

ELISA CRISTINA DE PROENÇA RODRIGUES GALLO

L.P. HARTLEY'S
THE EUSTACE AND HILDA TRILOGY
- A Study of Symbolic Structure -

FACULDADE DE LETRAS
UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE MINAS GERAIS

L.P. HARTLEY'S
THE EUSTACE AND HILDA TRILOGY
- A STUDY OF SYMBOLIC STRUCTURE -

by

Elisa Cristina de Proença Rodrigues Gallo

Submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

Thesis Advisor:
Prof. Ian Linklater

Faculdade de Letras
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

Belo Horizonte, junho de 1981.

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE MINAS GERAIS
FACULDADE DE LETRAS

This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by
ELISA CRISTINA DE PROENÇA RODRIGUES GALLO
entitled L.P. HARTLEY'S - THE EUSTACE AND HILDA TRILOGY -
A STUDY OF SYMBOLIC STRUCTURE.

complies with the University regulations and that it meets
the accepted standards of this Faculty with respect to style
and content for the degree of:

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

Signed by the final examining committee:

Ian Linklater

Prof. Ian Linklater

Advisor

Clara Vieira Aguiar

And by

Prof. Dr. Eunice Souza Lima Pontes
Coordenadora do Curso de Pós-Graduação em Letras da FALE/UFMG

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All my gratitude to Professor Ian Linklater, my advisor, from whose knowledge and skillful orientation I have profited a lot.

I am greatly indebted to Dra Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira, for her assistance and approval made me confident to start my M.A. dissertation.

My special thanks to Professor Aimara da Cunha Resende, who initiated me into English Literature, for her unfailing help.

My debt to Professors Ana Lúcia Gazolla, Carlos Alberto Gohn, and Cleuza Vieira Aguiar for providing me with bibliographical and printing resources hard to come by, to Professor Rosa Maria Neves da Silva for her interest in my work and her patient and fruitful final reading, to Marilda Valéria Azevedo for her labor in typing the manuscript, and to CAPES (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior) for a two-year scholarship during my Post-Graduate Course.

I should like to extend my thanks and indebtedness to all those friends who have contributed in some way to the accomplishment of this work.

To Edson José Gallo
To João Guilherme and
Pedro Henrique
To my parents.

CONTENTS

page:

INTRODUCTION

1

PART I - *The Shrimp and the Anemone*

1. The Shrimp and the Anemone 5
2. The Pond-Building 13
3. The Bath-Ritual 30
4. The Nightgown 45
5. Nancy Steptoe's Influence and The
Toboggan-Ride 50
6. The Drawing of the Heart 65
7. The Three-Legged Race 69

PART II - *Hilda's Letter*

1. Mustard and Hot Water 73.

PART III - *The Sixth Heaven*

1. Concerto for Two Violins 77
2. Highcross Hill 84
3. The Sixth Heaven 87

PART IV - *Eustace and Hilda*

1. Gothic and Baroque 104
2. The Ritual Bath 109
3. The Dressing-gown 113
4. The Sixth and the Seventh Heaven 116
5. The Shrimp and the Anemone 128

CONCLUSION

134

BIBLIOGRAPHY

136

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Some critics do not consider Leslie Poles Hartley as a major writer. In fact Mr. Hartley is not an epitome of perfect style or originality, but he undoubtedly has his place among the twentieth-century English novelists.

A prolix writer L.P. Hartley wrote seventeen novels, six collections of short stories and a critical essay.

It seems, though, that Hartley was at his best at the beginning of his career as novelist, and the four novels written during this phase - *The Eustace and Hilda Trilogy*, constituted by *The Shrimp and the Anemone*, *The Sixth Heaven* and *Eustace and Hilda*, together with another novel - *The Go Between* are considered to be his best works. It is on the trilogy that we have decided to concentrate.

Though seen as a "sharp-eyed" critic of social and moral values, which some consider to be the kernel of his books, Hartley's deep insights into human nature and his effective use of symbols to convey such a thematic has struck us as being the essence of his trilogy.

Thus, the focus of our work has been directed on this psychological level from which the central theme emerges: Eustace's development from a nine-year-old boy to a grown-up man, essentially the problems brought about by a life-time repression leading to frustrated incest in his relationship with his sister Hilda.

