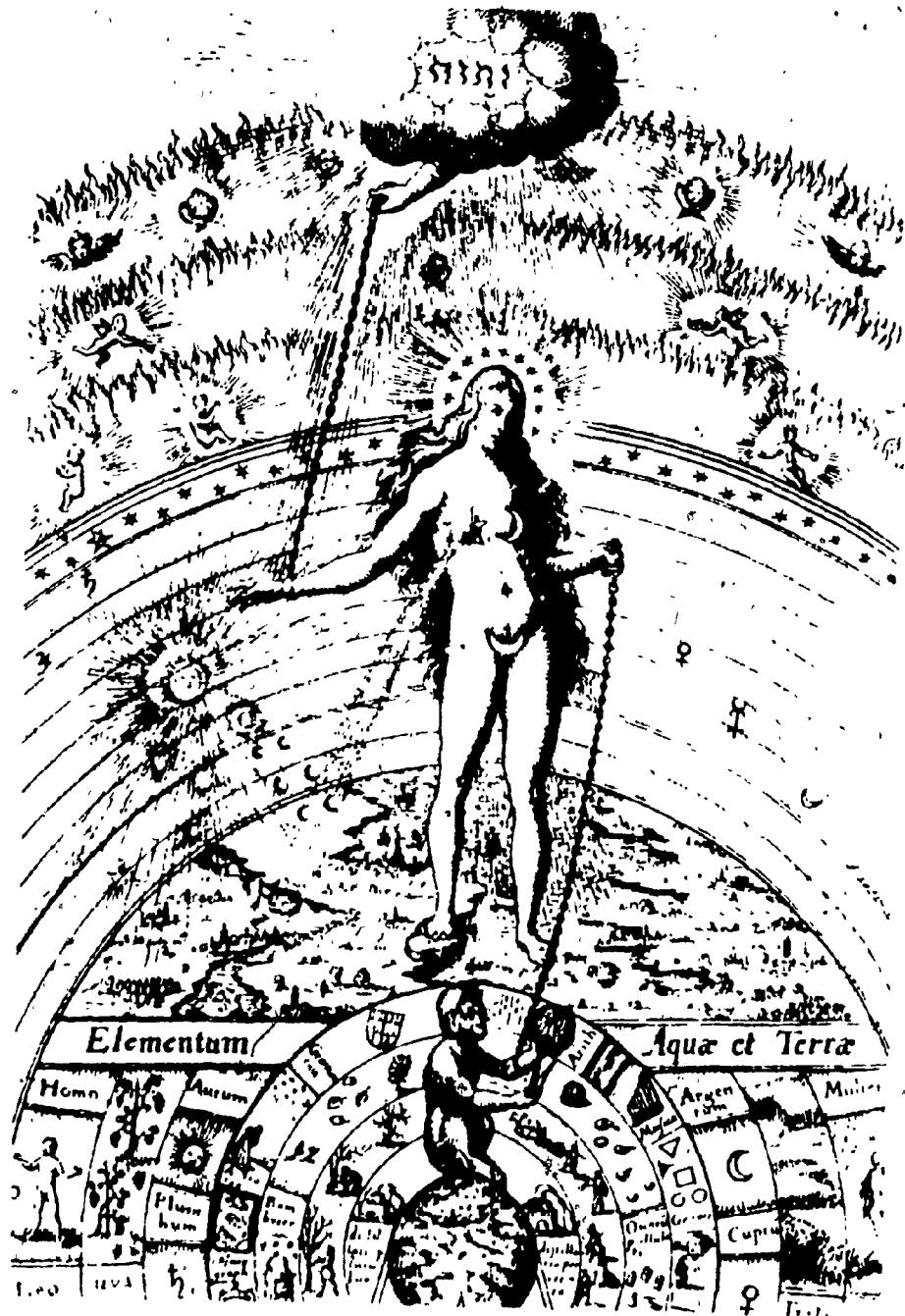
The poet also notes that the inherent tension between the creative and destructive forces of life and death, or sex and death, creates a "tightrope" wherein man and artist must learn to "dance" or define himself. Man and artist, cast against the destructive forces of dissolution and death-in-life, is able to assert his individuality and define himself in a creative life through the redemptive powers of love and art.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Nietzsche, F. The Birth of Tragedy and The Case Of Wagner.
Trans. with commentary by Walter Kaufman. (New York: Vintage Press,
1967) p.59.

² Ibid., p. 59.

³ Francis, Wynne, "Layton and Nietzsche", Can.Lit., 67 (Winter,
1976): p. 39-52.



14. The soul of the world

FIGURE 1.
THE SOUL OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER II

THE FEMALE PRINCIPLE: WOMAN AS INTERMEDIARY

I. Woman as The Other

Women and poems are my sole chance here to give expelled breath shape and contour and fable it with meaning.

"The Tamed Puma"

In several poems such as "The Tamed Puma" (TC 1977) Layton confirms the importance that woman holds in man's life. She is the Other through whom man defines himself, who gives scope and meaning to his life. In his "Foreword" to The Love Poems of Irving Layton (1980) he states:

So I take my place beside the poets, and less arrogant than the philosopher or mystic, am prepared to find the greatest good and embrace God whenever I hold a woman in the act of love. It is then I know with assurance and inexpressible delight that whatever it is life promises us, this must be it; and that a universe containing this experience must have something grandly important going for it.

Woman is intrinsically connected to life. She is the generative principle of life responsible for man's biological life and erotic life (rebirth into manhood). She is also a source of his spiritual life in that through the experience of woman in sensual love, man is able to transcend himself, and fulfill himself as a human being. As the poet

said, "find the greatest good and embrace God whenever I hold a woman in the act of love". In a poem entitled "Eric Kastner (1899-)" (PM 1967) the two poets in discussing life arrive at the following conclusion, "... Women are life,/don't ever forget that." In another poem "For Musia's Grandchildren" (PM 1967), the poet once again affirms woman as the source of a creative life:

Dearest love, tell them
that I, a crazed poet all his days
(...) made woman
his ceaseless study and delight.

"For Musia's Grandchildren"

Woman, along with art, stands as a source of redemption to man. As she is the source of life (biological and erotic), man feels himself connected to life through his experience of woman.

As Simone de Beauvoir states, "Man seeks in woman the Other as Nature and as his fellow being." The other as Nature (woman) can be seen in the ancient symbol of the goddess Isis, the essence of woman intrinsically connected to life.

Kurt Seligmann in Magic, Supernaturalism and Religion describes the goddess Isis:

Isis is the great female generative power, the essence of things.

Plato according to Plutarch

.....
...it was life that Isis loved and protected...Isis had many names, and she united the qualities of many local divinities. The faithful sought her protection, and the alien recognized in her traits of the mother goddess

of his homeland: Minerva, Aphrodite, Ceres, Hecate... She continues in a world of stars and upon earth to sow the essence of life. 'She is the feminine part of nature, or that property which renders her a suitable subject for the production of all other beings.' A seventeenth-century engraving shows the world still with some of the symbols of the ancient Isis: flowing hair, the half-moon on her womb, one foot in the water, the other on land. She is chained to God, according to Plutarch's saying: 'Isis always partakes of the supreme.' And man (the ape of God!) is chained to her, as he owes his very life to the seed that flows from her breast.²

One of the important observations which can be made from the engraving of the ancient figure of the goddess Isis, is that the figure contains a downward movement, ("one foot in the water, the other on land.") and an upward movement, ("She is chained to God,..."). The other important observation is that "man... is chained to her". Symbolically, woman serves as the intermediary between God and man. She is the generative power, the source of life, and man must turn to woman as life. She offers two forms of redemption to man: downward (earth) and upward (sky). Together they form a cycle which represents the cyclical pattern in creation. The downward movement represents woman's connection to earth, her basic connection to nature. Through the downward cycle (earth) man may find redemption in woman through rebirth into erotic life, into his malehood. Man may discover his own intrinsic connection to nature and to his unconscious. Consequently, through the experience of the natural, physical realm of life, man may experience the joy of sensual love and discover the profound depths of his creative imagination. Then, having achieved fulfillment in the positive force of the downward (earth) movement, man is able to find redemption in woman as inspiration

(symbolically represented in the upward (sky) movement). Through the process of the upward movement, man is now able to transcend himself, to discover his inner universe, and to achieve a unity with the greater Cosmos. Essentially, through woman, man is able to fulfill himself and achieve communication with God.

The redemptive and inspirational power of the goddess Isis, of woman as the creative source of life, is manifested in Layton's poem "The Convert" (DFH 1978):

Just when my faith is strongest
and I embrace Emptiness
.....
just then he turns his head
to smile goodness and peace at me
with your full perfect lips
and at that instant
I fall down on my knees
an awestruck convert,
my eyes two candles glimmering
in the dark

"The Convert"

Man feels alone and alienated; he has an overwhelming sense of "Emptiness" within him and around him. It is only through the Other, as a part of Nature, that his faith in Nature is restored ("smile goodness and peace at me/with your full perfect lips..."). These lines illustrate the redemptive power of woman; however, redemption comes first through sensual love (downward (earth) movement) as previously discussed.

Through love, woman proceeds to inspire a renewal of faith in man, a renewal of his belief in life. As the poet states in the following lines, "I fall down on my knees/an awestruck convert,...". The imagery in the poem - "my eyes two candles glimmering/in the dark" - symbolically

represents the rebirth of faith, or light in the darkness of life. Now, although the emptiness around him is still vast, ("in the dark"), the light of the reborn spirit is alive and it illuminates the darkness, ("my eyes two candles glimmering").

Thus, woman as the Other, and as a part of Nature, serves man as a source of redemption from his loneliness and alienation in the Cosmos. She acts as an intermediary between man and God.

Erich Neumann in The Great Mother states:

Thus, modern man, on a different plane, discovers what the primordial man experienced through an overpowering intuition; namely, that in the generating and nourishing, protective and transformative, feminine power of the unconscious, a wisdom is at work that is infinitely superior to the wisdom of man's waking consciousness, and that, as a source of vision and symbol, of ritual and law, poetry and vision, intervenes, summoned and unsummed, to save man and give direction to his life.³

Layton's poem "Click, Click" (DFH 1978) illustrates the "generative, nourishing, protective and transformative, feminine power of the unconscious" as the poet observes woman, in the role of the goddess Isis, giving meaning and form to "fallen leaves", representing the lost modern man. The first three stanzas of the poem depict woman as the goddess Isis, saving and restoring man's life as she is "gently patting their raggedness into place". As Erich Neumann stated, the role of woman in the figure of the goddess Isis is "to save man and give direction to his life". In the poem the woman's face is transformed into that of a

goddess:

Her face is beautiful
like glowing sculpture
and beautiful her hair
the colour of turning leaves
warm and russet all around her

The poet, through the redemptive and inspirational powers of woman, rediscovers the god within and achieves a unity with the God of the universe as he says:

The god in the white clouds
the god in the vermilioned trees
the god in the gathered shadows
the god who is everywhere
gazes at her with my eyes

Woman has indeed served as an intermediary between God and man. The poet now feels a sense of unity with all creation, "the god who is everywhere/gazes at her with my eyes".

II. Woman In Man's World

Woman I loved. Enough
She made me dream of love
And in that sexual dream
forget the whitethroat's scream.

"Orpheus" (CGE 1955)

The role of woman as a source of redemption and inspiration also applies to the concrete world of men. She stands as the Other to whom man may turn for refuge against the horrors of man-made history, as illustrated in the poem "Orpheus". Simone de Beauvoir explains the passive and dependent role of woman in history:

History has shown us that men have always kept in their hands all concrete powers; since the earliest days of the patriarchy they have thought best to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes

of law have been set against her; and thus she has been definitely established as the Other, 4

Layton's attitude to woman in relation to man's control of "the concrete powers" is precisely that as defined by Simone de Beauvoir as illustrated in the following poems. As the Other, woman has the power to offer redemption and salvation to man from the horror of his man-made history. Her role nevertheless remains a passive one. It is man who must actively choose his salvation. The dependent aspect of woman upon man reveals itself in the fact that man, in choosing salvation for himself, saves both man and woman. In the poem, "He Saw Them At First" (SP 1968), the poet clearly illustrates woman's passive position in a man's "concrete" world, her dependence upon his action, and her role as a source of salvation:

He approached and saw one that appeared to be female
and drew her out of the circle of excrement-covered
figures, catching and holding her reeking arm
in its half-movement of violence

"He Saw Them at First"

Layton presents a vision of hell, destruction, violence and madness, representing the state of man's history. It is interesting to note that woman too, "her reeking arm/in its half-movement of violence", has become a victim and an accomplice to man's madness. Nevertheless, as she is the source of life, she can never really turn against life, and therefore redemption can still be found in woman. The poem implies that since it is the history of man's control of "concrete powers" (active role) which is the source of destruction, it is therefore man himself who must decide to put a stop to the destruction. The lines, "He

approached and saw one that appeared to be female", and further, "He said, let me trace your features on the hot sands", imply that woman is therefore dependent upon man for salvation. Man must choose life over death as salvation for both. However, although woman retains her passive role as a source of redemption and inspiration, in the realm of love she may assume an active role to inspire love. The poet says, "...she threw herself on him/and cried joyously: 'I love you'. Without looking up/he muttered to the crackling sand, 'And I, you'." D. H. Lawrence in Fantasia of the Unconscious states:

If the man, as thinker and doer, is active ...The man may be the initiator in action, but the woman is initiator in emotion.⁵

Layton's attitude to the role of woman in the realm of love and emotion as illustrated in the poem, clearly indicates a similar perception. In the realm of love and emotion woman may assume the active role of initiating or inspiring love. In the world of "concrete powers" it is man who remains in control in the active role.

A similar theme is expressed in the poem, "An Aubade" (LP 1980) where the poet, preoccupied with the serious concerns of the world of men and power, looks to woman as the Other who stands as a form of redemption and salvation from his oppressing problems:

My girl is still sleeping.
When she awakes how will I
who read Husserl and Camus
tell her of my simple need of her
and that she must never leave me?

Symbolically, woman is asleep. She is passive and not involved in man's preoccupation with the problems of his world. "My girl is still

sleeping", indicates woman's passive role in man's history, i.e., control of the "concrete powers". When she does "awake" he will "tell her of my simple need of her", turn to woman as a refuge and salvation from the oppressing concerns of his world. She does not become involved in the action, but remains in her role as the Other, offering redemption and inspiration to man.

The poem, "Peacemonger" (SP 1968) repeats a similar theme. However, in this poem, the woman, in the role of one who has the power to actively inspire love, consents to use her body to lure men from the battlefields. The poet approaches the subject with some irony:

When I tell her
not all men are lucky as I,
she says to lure them
from the battlefields
she would give her small, satisfying body
to all the armies of the world
-even those of Nasser and Hussein
or the despised Algerians

On one level, woman appears in the traditional role of seductress. However, on a more serious level, it is apparent that, woman still functions in the role of the goddess Isis who protects life. She would "give her small, satisfying body" to save life. Woman always remains a source of redemption to man, "even...the despised Algerians".

Simone de Beauvoir comments that when man is tired of the pressures and problems of his man-made world, he turns to woman as refuge and solace:

"...the magical fertility of the land, of woman, seems to be more wonderful than the contrived operations of the male; then man dreams of losing himself anew in the maternal shadows that he may find there again the true source of his being.⁶

The pressures from the "contrived operations of the male" force man to respond to his instinctual drive of self-preservation which turns him to woman as salvation. Layton's poem "You And The 20th Century" (NP 1971) illustrates the situation described by Simone de Beauvoir. Man turns to woman as refuge against "this brutal stinking 20th Century". The contrast between woman as the creative life force, and the destructiveness of the 20th Century, is clearly set out in the first few lines of the poem:

On the one hand, dear girl, there's
this brutal stinking 20th century;
on the other hand there is you
or rather your incredible blue eyes

As illustrated in previous poems, Layton asserts that woman through sensual love ("or rather your incredible blue eyes") offers redemption to man. For man, she is not an inapproachable goddess, but rather a real, accessible woman, who offers redemption through sensual love. The goddess Isis is not merely a concept; she lives in woman as a source of redemption and salvation.

III. Woman and Man in Nature

One of the central concepts in Layton's poetry concerning woman is the patriarchal conviction that woman was created by God for man.

Man holds the primary position in existence, woman the secondary. As Simone de Beauvoir explains, "Woman thus seems to be the inessential who never goes back to being the essential, to be the absolute Other, without reciprocity."⁷ De Beauvoir further illustrates the strength of this patriarchal conviction in everyman:

This conviction is dear to the male, and every creation myth has expressed it, among others the legend of Genesis.

According to the patriarchal view, woman exists not as an end in herself but in order to serve as a companion to man (Adam), and to rescue him from loneliness and alienation:

Eve was not fashioned at the same time as the man; she was not fabricated from a different substance, nor of the same clay as was used to model Adam: she was taken from the flank of the first male. Not even her birth was independent; God did not spontaneously choose to create her as an end in herself... She was destined by Him for man; it was to rescue Adam from loneliness that He gave her to him, in her mate was her origin and her purpose;⁸

Layton's poem "Adam" (FMBJ 1976) begins "I wish we could go back/to the beginning/", expressing a wish to return to Eden, "There's only God and myself/in the cool first evening in Eden". The imagery in the poem suggests a calm, serene setting. God and man are in unity, "discussing his fantastic creation", observing the beauty and magnificence of the universe, "the moon and the stars,/and the enveloping stillness." However, man is alone and solitary. God tells him about woman, the creation which He specifically designed for man, "About the woman/he has in mind for me". The woman (Eve) to be created, has not yet appeared in

the garden of Eden; therefore the setting is very calm. However, the final lines of the poem concerning woman, "we talk softly for a long time/and very very carefully.", express a sense of foreboding about the nature of the second magnificent creation.

In "La Minerve" (LP 1980) the poet expresses man's first delight in his vision of the new creation. Man's experience of the wonder of woman is compared to Adam's delight in the creation of the first woman, Eve. Adam sees Eve for the first time and realizes that this magnificent creation is made for him:

But when you stand at night before me
 Like the genius of this place, naked,
 All my ribs most unpaganlike ache
 With foolstruck Adam in his first wonder.

The line, "All my ribs most unpaganlike ache", implies a belief in the patriarchal conviction that God created Eve from one of Adam's ribs. Woman is the Other, a secondary creation. The very purpose of her existence is to bring joy and salvation to man.

In his poem, "Return to Eden" (TTD 1978), the poet once again says, "You were sent to me", implying that woman came to him in order to save him from loneliness and to offer him salvation in the form of sensual love:

so that I could make my declaration of love
 beside a royal palm
 and afterwards kiss your small ears
 under the chorisia's white floss.

Another poem, "Orthodoxy" (DFH 1979) expresses the poet's gratitude to God for the marvelous creation, woman:

And he is all-merciful
for how barren would be my days
were you not mine
to delight and amaze

The central themes which emerge from the poems discussed in Chapter II illustrate that woman is seen in the traditional role as the Other (secondary creation) who acts as an intermediary between man and Nature, and man and God. She is a part of Nature. In her generative capacity woman becomes intrinsically connected to life. She is the source of natural life and erotic life in man. Thus, in her very existence woman asserts life and serves as a source of redemption and salvation to man from his loneliness, his alienation, and the horrors of his man-made world. She is the necessary Other through whom man may fulfill himself and give scope and meaning to his life.

FOOTNOTES

¹ de Beauvoir, Simone. The Second Sex. Translated and Edited by H.M. Parshley (A Bantam Book, published by arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York) Knopf ed. published, February 1953. p.133.

² Seligman, Kurt. Magic, Supernaturalism and Religion. (New York: Pantheon Books, A Division of Random House Inc., New York, 1971.)p.45.

³ Neumann, Erich. The Great Mother, An Analysis of the Archetype. Translated by Ralph Manheim. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963.)p.330.

⁴ de Beauvoir, Simone, The Second Sex. Translated and Edited by H.M. Parshley (A Bantam Book, published by arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York) Knopf ed. published, February 1953. p.129.

⁵ Lawrence, D.H. Fantasia of the Unconscious, Psychoanalysis and The Unconscious. (Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books, 1971.)p.98.

⁶ de Beauvoir, Simone. The Second Sex. Translated and Edited by H.M. Parshley (A Bantam Book, published by arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York) Knopf ed. published, February 1953. p.133.

⁷ Ibid., p. 131.

⁸ Ibid., p. 131.