In his book *L.P. Hartley* Peter Bien remarks: "It's

toward Hilda that Eustace's incestuous desires are chiefly directed. This is the aspect of his neurosis with which she is concerned, but neither she nor Eustace consciously knows it. Nor does the reader, unless he examines symbols and interprets dreams. There are several open hints... but they nowhere convey the gruesome seriousness of the situation.

Incest, or rather frustrated incest, is the basis of Eustace's difficulty. Readers who feel that all the emphasis is on the domination of Hilda have missed the point.

The real trouble is that Eustace unconsciously wants to be dominated, wants masochistically to satisfy his sexual needs in this way, and most strangely and perversely of all, feels guilty for anything his natural vitality may do to challenge Hilda's domination or to put himself out of its clutches.

Eustace's sexual attraction towards Hilda and his attempts to indulge it, are presented by Mr. Hartley in several different ways: by actions which serve as symbols, by dreams, and by combinations of actions and dreams. The symbolic actions which suggest the incestuous relationship between Eustace and Hilda are many and all of a pattern. Each one is an epitome of the whole book, since each includes an ecstatic union of Eustace and Hilda, followed by deflation, tragedy and failure — either presented or implied."¹

These points presented, what we propose to do in this work is an intrinsic study of the symbols used to convey Eustace's obsessive sexual relationship and his repression which together lead him to a condition of latent incest.

Symbols will be examined as they spring up from the literary work itself, occurring and recurring as theme —

carriers in similar contexts, reinforcing and complementing basic ideas; acting and interacting for the same purpose of showing Eustace's problematic development from childhood and early adolescence to manhood.

As we are endeavouring to write a literary essay, the following of an established psychoanalytic line will not be attempted, but as we have opted for a psychological approach, psychoanalysis will enter in so far as it serves to enlarge or reinforce the significance of symbols in a specific literary context.

To explain and illustrate the central theme of the book we will concentrate on erotic symbols of sexual relationship.

Though not attempting at a critical study from a Freudian point of view, it is as well to point out that the development of Eustace's personality in the cause — effect process, perfectly chimes in with certain aspects of Freud's theories.

Nevertheless it is interesting to mention Hartley's statement that he has never read Freud himself, though he does not deny the possibility of having been influenced by him — since he (Freud) was in the air he breathed at the beginning of the century.²

N O T E S

¹Peter Bieri *L.P. Hartley* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963),
pp. 84-85.

²Ibid., p. 42.

oOo

PART I : THE SHRIMP AND THE ANEMONE

PART I - THE SHRIMP AND THE ANEMONE

1. *The Shrimp and the Anemone*

The central symbolic double image of the book — the shrimp and the anemone — is also a prophecy and as such it constitutes the prologue and the epilogue of Eustace's trilogy. The recurrence of this image underlines the unity of the theme — incest — secondarily illustrated by other different images all of which could be summed up in the main one.

At the very opening of the first book of the trilogy *The Shrimp and the Anemone*, the Cherrington children are playing by the sea when Eustace finds a shrimp in the act of being sucked in by an anemone.

Eustace calls Hilda and puts the situation before her, "weighing the pros and cons. Which was to be sacrificed, the anemone or the shrimp?"¹

In his enthusiasm Eustace forgets that the well-being of one depends on the misfortune of the other. Hilda, more objective than her brother, immediately enters into action. The result is as follows:

"The shrimp lay in the palm of Hilda's hand, a sad, disappointing sight. Its reprieve had come too late; its head was mangled and there was no vibration in its tail. The horrible appearance fascinated Eustace for a moment, then upset him so much that he turned away with trembling lips. But there was worse to come. As a result of Hilda's

forcible interference with its meal the anemone had been partially disembowelled; it could not give up its prey without letting its digestive apparatus go too. Part of its base had come unstuck and was seeking feebly to attach itself to the rock again."²

The relation of the shrimp and the anemone is symbolically the sexual relation between Eustace and Hilda: the shrimp being eaten by the anemone, the attempt to solve the situation by separating one from the other, and the disastrous ending — a dead shrimp and a disembowelled anemone.