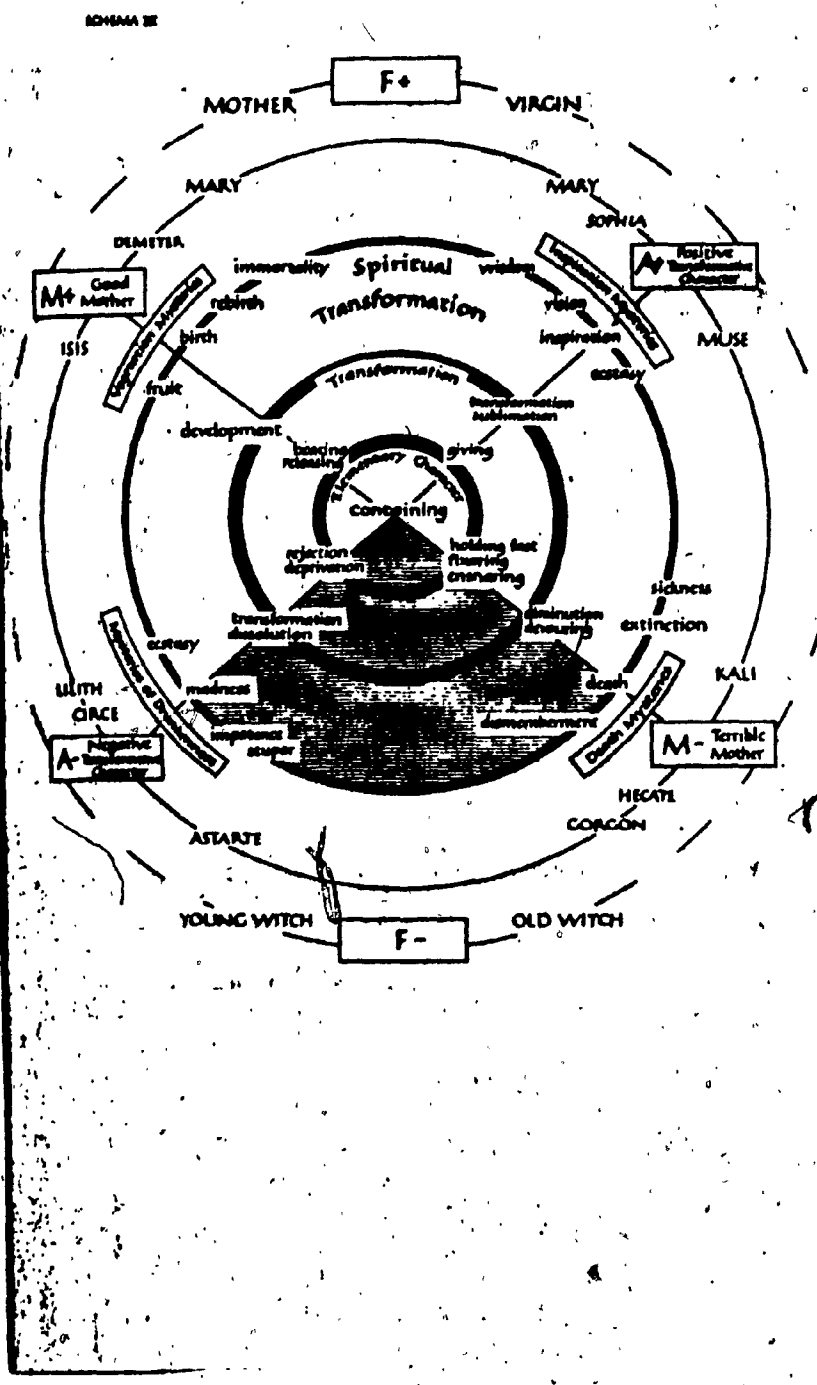


FIGURE II
THE GREAT MOTHER

CHAPTER III

ARCHETYPAL FEMININE: THE MYTH OF WOMAN

I. Woman as Archetype

The study of Layton's poetry about woman leads to an examination of the function of archetypes as manifested in a poet's artistic projections upon the female. The projection-making factor may be defined as the poet's myth of woman wherein woman, through the poet's artistic perception, becomes the artist's creation. As Layton himself says:

I fashioned you
composed you between darkness and dawn.
.....
You are my best-made poem,
The one I laboured longest over.

"Creation" (LR 1964)

The line "composed you between darkness and dawn", once again reminds us that for Layton poems are born from inspiration originating in the actual experience of sensual love.

Erich Neumann in his book The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype defines the function of the archetype of the Great Mother as follows:

When analytical psychology speaks of the primordial image of archetype of the Great Mother, it is

referring, not to any concrete image existing in space and time, but to an inward image at work in the human psyche. The symbolic expression of this psychic phenomenon is to be found in the figure of the Great Goddess represented in the myths and artistic creations of mankind.¹

In a further explanation of the function of the archetype, Carl Jung states:

Every man carries within him the eternal image of woman, not the image of this or that particular woman, but a definite feminine image. This image is fundamentally unconscious, an hereditary factor or primordial origin engraved in the living organic system of man, an imprint or 'archetype' of all the ancestral experiences of the female, a deposit, as it were, of all the impressions ever made by woman...I have called this image 'anima'.²

Thus, the poetry discussed in this Chapter concerning Layton's portrayal of woman will illustrate woman as "the Dream Incarnate"³ upon whom man projects his fears, his hopes, his aspirations, and through whom he hopes to fulfill himself as a human being. Woman is the many-faced myth who embodies 'the Dream' projected upon her by man, yet who emerges as a mystery which cannot be probed. Layton's poem, "Song About Woman" (PM 1967) illustrates the poet's perception of the complexity of woman's nature and the impossibility in probing her mystery:

I put all that I knew
 about a woman
 into a pearl-lined shell
 and flung it into the sea
 but a wave rose up like a fist
 and seized it
 and hurled it back to me.

Life gives him no answers about woman, but returns his subjective perceptions of woman(art) as it is his creation. Once again, the poet attempts to define and apprehend the essence of woman:

I put all that I knew
 about woman
 into an air-tight box
 and shot it into the sky
 but someone behind a cloud
 put out a hand and flung it
 back to the sand and rocks;

The poet attempts, in vain, yet another definition of woman through the process of his art. Having defined woman he hopes to be free of her; "flung it into the sea" and "and shot it into the sky". Understanding her essence, he hopes to be in control of woman. Finally, he hopes to escape and control woman in his life by embalming her essence in a poem, ("jewelled urn"):

I put all I knew
 about woman
 into a jewelled urn
 and buried it in the ground;
 but at once the grasses parted
 and flowers began to turn
 and the thing that I had buried
 came up without a sound.

The poet realized that the poem is not life, is not woman; therefore it is "without a sound". The poem about woman is always the artist's own illusion, his myth of woman, which he captures in the poem. The poem is his creation; woman is the creation of Nature reflecting the complexity and mystery of life itself. Therefore the poet concludes:

'Fool', said a voice full of mirth
 'she is perfect, my lovely daughter!'
 Then still were the lips of the earth.

The poet, as artist, is aware that whatever projection or creation he makes regarding the essence of woman, it is always and only a reflection of woman, a reflection of life.

In relation to the concept of the archetype of woman, or the 'anima' figure as defined by Carl Jung, the artist in his myth of woman creates an enchanted garden of his own imagination wherein woman reigns as the Great Mother, or the Great Goddess.

Mother-Daughter nucleus

The Mother-Daughter figures form the 'female nucleus' wherein all the possibilities of a woman's role in life are contained in their essence. Erich Neumann states:

Precisely because Demeter and Kore are archetypal poles of the Eternally Womanly, the mature woman and the virgin, the mystery of the Feminine is susceptible to endless renewal.⁴

The female passes through all the stages possible to woman, from virgin to wife/mistress, to mother, giving birth and continuing the "endless renewal" of life, death, and rebirth. However, the inherent duality in the cyclical pattern of life and death is also manifested in the figure of Mother who is associated with Life and Death; "The Great Mother is the giver not only of life but also of death".⁵ (a symbol of Nature itself, or of Woman as part of Nature), gives the gift of life to man, but in that gift is also contained the fact of death.

Through the figure of the Mother, man becomes aware of his own mortality. Layton's powerful poem, "Keine Lazarovitch: 1870-1959" (SF 1961), manifests the complexity of the poet's emotions for his mother, the first woman in his life. His grief at her death is a vast grief because it is not only personal, but is universal: "I thought,

quietly circling my grief,..." Through her death he becomes aware of his own mortality, "the inescapable lousiness of growing old", and of mortality as a fact of life. The contrasting and defiant images of life as reflected in his mother ("But I think now of the toss of her gold earrings./Their proud carnal assertion.") even more poignantly assert the power of death and his grief at her absence: "Now none will shake her amber beads and call God blind,".

However, in the concluding lines of the poem, the poet comes to an acceptance of the cyclical process in Nature, life, death, and rebirth. Consequently, accepting his mother's death, he accepts his own mortality and inevitably affirms life, "...her youngest sings/while all the rivers of her red veins move into the sea." As Simone de Beauvoir says, "But her role (mother) is precisely to integrate death with life, with society, and the general welfare."⁶ Thus, the Mother figure for the poet serves as a positive Mother figure who integrates life and death for him, who helps him to accept the natural process of all creation and therefore allows him to affirm and celebrate life. Woman, therefore, in the figure of the Great Mother, is still a source of redemption and salvation.

Turning from the Mother figure to its archetypal polar opposite, the Daughter-virgin, the poem "Song For Naomi" (IB 1956) reflects the poet's love and concern for his daughter who represents youth, innocence and vulnerability. The Daughter-virgin figure is not in the realm of

the erotic mature woman, therefore she does not present a threat to man. Consequently, he is able to love her without ambivalence. (Man's ambivalence to woman will be discussed in Chapter IV). The poet is acutely aware that in spite of her youth, innocence and joy of life, she also is caught in the irreversible process of Time: life, death and rebirth:

She can not see there
Time that pursued her
.....
And caught her,
My foolish daughter.

She is still too young and innocent to be aware of the threatening presence of Death beside her as represented in the symbols of water and deep lake, "By herself, near the water?"---"Near the deep lake?". Her youthful innocence and vulnerability evokes a protective love from the poet. He prays that Life or God ("Saviours that over/All things have power") will at least permit her to live long ("Make Time himself grow kind/And kinder/That sought her/My little daughter.")

The suffering expressed in "Keine Lazarovitch: 1870-1959" and in "Song For Naomi" reflects the poet's awareness and acceptance of the inevitable fact of death as a part of life. The figures of woman, as represented in the Mother and Daughter unit, make man aware of time as a cyclical process of nature, life, death and rebirth. The carnality of both Mother and Daughter, age or youth, forces man to become aware of his own mortality and to accept the irreversible process of life and death. Once again, through woman, man is made aware that she who gives him the

gift of life, also dooms him to death. Woman in her very essence represents the duality of life, the inherent tension in the creative and destructive forces in nature and in life.

II. Eros: The Edenic Realm

Layton's Eden is post-Lapsarian (after the Fall). For the poet, Eden represents the Dionysian reality (as opposed to everyday reality) wherein man or poet, through the power of sensual love (Eros) is able to liberate his creative imagination. Man and woman is transformed into a 'god' or 'goddess'. Eden, however, is neither ideal, nor idyllic nor static. Under the creative power of Eros, Eden is characterized by "surrender", "turbulence", "transformation", and "transience". The enchanted garden of Eden, man's Dionysian reality, is in a constant state of change or flux. Emphasis is placed on the creative moment of the experience, not on its durability. Layton himself best describes his vision of Eden, or Dionysian reality, in his "Foreword" to Love Where The Nights Are Long (1962):

Love is surrender, concern, ecstasy---Love's sweet torture transforms our grasping, unpleasant selves into temporary divinities and has us capering on the streets with the glory and arrogance of gods. It is the emotion that makes us endurable to one another; the flash so blinding that we cannot see wrinkles, grey hairs, skin pores, and all other evidences of our pitiful mortality. It is the alchemist in our blood and gonads converting the shabby material of our days and weeks into incandescent golden, rapture, giving our cloddish lives lustre and grace. We are transformed...

One of the important factors in the Edenic realm described by Layton is transience. Layton explains the function and importance of

poetry in man's life:

Only the poet can seize the moment, most joyful and significant in the lives of each, to confer dignity on the eternal.

The poet preserves and celebrates the Edenic experience in his poem which makes it immortal. The poem reflects the beauty and the terror of life in the enchanted Edenic realm as an affirmation of man's capability to experience the life of a 'god', if only for a moment.

Layton says in his poem "Party at Hydra" (LLM 1973) "Love resides neither in the body nor in the soul/But is a volatile element reconciling the spirit to flesh". Layton's vision of Eros, the creative life principle, reflects the duality of life in the tension between its creative and its destructive elements (love and hate) as illustrated in several poems concerning the theme of love. As he said in his "Foreword" to Love Where The Nights Are Long, "Love is surrender" In poems such as, "The Quill" (LP 1980), "Love's Diffidence" (BP 1955), or "Latria" (LP 1954), "surrender" does not imply only their mutual surrender to each other, (i.e. "Goodnight, Sweet Lady" (LP1980)), but also a personal surrender to the creative and destructive forces of Eros:

Love is so diffident a thing.

.....

I am confused, forsaken.
I have lost the way.

"Love's Diffidence"

The poet expresses a sense of confusion and loss because he is losing

control of his emotions. He is no longer in a situation of control but must surrender to love. The poet calls out in anger, "Love, I call out, find me/Spinning around in error". Then, in an attitude of angry submission he states, "Then strike, witless bitch, blind me". The surrender demanded of man, as illustrated in the poem, is not an easy form of surrender, for love demands the actual surrender of one's control of emotions to the force of Eros. Again, in "The Quill" (LP 1980), the poet repeats a similar theme:

I am a caster on love's quill
a rotor on love's pin or pool
I am a whirling jack
on a greased mandrel

In the image of endless spinning and confusion, the poet illustrates the state of confusion that man feels when he surrenders his control and becomes a vehicle of the power of Eros. The submission to the power of Eros must be a total submission to the powerful force of the creative principle of life.

In a poem entitled "Divorce" (DFH 1979), the poet questions the nature of love:

Is that what love is: to care knowing
stars and blossoms flare to extinction?

Here, the poet becomes aware of the most painful aspects of Eros, its transience. (Transience will be discussed in a separate section in this chapter, Demystification of Woman). In spite of the danger in the realm of Eros wherein the individual is drawn through the creative and destructive forces of love, the poet nevertheless affirms Eros as the

creative principle of life:

Give me, Dark One, these:
A woman's white knees
A woman's fine eyes
Her hot, lathered thighs

The nuptial embrace
The first look of love
A bird, sparrow or dove,
The unscheming face

Any bloom, a rose,
Creation's frenzy
The thrill of pity
--The rest is prose.

"Latria"

For Layton, love is the poetry which "confers dignity on the eternal" by transforming the ordinary day ("prose") into a state of Eden. It is only through the process of love, which demands the greatest from man, that man is able to attain the Edenic experience and to enjoy the enchanted garden of his own creativity. In this sense, man is indeed transformed into a 'god' through the creative power of Eros.

III. Transformation

The poet's (and man's) aspiration is to transcend himself and the bounds of ordinary reality through the sensual power of woman. She becomes the embodiment of his myth, or "she incarnates The Dream".⁷ Layton's poem "Creation" (LR 1964), asserts that woman, through the process of transformation in Eros, as well as through the transformation of the poet's imagination, becomes the myth of the artist's imagination:

I fashioned you:
Composed you between darkness and dawn.
You are my best-made poem,
The one I laboured longest over.

The poet's attitude to woman in the poem is almost impersonal in the sense that she has become his work of art as much as the poem is his work of art. As such, the poet claims, she belongs to the world ("What does one do with a poem?/One gives it to the world."). The essential theme in the poem is that the essence of woman, her reality as life, is transformed by the poet's artistic perception, and thus, she becomes a myth, a creation, a work of art. The poet's vision of woman is a subjective, artistic interpretation of woman, not a representation of reality. Therefore woman is "the Dream Incarnate" for man, upon whom he may project his hopes, his fears, his aspirations, his love, and his hatred.

In the poem "Inspiration" (LLM 1973) the poet observes that, "In this stupid century/addleated professors and mechanics" (representing the death-in-life forces in modern man's society) are unable to recognize woman as a source of creative inspiration. In their limited and narrow-minded perception of woman, they are unable to realize that within her essence she possesses the power of Eros. Through the experience of sensual love, she can inspire man to the heights of transcendence, transcendence of self and the bounds of ordinary reality into the realm of a 'god':

'Alas, their arms have never held her;
gazing, at you, woman
in this shy early morning light I could more easily
doubt the feel of the bare boards under my feet
.....
Truly this goddess has being
--in you,.....
.....
Come, let us show them
the fierce lumps on our divine foreheads.

Through the power of Eros, man and woman have been transformed into a 'god' and a 'goddess'. The sign of a 'god' on their "divine foreheads" in the form of "fierce lumps" is the sign of the god Dionysus. Frazer, in The Golden Bough says:

A feature of the mythical character of Dionysus, ... is that he was often conceived and represented in animal shape, especially in the form, or at least with the horns, of a bull. Thus he is spoken of as 'cow-horn', 'bull', 'bull-shaped', 'bull-faced', 'bull-browed', 'bull-horned', 'horn-bearing', 'two-horned', 'horned'.²⁰

For the poet, woman's essential role is to be a source of inspiration to man. She is the way to self-fulfillment, and the catalyst to his creative imagination. Simone de Beauvoir claims that:

Woman awakens in man an unknown being whom he recognizes with pride as himself; in the blameless orgies of marriage he discovers the splendours of his own animal nature: he is Male.⁸

As mother, woman gave man natural life. As a lover, she gives him erotic life wherein he can discover his own malehood. Only through woman in sensual love is man able to assert his erotic identity. The joy of man's experience in this second form of birth through the inspirational powers of woman, and his consequent transformation into a 'god', is illustrated in the poem "Divinity" (LM 1959):

Merely to touch you is fire
In my head; my hair becomes
A burning bush. When you speak,
Like Moses I am dumb.

With marvelling, or like him
I stutter with pride and fear:
I hold, Love, divinity
In my changed face and hair.

"Divinity"

The theme of transformation into a 'god' is once again repeated in the poem, "For Artemis" (LP 1980). The poet says, "She is so lovely and desirable/I am an immortal god". In the ecstatic moment of transformation through the power of sensual love; the poet seems to transcend his mortality, "and I know with certainty/death is unreal". These lines also illustrate the power of illusion or myth in the Edenic realm. As Layton claimed in his "Foreword" to Love Where The Nights Are Long, men and women in love do seem to assume "the arrogance of gods". In the poem "Farewell" (FMBJ 1978), the poet reflects on the sensual power of woman to make man transcend himself, "...whose laughter made me forget/the decorum of grey hairs" and "...in whose arms I rose/resurrected after the third day". The recurrent theme in Layton's love poetry is the affirmation of woman as a source of inspiration and redemption to man.

In the poem, "Look, The Lambs Are Around Us" (LP 1954), the lovers are transformed into gods, "Helen with her thick/obscuring limbs/about the waist of Paris". Again, in "Of The Man Who Sits In The Garden" (FMBJ 1978), the poet claims that the lovers are transformed, "I was Paris and you were my enchanted Helen". Thus, during the ecstatic moments of the experience of sensual love of woman, through the process of transformation man is able to transcend himself and create an enchanted garden of his creative imagination wherein both man and woman enjoy the dignity and the glory of 'gods'.

Layton's poem, "Sacrament By Water" (CP 1965), one of his most profound love poems, rich in evocative imagery and archetypal symbols, celebrates erotic love in "the blameless orgies of marriage". The natural marriage or unification of man and woman through the joy of sensual love, also symbolizes the creative fusion and unification of the male (sun) and female (water) principle in nature. Simone de Beauvoir states:

She is the earth, and man the seed; she is Water
and he is Fire. Creation has often been imagined
as the marriage of fire and water;

The theme in the poem asserts that the archetypal rites of marriage are indeed the rites of creation which unite the male and the female principle in nature as in man and woman, representing the creative union of the "marriage of fire and water". The poet asks, "...How shall the Sun at daybreak marry us/Twirling these waters like a hoop." Again, nature celebrates the creative union of man and woman ("sacrament") as, "Gift of the waters that sing/Their eternal passion for the sky". The male and female principle in nature celebrate each other's existence in creation and the fact of their union.

The poet becomes aware of woman as a 'goddess' who brings the enchantment of Eden to man, "Your perfect beauty is a wave of tumult/
Drops Eden about your thighs". This is the ecstatic moment of creation and transformation:

Green is the singing water
And green is every joyous leaf
White myrtle's in your hand and in the other
The hairy apple bringing life.

Green is the colour of nature in its form of rebirth as in the season of Spring. In the image of "White myrtle's in your hand" and "in the other/the hairy apple bringing life", the poet confirms woman (in the figure of the Virgin goddess, the Earth Goddess, and the Great Mother Goddess representing Nature), as life. She is ALL, representing all that is possible to woman as life in the full cycle of her essence as woman. The concluding image in the stanza celebrates the essence of woman as life. Erich Neumann states:

The goddesses with the flower and fruit are scarcely distinguishable from one another. Demeter and Kore are worshipped in one as "the Goddesses",... - it is only their attributes that make the distinction possible. One is often characterized as a maiden only by the flower she bears, the other as the mature goddess by the fruit.¹⁰

And he adds,

"...Kore holds a flower and the later-enthroned youthful Aphrodite bears a fruit, but precisely this goddess enthroned on sphinxes and adorned with flowers and fruits manifests the unity of the two goddesses."¹¹

Thus, on the archetypal level the symbolic representation of woman with flowers and fruit in her hand, represents the unity of the virgin goddess and the mother goddess in the creative rites of marriage. Woman is Demeter, Aphrodite, and Kore in one. Man delights in her magnificence as she is the creative source of life ("bringing life") for him.

IV. The Great Goddess: Eve-Circe

Layton's poetry concerning woman in the Edenic realm is lyrical and rich in evocative imagery. The sun, representing the creative love principle, Eros, (the dominant symbol in his love poetry) is a "blazing Greek sun" ("Vexata Quaestio" (CP 1965) emitting the creative energy of life. The night is seen as soft and sensual as in, "In the purpling dusk I softly call your name/...Soon the ballerina stars will come dancing out". ("Of The Man Who Sits In The Garden" (FMBJ 1976). Darkness and light fuse into creative unity wherein the essence of each element is strengthened by the contrast of the other. Symbolically, man and woman in their very difference affirm each other's essence. The poem, "For Francesca" (FMBJ 1976) illustrates the poet's lyrical use of imagery, music, darkness and light to create the sensual mood of the Edenic realm:

...ignite each other
into a flame
that lights my room's darkness
till I think the night has gone

The dawn comes
when I open my window
to let music and flame
astonish the whole world.

In his poem, "Earth Goddess" (BC 1956), dedicated to Marilyn Monroe, Layton addresses her as a 'goddess', invoking her to use her creative power to redeem man:

Teach us happiness,
The warmth, love, sanity
Of your redeeming energy:
Blest of women, earth goddess,
Teach us to delight and praise.

The image of Venus/Aphrodite rising naked from the foam of the sea is a recurrent image in Layton's love poetry. In the poem "Proteus and Nymph" (LP 1980), he imagines woman transformed into a goddess of erotic love. Through his experience of woman in sensual love, he sees woman like the goddess Aphrodite rising from the waves to save and delight man:

...I'm thinking of the waves
 gently cupping the breasts
 of the lovely nymph just risen from the sea
 and the water-lapping
 her thighs and her delicate love-cleft

When she swims away
 she pulls my thoughts after her
 in watery streaks of light. I become
 the sea around her

Man himself becomes transformed by the overpowering beauty and grace of the goddess or sea nymph. In his imagination the poet assumes the essence of the sea water around the nymph which is caressing her beautiful body:

and she nestles in my long green arms
 or is held in the flowing
 wavelets of my white hair. I billow
 above her like a dolphin
 stroke her limbs and nip her rosy neck and shoulders
 with sharp unceasing kisses
 till languorously she slips to the ribbed sand
 where under the haloing starfish
 fern weed and enamoured seasnake I quiver
 between her silver thighs

The imagery in the poem suggests the soft, sensual fluid movement of sea water representing the grace of movement of woman in her passive, receptive form to man. However, man himself is seduced by the irresistible charm of the sea nymph (woman) as he surrenders himself to her in love. He loses himself completely to the power of love wherein he

assumes the identity of nature about him.

Water, or the sea, in Layton's poetry is associated with the female principle in nature, or woman. Water, in its fluid, passive, changing element, represents the female principle in contrast to fire or the sun, the male principle, in nature. The elusive quality of water also represents the nature of woman, as perceived by man, in his futile attempt to capture her essence (i.e. "Song About Woman") and probe her Sphinx-like mystery.

In poems such as "Prelude" (SP 1968), or "Undine" (BC 1956), the poet perceives woman as a siren, a sea nymph, a Venus/Aphrodite rising out of the sea. The poet's vision of the archetypal myth of the birth of Venus seems to be a re-enacting of the ancient myth of Adam and Eve wherein Eve appears to Adam as God's creation for man. In a different form, the poet repeats the ancient legend of creation over and over again in the image of the birth of Venus, Aphrodite, or Eve. The central theme in such poems is the poet's conscious (artistic) and unconscious (archetypal) affirmation of woman as a creation by God-for man's redemption and inspiration.

In the poem "Undine", the poet is once again seduced by the sea nymph. He is under her spell (Eros), and loses his identity, or surrenders it to the 'goddess' in his love for her:

And I'm like water in a scoop of stone
Kissed into absence by a drying sun;
Or I'm dried Sahara sand

Wanting your wetness over me without end
 So possessed, so broken's my entire self

The poet associates his experience of love for woman with the myth of the sea nymph who lures man, her lover Parcelsus, to the profound depths of the sea, representing the profound and complex experience of love. He reveals the sexual power of the 'goddess' (woman) in that his desire for her love is so profound that he feels totally possessed by his desire for her. The poem also manifests the dark side of the power of the 'goddess', in that man feels himself completely in her power as he says, "Fish a soul for you from between my loins;/You shudder in my embrace/And all your wetness takes the form of tears". The sense of loss of self under the power of love, and the sense of sorrow in the image of water as tears, reveals the disturbing power of Eros. Love demands total surrender from man for the gift of the gods. The gift consists of ecstatic moments of transformation and transcendence into the realm of the 'gods'.

The complexity of the figure of woman as explored and manifested in myth or archetype is explained by Eric Neumann:

This wreath of symbolic images, however, surrounds not only one figure, but a great number of figures, of Great Mother who, as goddesses and fairies, female demons and nymphs, friendly and unfriendly, manifest the one Great Unknown; the Great Mother as the central aspect of the Archetypal Feminine, in the rites and myths, the religions and legends of mankind.¹²

The tension between man's surrender of self in love and his fight for

identity is expressed in his myth of a dark version of Eve, the 'goddess' Circe. Woman's destructive power evokes hatred and anger in man which he manifests in the creation of a negative, destructive, dangerous 'goddess' (woman) Circe.

The imagery in Layton's poetry concerning woman as Circe is dark and sombre. Wind, representing her fickle changing nature, her instability ("unstable as the wind") in "Woman" (IM 1965) and rain, (negative image of water), are the dominant images which create a mood of unrest, depression, conflict, and anger. Man is in conflict with himself and with woman. Therefore, man is also in conflict with nature.

The poem "Rain" (LM 1959) begins with the lines, "The wind blew hard in the trees/And palegreen was the wet grass". The green colour is a pale, sick green. The wind and the storm set a mood of unrest, anger and depression. The lover (woman) is false to him, and deceitful as she says, "I love you, Love../And gave her false mouth to kiss." The story and atmosphere in the poem suggests the setting of the old ballads wherein the actual drama of a murder of a loved one is acted out. In this poem, the poet also murders his false love, "I lay down her bleeding corpse." The vivid images become quite gory as "The rain fell" and the murdered lover* (woman) decomposes and becomes part of the earth which receives her, "how green the moss!" The lover is absolved of his crime by "The white rain"; as it cleans his hands of her blood and his guilt, "And clean my hands of her blood". The treacherous, deceitful woman

seems to deserve to die because her crime is greater than his. The poem states that death is a just penalty for a deceitful lover. In the poem, the poet has created a fantasy wherein he actually kills the false lover (woman). It is interesting to note, however, that even in her negative form, woman evokes strong emotion from man -- hatred, which is the other side of love. And even through her negative and destructive image, woman is able to inspire man to create, and experience life in its full intensity of creativity and destruction. Through woman, he is able to realize the profound depths of his own darkness and destruction. Thus, even in her negative form woman remains a mirror of man's own complexity, and an inspiration to explore and express his complexity as a human being.

Again, in the poem "The Air Is Sultry" (PM 1967), the poet uses the image of rain, ("It's going to rain,/The rain can't help me.") and the sultry air to reflect the bitter thoughts of jealousy regarding his love. He comments that, "She brings me suffering", however, he reacts in anger to her obvious deceit, and they both become false to each other, "She tells me she loves me./I tell her I adore her". The theme in the poem, once again, illustrates the negative power of woman, Circe, as she brings pain and suffering to man.

In "Fanatic in San Feliu" (LP 1980), Layton creates a powerful image of Eden (post-lapsarian) in its destructive form, wherein Circe reigns supreme. The lines, "They said it wouldn't rain/after the 21st of June/in San Feliu", symbolically suggests the poet's disappointment

that the enchanted garden of Eden has a dark element. But it has, "It did,/It rained every day". The poet becomes aware that the post-lapsarian Eden is an enchanted garden wherein both Eve and Circe reign in equal power. And Eros manifests the nature of love in its dual aspect, creative and destructive. Layton's vision of the garden of Eden is not ideal or idyllic, or static. It is characterized by turbulence and transience. Thus, the negative image of the "rainswept" garden of Eden reflects the poet's torment and his "terrible sickness" (love):

Now under this soaked awning
 beside an abandoned aquarium
 full of crawling baby lobsters
 whose rubbery black eyes
 I imagine moles
 on your lifeless breasts
 are only some empty chairs
 and myself,
 a lonely fanatic with images
 of your faraway body
 and corrupt mouth
 to torment him this rainswept
 cold evening
 while the high and swelling wind
 howls with his terrible sickness.

Instead of a sky with a moon and stars (representing the positive image of the garden of Eden), the poet is caught under a "soaked awning", with an "aquarium" instead of the vast magnificence of the sea. There is no undine or sea nymph, but only "baby lobsters" with "rubbery black eyes". Once again, the poet fantasizes the death of his deceitful love. He is alone and abandoned, "...only some empty chairs/and myself," suffering the torture of his terrible sickness", his love for the woman:

In these strong negative images, the poet reflects the bleakness and desolation within a man's soul (which may be symbolically described as the negative image of the garden of Eden) when he has been abandoned by a woman he loves. The intensity of the pain and loneliness is indeed a "terrible sickness". However, at the same time, the very intensity of the pain of love suggests its positive aspect which is the profundity of the love that man is able to feel for woman.

The important fact which emerges from the study of the negative images of woman as Circe, is that the poems never reflect the destructive power of Circe as a form of death-in-life, but rather confirm destruction and the negative aspect of woman as the necessary polarity to creation.

As Simone de Beauvoir says:

There is no figurative image of woman which does not call up at once its opposite: she is Life and Death, Nature and Artifice, Daylight and Night.. In the figures of the Virgin Mary and Beatrice, Eve and Circe still exist.13

Woman is life, and as life she reflects in her very essence the duality of Nature. In the figure of woman, man is constantly aware of the tension between Life and Death (e.g. discussed in the Mother-Daughter archetype), and the tension between the creative and destructive principles of life, Eros and Thanatos. The awareness of the basic principle of life; the paradox in the unity of the constant tension between the creative and destructive forces of life, forces man to accept his own duality. Thus, man is able to fulfill himself as a human being by his active choice to define himself in a creative life. Woman, in

the complex structure of her essence, allows man to explore the profound depths of his own nature.

V. Demystification

Perhaps the most painful element in the Edenic realm is the fact of its transience. In the poem, "Divorce", (DFH 1978), the poet questions the nature of love:

Is that what love is: to care knowing
stars and blossoms flare to extinction?

The theme in the poem implies that the actual tragedy lies in the fact that such experiential knowledge can only be achieved after the ecstatic moment has passed, the enchantment has faded. Wisdom is gained through the painful experience of love and the loss of love. Nevertheless, man must surrender to love again and again, knowing that love in the Edenic realm is a transient experience.

The theme of the process of disenchantment and demystification of the 'gods' and 'goddesses' in the garden of Eden, is examined by the poet in "The End of the Affair" (SP 1968). In the lines "Already the sun burns less intensely", the poet sets the theme of the loss of erotic power, as represented by the sun, the symbol of the creative life energy, Eros. And the sea, symbol of the birth of the 'goddess' Aphrodite (woman), is no longer fertile. The sea does not produce a goddess, now, "The foam now whitens my melancholy". The enchantment is gone. The sun and sea, symbols of male and female creativity, are impotent. There is no communication between the lovers who are, "like people who shout at

each other/at the end of the affair". Even the anger is only frustration. It has no focus or direction.

In a sad tone of resignation, the poet asks, "Where's its force, its fiery heat?", meaning the heat of the sun, or the fire of their own erotic desire for each other. He is aware that the final acceptance of the loss must be made as the sun (Eros) no longer relates to him: "Slowly the sun mounts the stone steps of the Plage/and stares at my bronzed chest and arms". The woman has forgotten him for she looks at him, "like a woman failing to recognize/her former lover". He has become a stranger for her. The power of Eros, like the sun, has gone out of their relationship and they become separate and strange to each other.

The emotional tone in the poem evokes a sense of dissipation of power wherein the lovers are left with the image of the sun (Eros) moving away from them. As the seasons change in nature, so do they change in human relationships. Everything in life is caught in the cyclical process of time, life, death, and rebirth. Eros, the creative life principle which dominates man's sensual life, does not die: it passes away as the seasons do, in a cyclical pattern of constant change and flux. In the image of the dissipating energy of the sun at the end of the summer, the poem captures the essence of the realm of Eros which reflects Nature in its cyclical pattern of change and flux. Man must therefore accept the process of change in the realm of Eros as an aspect of the general pattern of nature and life. Life is flux.

In the profound and complex poem, "Mahogany Red" (PM 1967), the poet explores the depth of man's suffering, his tragic awareness of the inevitable process of change in the realm of Eros, and the inevitable demystification of woman as 'goddess'. Man must witness the Earth Goddess of his Eden reverse back into the role of an ordinary woman. He must witness the death of his "Dream Incarnated". The poem, "Mahogany Red" explores the painful process of demystification of the "dream incarnate", woman as a 'goddess' demystified.

The very first line of the poem captures the sense of tragic loss in, "Once, a single hair could bind me to you;". In strong, evocative and erotic imagery the poem continues to expound upon the power of erotic love which bound him to the woman. Now, in a tone of disbelief and pain, the poet confronts a new reality:

Now, without warning
you are a middle-aged woman
who has tinted her hair mahogany red;

The sense of suffering contained in these lines implies a more profound awareness of man's tragic reality than the demystification of woman as goddess, or even the loss of Edenic enchantment ("Yes, suddenly you are a woman/no different from other women.") The complex emotions of pain and anguish and a sense of contempt for her "middle-aged" flesh, her futile attempts to cover the signs of age, betray his own fear of aging as he perceives it reflected in the woman's body. As Simone de Beauvoir says, "It is upon a woman's body--this body which is destined for him--that man really encounters the deterioration of the flesh." 14

Woman is the mirror upon whom man projects his dreams and his fears. It is in woman and through woman that man experiences his own reality. She is the Other through whom he reaches himself. The deeper tragedy then, lies in the fact that through his awareness of the deteriorating flesh of woman, man becomes aware of his own ageing process. That awareness brings about the consequent knowledge of his own mortality, and the inevitability of his own death. The poet exclaims,

The bulb in my brain
 once ignited and kept aglow
 by genital electricity
 is smashed to bits.
 I look out at the world with cool, aware eyes;
 I pick out the pieces of grey glass from my brain;
 I hold them all in my trembling hand.

With his awareness of the death of the creative power or Eros within him comes the explosive knowledge, that he must accept ("pieces of grey glass from my brain",)--the realization of the irreversible process of time, the unity of life and death, creativity and destruction. The poet concludes, "I hold them all in my trembling hand."

Woman as part of life now reflects death. The unavoidable reality that man must face as reflected in the ageing body of the woman as Simone de Beauvoir describes, is that:

Born of flesh, the man in love finds fulfillment
 as flesh, and the flesh is destined to the tomb.
 Here the alliance between Woman and Death is
 confirmed. 15

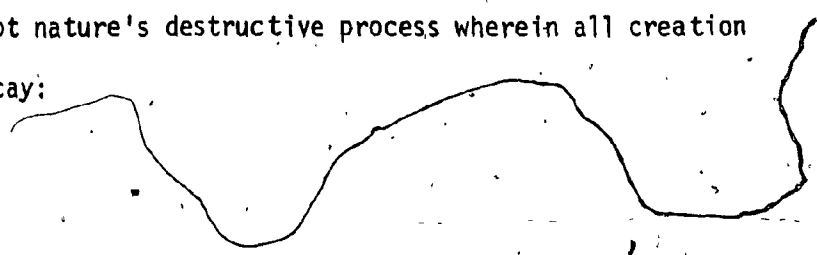
The concluding lines of the poem imply the poet's awareness of the deeper significance of his perception of the woman's ageing and losing her sexual power for him, as he says, "and not have wanted to

write/this bitter, inaccurate poem". The bitterness he feels towards her as woman is that she forces him to become aware of the inevitable process of time and that all life leads to dissolution and death. On the archetypal level, the woman as Earth Goddess has returned to the figure of Mother in her negative form as Terrible Mother representing her connection to Life and Death. She reminds him not only of the transience of Eros, as she is no longer an Earth Goddess, but also of the transience of all life, including his own. The poet confronts the archetypal myth of the Terrible Mother in all her destructive powers of capturing, ensnaring, and drawing him back to her womb, the earth. The woman (mother) who has given him natural life, erotic life, now claims him back to herself as Nature.

The poet's reply to the terrible awareness of reality as manifested in "Mahogany Red" is contained in the poem, "For My Incomparable Gypsy" (FMBJ-1976). The poet realizes that beauty in the form of art, as in a poem, transcends death, becomes immortal:

The beauty that nature would fill
with pregnancies I'd keep sterile
forever, to be gazed at, not touched:
a poem, a canvas under glass.

The poet states that in the cyclical process of nature all creation is subject to flux, change and transformation. However, he opposes the fecundity of nature with his own "sterile" work of art, "a poem, a canvas under glass". The poet continues to probe the problem of man's inability to accept nature's destructive process wherein all creation must ripen and decay:



What has the fine curve of your chin
 the trim perfection of your thighs
 to do with ripening and decay?

And yet, the poet is aware that beauty in woman must also deteriorate into ripening and decay. In rejecting his male role as a procreator (of children), the poet is refusing to participate in nature's plan of life, death, and rebirth. The poet turns to art as a form of a temporary 'escape' from the process of change and deterioration reflected in nature. In his creation of a poem, as a form of art which captures woman's beauty in the present moment, the artist is able to "dominate" the reality of nature. Thus, in the poem, woman's beauty is immortal:

Only in this embalming poem
 my unravished beauty be mine.

However, illusion through art is not reality, it is only a reflection of life. The captured moment in its stillness becomes a form of death, ("embalming poem"). Art is stasis. Life is flux. The theme in the poem in its conclusion is that man cannot "dominate" or control life. But through the process of art, as in a poem, the artist can give meaning and depth to his experience. As the poet said in his "Foreword" to Love Where The Nights Are Long, "Only the poet can seize the moment, most joyful and significant in the lives of each, to confer dignity on the eternal". If nature in its flux does not preserve the beauty of a particular woman a man loves, nor in fact, the lover (man) himself, the artist, through the power of his creative imagination, can preserve the image of his "dream incarnate". The poem gives immortality to the ecstatic moment of their sensual love and to their experience of the

enchantment in the garden of Eden. As such, Layton's love poetry becomes a witness to woman as a 'goddess' whose powers of redemption and inspiration through sensual love enables man to transcend the bounds of his ordinary reality, his ordinary self, into the realm of the enchanted garden of Eden where he joins woman as an "immortal god".

FOOTNOTES

¹ Neumann, Erich. The Great Mother, An Analysis of the Archetype. translated by Ralph Manheim. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963.) p.33.

² Jung, Carl G. Man And His Symbols. (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1971.) p.173.

³ de Beauvoir, Simone. The Second Sex. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953.) P.170.

⁴ Neumann, Erich. The Great Mother, An Analysis of the Archetype. translated by Ralph Manheim. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963.) p. 309.

⁵ Jung, Carl G. The Portable Jung, Edited, with an Introduction, by Joseph Campbell, Translated by R.F.C. Hull., (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1971).

⁶ Jung, Carl G. Man And His Symbols. (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1971.) p.173.

⁷ Nietzsche, F. The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner. Trans. with commentary by Walter Kaufman. (New York: Vintage Press, 1967.)

⁸ de Beauvoir, Simone. The Second Sex. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953.) p.164.

⁹ Ibid., p. 134.

¹⁰ Neumann, Erich. The Great Mother, An Analysis of the Archetype. translated by Ralph Manheim. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963.) p.307.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 307.

¹² Ibid., p. 307.

¹³ de Beauvoir, Simone. The Second Sex. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953.) p.161.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 149.

15 de Beauvoir, Simone. The Second Sex. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953.) p.161.

CHAPTER IV

THE MALE PRINCIPLE: AMBIVALENCE TO WOMAN

I Fear and Desire

Man, characterized by action and movement in his society, needs to control his environment as much as possible. His ability to control gives man a sense of power. Through the realm of love and art, he is also able to dominate reality in the sense of transforming it. The realm of love, however, presents a specific problem for man in the figure of woman, who is the Other with whom he must interact. Woman is life, and therefore she cannot be controlled. Within her own nature as microcosm, she represents the macrocosm of the universe in its constant tension between the creative and destructive forces of life. Woman as part of the universe, is characterized by change and flux. The ambivalence that man feels towards nature is also reflected in the ambivalence he feels towards woman as part of nature. In the poem, "Winter Light" (LR 1964) the poet states:

With you
I am negated and fulfilled

In you and through you
I am perpetuated and destroyed.

"Winter Light"

The poem illustrates precisely the source of man's ambivalence.

to woman. Woman, as part of nature, is so closely connected to life that she is responsible for both biological and erotic life in man. But, as previously illustrated, the gift of life from woman also bears with it the fact of death. Even in the very act of love, the poet notes the fusion of the creative ("pregnant summer cloud") and the destructive ("perishing seed") elements of life. Thus, the act of love, in its essence of creativity and destruction, reminds the poet of the connection between Sex and Death, and Woman and Death, as illustrated in the poem, "The Perfect Mouth" (TD.1978):

And watch once more the rose petals
 open on my manhood to distill the familiar perfume,
 making my frame twist with pleasure
 as she draws the sperm into her faultless mouth,
 the final spasm
 turning into my death quiver

"The Perfect Mouth"

In such moments of man's consciousness of woman's sexuality as a potential form of death (his own death), the poet sees the womb or the cunt in the image of a tomb: "In the poem "Her Mediterranean Mind" (Seventy-Five Greek Poems: 1951-1974) the poet observes:

O humid slit
 o welcoming grave
 that furies his hopes and bones,
 the hairy grass
 curling over them
 black as death

"Her Mediterranean Mind"

This terrifying image of woman's sexuality makes a strong

contrast to the erotic, evocative images of woman illustrated in Chapter III, wherein woman's sensual power was seen as a source of inspiration to man. However, the strong negative images of woman's sexuality in this poem illustrate man's profound fear of her destructive power. As the poet himself said, "the cunt can be an inspiration or a grave".* Thus, the source of man's ambivalence is his awareness of woman's proximity to life and to death. Insofar as man is connected to woman as a source of life (biological and erotic) his basic need of woman as life increases his fear of woman's power over him. Thus, ambivalence to woman is also a natural result of his awareness of her proximity to life and death, and the awareness of the power of woman's sexuality.

Otto Rank in Beyond Psychology explains the psychological basis for man's ambivalence to woman, his fear of the power of woman's sexuality:

She is causal, he is dynamic, irrational; hence had to make himself rational just as he had to make himself creative, religious and social: Herein is epitomized woman's sexual power as against her creative power, which is to say, the woman's strength lies in her sex, the man's in his creative will. Of this power of sex, man is afraid in himself and in woman, and this fear is quite different from his fear of man, which is social and rational. His fear of sex is really fear of the irrational, which he conceives of rationally as chaos, destruction, death. Hence, he fears the power of sex, which he has to control, as if it were the natural power of "chaos" which after all represents only life itself.

The first part of Rank's statement, "The woman's strength lies

* Interview with Irving Layton, March 1978.

in her sex, the man's in his creative will", is clearly illustrated in Layton's poem "Teufelsdröck Concerning Women" (LLM 1973) wherein the poet leaves no doubt that creativity and vision is "a man's prerogative":

Women are stupid.
They're cunning but they're stupid.
Life with a capital L wants it that way.

The poet expresses his fear and anger at woman's proximity to life (and death) implying that the pattern of life ("with a capital L") has been designed to grant man and woman different powers of creativity. Woman's power of creativity is contained in her sexual and generative power, "Their cunning is in their clefts/Where nothing can dislodge it/Not even Phil 301 at Queen's or Varsity". The rational, intellectual world of men cannot change the nature of woman, nor alter her basic generative role in life. The poet confirms:

Women will never give the world a Spinoza,
A Wagner or a Marx;
Some lab technicians and second-rate poets, yes,
But never an Einstein or a Goethe.
Vision is strictly a man's prerogative,
So's creativity.

The poet is convinced that it is "...Life who pre-arranged it this way/Knew what she was about". The poet, in a tone of satirical anger, "Giving men souls and women holes", betrays his fear and ambivalence to woman. In his fear of the destructive aspect of woman's power of sexuality, the poet creates negative sexual images of woman (images of death), such as "holes", "humid slits", and "tombs". Such images suggest the archetypal images of the Terrible Mother in her capacity to ensnare, capture, and devour. The poet fights against this terrifying image of woman, "For spirit straining to get free from

matter/And the world that would forever keep it blind and chained". As these images illustrate, woman is seen in the role of the negative Mother Nature, the earth that wants to claim her son. Man, however, is seen in the image of "Spirit" representing the force of man's creative will as against the power of nature (earth), or woman, as part of nature. The poet continues to expound upon the nature of man and woman as being "requisite poles". Man or poet asserts his strength in the power of his creative will and claims that, "Its concern is not with copulation and birth/But to go beyond the stars/And come face to face at last with God". The poet resolves the problem in the conclusion of the poem as his anger at woman subsides with the comforting resolution that:

Woman is spirit's necessary anchorage
 The blest assurance that it will never die;
 Let the kite soar marvellously into the sky,
 It is still held to the gorgeous flesh that holds it firm.

The contrasting images in these lines representing man as the "kite" soaring "marvellously into the sky", and woman as connected to the earth in the image of "necessary anchorage", and the "gorgeous flesh" that pulls man's spirit to the earth, clearly illustrate Rank's observation of the separate roles man assigns to woman and to man. As Rank stated, woman's creative strength lies in the power of her sexuality (earth), and man's creative strength lies in the power of his creative will (spirit). According to the poet, woman's creative power lies in her generative and sexual nature, whereas man's creative power lies in his creative will and artistic imagination. The fear and anger expressed at woman in the poem, points out the ambivalence man feels

towards woman in his necessity to define his identity in a separate and distinct form of creativity. (The artist's specific response to woman will be discussed in further detail in the Chapter, Poet and Woman).

Rank's psychological observation is that man's ambivalence to woman is centered in his fear of the power of her sexuality, and in the power of sex within himself (his desire for woman): He states that this fear is manifested as "fear of the irrational, which he conceives of rationally as chaos, destruction, and death". In Layton's poem, "Man and Wife" (LR 1964), in the symbolic and archetypal images, such ambivalence is represented in the figure of the Terrible Mother (reversal of wife as Earth Goddess) who draws man back into her womb:

If I do not hold on
to my maleness,
my individuality,
I shall become her son
I shall return to the womb.

I shall surely die.

The womb
is such a diminutive room
in which to lie.

The important theme which emerges at this point is the poet's confrontation with woman in the figure of the Terrible Mother, in his masculine, phallic assertion of the self as Male and separate. Paradoxically, it is through his sexual desire of woman that he becomes her 'victim', and it is also through his phallic assertion (erotic identity) that he opposes woman. (The paradoxical nature of woman in relation to man was illustrated in the poem "Winter Light" in the lines,

"With you/I am negated and fulfilled/" and "In you and through you/I am perpetuated and destroyed"). The poet continues to make his phallic assertion to woman as a form of his separate and male identity:

Time is my true mother,
 Space my father,
 I was made to batter doors,
 and my attentive phallus
 prods her and points to the stars.

Rejoice, O woman, in the pointer!

The poet concludes with a warning to woman that she must respect and enjoy his male essence, his separate erotic identity.

Again, Otto Rank explains the problem man has in his relation to woman, the problem of preserving his own individuality, his identity:

...love and hatred are not static concepts in the individual but dynamic factors operating as the basic life-forces of alternate unification and separation.. 2

And, therefore:

...love does not simply "change" into hatred, but both are manifestations of two opposite life forces: the tendencies toward unification and separation respectively, that is, toward likeness and differences. This explains why hatred appears not infrequently as the result of a heightened love-emotion which carries the individual too far away from his own self to an over-identification with the other. 3

Thus, in conclusion, man's ambivalence to woman is centered in his fear and desire (or need) of woman. His inability to control or possess woman as life, results in an intense sense of frustration. As Simone de Beauvoir has pointed out, man receives a sense of power from his ability

to control the concrete powers of his world, his control of his environment. But his frustration results from the fact that he is unable to control nature, and life, and woman as part of nature and life. In fact, woman's very essence as part of life, forces man to submit to the greater power of life and death.

Man must also concede to the greater power of eros within himself as manifested in his erotic desire for woman. His awareness of the power of woman's sexuality as well as the power of his own desire, results in a fear for his identity as explained by Otto Rank in that the "love-emotion... carries the individual too far away from his own self to an over-identification with the other". As the poet has illustrated in "Man and Wife" the opposite of love is not hate, but the quest for one's own identity. As artist, the poet looks to male strength manifested in phallic assertion and creative will, or artistic imagination. Through the strength of his creative will and artistic imagination, the poet asserts his individuality and identity in an attempt to control the destructive power of woman.

II. Duality in Woman

The ambivalence that the poet manifests to the duality of woman's nature illustrates man's struggle against the creative and destructive forces in woman. Woman is neither Eve nor Circe, but a fusion of both Eve and Circe at the same time. Erich Neumann makes the following observation:

It is an essential feature of the primordial archetype that it combines the positive and negative attributes and groups of attributes. The union of the opposites in the primordial archetype, its ambivalence, is characteristic of the unconscious.⁴

As illustrated in Layton's poem "Song About Woman" (Chapter III, Woman as Archetype), the poet's perplexity about the duality in woman's nature is his own awareness that woman reflects the duality of life itself in the inherent tension between the creative and destructive forces. Carl Jung explains the function of man's 'anima' figure (archetype) in both its positive (Benevolent) and negative (Malefic) form:

...Every mother and every beloved is forced to become the carrier and embodiment of this omnipresent and ageless image which corresponds to the deepest reality in man. It belongs to him this perilous image of woman; she stands for the loyalty which in the interest of life he must forgo; she is the much needed compensation for the risks, struggles, sacrifices that all end in disappointment; she is the solace for all bitterness of life. And, at the same time she is the great illusionist, the seductress, ...who draws him into life...not only into life's reasonable and useful aspects, but into its frightful paradoxes and ambivalences where good and evil, success and ruin, hope and despair, counterbalance one another. Because she is his greatest danger she demands from a man his greatest...⁵

Jung's perception of the function of the anima figure in man is that woman, in her duality, presents a challenge to man, "Because she is his greatest danger she demands from man his greatest...". Thus, man's ambivalence to woman is a reaction against such a demand. Yet, as the poet illustrates in "Coal", he is aware that the duality in woman's nature is a productive source for man's growth and serves as a form of

inspiration to man and to artist. The poet says, "I no longer understand the simplest things". The poet recalls that when he was passionately in love with the woman, "I was inarticulate/and I could not praise her". The poet, totally overcome by the power of sensual love could not produce a poem. He was possessed by her or his own passion for her, and "moaned like a swollen filthy stream/under her amorous fingers". However, "now that I loathe her", she becomes an inspiration to his art. The poet's conflicting emotion of love and hate, inspired by the duality of the woman's nature, creates an intense sense of frustration within him which results in a series of poems for her. Woman, in her duality, does not destroy inspiration, but on the contrary, she acts as a catalyst to the artist to increase his creativity. Thus, in the demand that she makes of man, she forces him to strengthen his creative will, and challenges his very being as a man. In the poem, "My Queen, My Queen" (LR 1964), the poet explores the intensity of man's ambivalence to woman. The image in the poem, once again, is rain representing the darkness and conflict of man's emotion (love and hate) for the woman.

The rain falls on the street.
 All this day I have passed
 Thinking of your deceit:
 Betrayals born of lust,
 A woman's vanity.

The poet's vision of woman is a negative one, accusing her of betrayal and lust and vanity. Yet, at the same time, he exposes the depths of his own jealousy. Nevertheless, in conclusion the poet concedes to the power of Eros within him:

There is no right or wrong,
 Love is a madman's dream
 And I must hold my tongue
 Where pigs and pygmies roam
 And you're my queen, my queen.

The poet realizes that in the realm of Eros, the dominant force is love itself in its complexity, and that rational definitions of "right" or "wrong" have no meaning. His "queen" is not a simple gift of life. Woman, in the fusion of her duality as Eve and Circe, is a gift from life in its full complexity to demand the greatest from man as a human being. She is a source of redemption and salvation to man, but inspiration through woman comes both from her benevolent and her malefic aspects. Cast against the duality of her nature, man must accept the challenge of life, and become involved in the struggle between the creative and destructive elements of life.

The poem, "Woman" (IB 1956) explores a similar theme of man's ambivalence to woman's duality and his need to accept her essence as Eve-Circe. The poet attacks woman as,

Vain and not to trust
 unstable as the wind,
 as the wind ignorant;
 shallow, her laugh
 jarring my mended teeth.

Again, although the poet accuses woman of being false, he is aware of his own jealousy. The earth goddess has seduced him, and he is suffering the most intense pain of love--the ambivalence of love and hate for woman as he is captured by his own need and desire for her.

The poet says:

I am lost, lost,
Beauty and pleasure,
fatal gifts,
she brings in her thighs,
in her small amorous body.

The image in the concluding lines of the poem clearly illustrates man's ambivalence to woman, and the power of her sexuality as the poet says, "I roar like a sick lion/between her breasts".

There is no resolution to man's dilemma. He is a victim of his own fear and desire of woman. As the poet himself had stated in "Winter Light" (LR 1964), "With you/I am negated and fulfilled/In you and through you/I am perpetuated and destroyed". Man must accept the fact that woman, as part of nature, reflects the duality of nature and its mystery. Woman remains beyond man's control or definition. Her mystery cannot be probed; her essence cannot be possessed.

In conclusion, in his poem "Queer Hate Poem" (SP 1968), the poet comes to the realization that he can only explore the mystery of woman, but he can never apprehend it. The explorations will only lead back to the Self. The poet, in his awareness of the impenetrable mystery of woman says:

I went out looking for you, O woman,
and found only myself.

"Queer Hate Poem"

The quest to probe woman's mystery through the projection of his own artistic and creative myths upon her, only serves to reveal the essence

of the poet himself. Thus, in Layton's poems, woman remains an artistic illusion, a creation of the artist. Carl Jung states that the psychological importance of the anima figure is:

Only the painful (but essentially simple) decision to take one's fantasies and feelings seriously... only in this way can a man discover what this figure means as an inner reality. Thus the anima becomes again what she originally was--the "woman within" who conveys the vital messages of the Self.⁶

Thus, the poet's discovery of the role of woman in his vision of reality as illustrated in "Queer Hate Poem" (SP 1968) concurs with Jung's observation that the essential role of woman as the Other is to serve as a mediatrix between man and God. The ultimate quest for man is the inner journey to the Self (the god within) and a unity with the Cosmos.

III. Poet and Woman

At this point it is necessary to examine the relationship between woman and poet in order to discover the importance of her role in its creative and destructive duality as she relates to the artist and his imagination. Layton's poem "Poem and Woman" (DFH 1978) explores such a theme:

I can make poems only out of chaos
out of hurt and pain,
I sing loudest when my throat is cut.

And saying this
I handed her the razorblade
she lovingly slashed my throat with.

After, when she was sluicing the blood
into the enamelled urn
my sorrow was that I could not thank her.

Nevertheless out of that silence
my greatest poem was born; the one
she sings to the hairy Cyclops on her bed.

"Poet and Woman"

The important theme explored in this poem is the destructive role of woman as inspiration: the Muse as Circe. The paradoxical situation in the poem is that woman, in her very essence of creativity and... destruction, is nevertheless a source of inspiration to the artist, or the poet. Even if she destroys him completely, the intensity of that experience in the artist will produce a poem, "the blood" of his living experience will be transformed into art, "the enamelled urn". Thus, in every Eve there is a Circe, and in every Circe there is an Eve. Woman inspires man in the duality of her essence, and even when she is most destructive, the artist, through the power of his art and his creative imagination, can transform that experience into art. The poet's creative will and his artistic imagination manifests itself in the poem which emerges from the experience, "Nevertheless out of that silence/my greatest poem was born". The poem, as art, transcends death, becomes immortal. Thus, through the process of transformation through art, the artist is able to control, dominate, or give definition to his experience of woman. As such, man or artist, can escape the destructive power of woman, "I sing loudest when my throat is cut", by transforming it into art, "...sluicing the blood/into the enamelled urn".

In the concluding lines of the poem, the poet explores a similar theme to the poem "Man and Wife" in that woman must respect the male

principle in life in its manifestation in phallic assertion (erotic identity) or in the symbol of the Dionysian artist. Destroying the Dionysian artist, the creative principle in man, woman is left with a "hairy Cyclops on her bed". The symbolic image of the "hairy Cyclops" seems to originate from Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy wherein the Dionysian artist is opposed by the "one great Cyclops-eye of Socrates".⁷ representing the intellectual, rational forces of the mind opposing the creative, irrational, erotic life energy of Dionysus. The death of the poet in "Poet and Woman" symbolizes the destruction of the Dionysian element in life, the creative life principle in man or artist, by the oppressive forces of the mind (reason and intellect) which split the body and the soul and destroy the unity in man.

Layton's poem "For Sassu* and His Horse" (TD 1978) best illustrates the poet's concern to retain his masculine individuality and his artistic freedom against the opposing forces of "woman" and "power". (It is interesting to note that the opposition to the freedom and individuality of the artist is in the different forms of "power" as in woman's sexual power and the concrete powers of man's world.) Sassu's horse, Blake's tiger, and Lawrence's fox, as well as Layton's own childhood heroes, are symbols of artistic freedom and vitality. The poet says:

Blake had his tiger
 Lawrence, his fox
 Yeats, his deer with no horns
 You, Sassu, have your horse
 wild dynamic unreal

*Aligi Sassu, a contemporary Italian painter.

on which I ride with my corduroy heroes
 Tom Mix and Buck Jones
 into the fabulous world of my childhood
 full of praise and wonder,
 making all men
 trapped in the foul metropolises
 by women and power
 who see us thundering by
 want to leap from the curb
 on one of your mythical creatures
 and direct him towards the red plateaus
 to the waiting sun

"For Sassu and His Horse"

Layton, in an interview with the writer (March, 1978) explained his
 vision of woman's relevance in man's (or artist's) reality as:

Woman offers him (man) inspiration, comfort, love
 and all that. Of course, they are wonderful, but
 more wonderful than all--because I believe that
 is what it is--is that the spirit is here for one
 thing, and that is to know the universe and to
 probe its mysteries. That is what the human
 spirit is all about and nothing must be allowed
 to interfere, nothing. No dogma, no religion, no
 political ideology, no woman, nothing must prevent
 your Shakespeare, or your Plato, or your Freud
 from probing the mysteries of the Cosmos and the
 human psyche.

The essence of the ambivalence the poet feels towards woman is in her
 capacity to be potential threat to his individuality, his artistic
 freedom, and above all, to his most important quest, to probe "the
 mysteries of the Cosmos and the human spirit". The paradox that
 nevertheless remains is that woman, in her dual capacity of creativity
 and destruction, remains man's source of redemption and inspiration.
 Man's ambivalence to woman cannot be resolved, for it is in the
 complexity and danger of the challenge that she presents to man, that
 woman also draws him into life. In his profound poem, "Winter Light"

the poet affirms his awareness of the complex role that woman holds in a man's (or artist's) life in the duality of her creative and destructive potential: "With you/I am negated and fulfilled/In you and through you/I am perpetuated and destroyed".

FOOTNOTES

¹ Rank, Otto. Beyond Psychology. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1958.) p.256.

² Ibid., p. 192.

³ Ibid., p. 192.

⁴ Neumann, Erich. The Great Mother, An Analysis of the Archetype. translated by Ralph Manheim. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963.) p.12.

⁵ Jung, Carl G.. The Portable Jung. (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1971.) p.31.

⁶ Jung, Carl G. Man And His Symbols. (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1971.) p.198.

⁷ Nietzsche, F. Birth of Tragedy. Trans. with an introduction by R.J. Hollingdale. (Markham, Ontario: Penguin Classics, 1961.) p.89.

CONCLUSION

The essence of the struggle for man and poet lies in the basic tension between two realities: "Eden" and Civilization. As both realities are a necessary aspect of man's existence, he must learn to commute between them: "How to dominate reality: love is one way, imagination another". ("The Fertile Muck" BFOJ 1963)

In the realm of art, the artist independently probes the mysteries of the universe. Through his art, he transforms reality, gives it form and meaning. However, in the realm of love, Woman emerges as the necessary 'other' with whom man or poet must interact in order to achieve a creative life. Woman, who is intrinsically connected to life, biological and erotic, becomes a source of redemption to man through sensual love. For Layton, poetry emanates from real experience; therefore salvation through woman is found in the experience of sensual love.

Woman, as life, in the full complexity of her creative and destructive potential, is the necessary 'other' through whom man may find salvation, and also the 'other' from whom man must guard his identity, his maleness, and his artistic freedom. The poet's ambivalence to woman is manifested in the complexity of her role as woman as she relates to both man and artist. Essentially, for Layton, woman serves as a medium for man and artist to achieve a creative life. Above all, she presents the way to the inner Self and the unity with the Cosmos.

For the poet, the essence of his creative life lies in the 'style' or 'manner' with which he is able to "dance" on the tightrope "stretched tautly" between sex and death, between "love" and "loathing" for humanity. Layton defines the situation clearly in his poem, "Orpheus" (CGE 1955):

And the poet's heart
Has nowhere counterpart,

Which can celebrate
Love equally with Death
Yet by its pulsing bring
A music into everything.

"Orpheus"

For Layton, the ordinary man and woman must learn to live with joy, affirmation and celebration of life on the tightrope between Love and Death, between love and imagination on the one hand, and the decadence of modern society on the other. It is the artist alone who through his creative ability to transform reality learns to "dance" on that tightrope.

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