The identification between Eustace — passive and physically weak — and the shrimp, and Hilda — lovely though dominating and destructive and the 'plumose' anemone is evident from the very first pages. Not only their physical traits but also the relation between the two 'couples' are the same.

Eustace's self-immolation in relation to Hilda, his utter self-denial for her benefit is well expressed in his consideration that "If he took the shrimp away, the anemone might never catch another, and die of hunger"³ followed by his hesitation of "which was to be sacrificed, the anemone or the shrimp?... the well-being of one depended on the misfortune of the other."⁴

This idea of Eustace's self-immolation and self-denial in relation to Hilda is reinforced as the trilogy develops, as it goes well with the theory of the consort who is sacrificed for the benefit of the goddess.

Let us refer to the picnic on the Downs, where a small bush engages Hilda's attention: "she peered at it from under her drawn brows as though it was something quite extraordinary and an

eagle might fly out of it."⁵

As Robert Graves⁶ points out, the spirit of the sacrificed consort is turned into an eagle after the flesh is consumed. This gives an added depth to the episode in the picnic when it gets dark and Eustace is startled by a cry he hears. Turning to Hilda he asks what it was and she answers:

"Only an owl, you silly!"⁷

The figure of the owl is deeply connected with the idea of ritual sacrifice again. It's the owl which announces the sacrifice by screaming.

Though not explored in the book, one of the most symbolical passages in *The Sixth Heaven* is when Eustace imagines himself climbing with great difficulty to get to Highcross Hill, at the top of the mountain where Hilda lives.

The mountain is associated with the idea of meditation, spiritual elevation, communion with the saints. Its peak has a mystical connotation. It is said to be the linking point between earth and sky, the center through which the axis of the world passes.⁸

In his imagination Eustace is not able to climb the mountain. He has already determined places for his rest during the ascent, on account of his weak heart, but even so he has to stop between two of the established points.

"Eustace had been told to take hills easily. Highcross Hill could not be taken easily, but he had established certain rest stations at which he called, somewhat in the spirit of a railway train.... He could be a fast or a stopping train, according to how fit he felt....

Unexpectedly, for he had been doing so well, Eustace felt a little out of breath, but to stop now would be against the rules....He was undoubtedly panting: supposing he just stopped for once, here, where he was, without paying any attention his self-imposed traffic signals? It was no disgrace for a train to stop between stations. He stopped, but his heart went on thumping. 'What shall I do?' he wondered panic rising in him. Seeing the pine tree's withered branch, the youth decided to retrace his steps. There was no point in going on to die on a mountain top: nobody would be better for it."⁹

Eustace tries to find justification for his having stopped. Mountain tops were for highly spiritual people to attempt not he. Hilda could live at such an altitude, but he'd better stop. His conscience greets him in the voices of a peasant and a maiden: "Bravo, Eustace, you've done the right thing after all. None of us wanted you to go on. It would have been certain destruction."¹⁰

The images fit the same pattern of the nuptial flight*. Hilda is a goddess and as such she could live on mountain-tops or rise to the skies. Eustace is nothing more than a poor human being whose function it is to keep distance from his goddess-sister and simply worship her.

The appearance of the pine tree, also has some significance. The pine tree stands for immortality and its fruit for fertility. ¹¹

* (See page 85 and forward for a fuller elucidation).

"Sure enough, overhead there was a pine tree, and it had a withered branch. Exactly why the branch was dangerous Eustace had never understood."¹²

And in *The Sixth Heaven* the idea is given direct visual expression with Hilda as a goddess flying to the empyrean. When Lady Nelly asks Eustace if he feels the flight was for Hilda's best, he just says: "I suddenly felt that the air was her element."¹³

As a goddess Hilda surely has to be the leading partner in her relation to Eustace. This position is emphasized by Eustace's hesitation and Hilda's immediate interference in separating the shrimp from the anemone by force, which at once qualifies their relation as a sado-masochistic one. Her fulfillment depends on his being inferior, submissive, clinging to her; her satisfaction always implies his suffering and though he chafes against her domination it is necessary to him.

In his book *L.P. Hartley*, Peter Bien well defines this sado-masochistic relationship between brother and sister. "She chafes against her domination at first but soon gives up and turns his inability to deal with the outside world, represented by Hilda, inward upon himself, seeking pleasure in humiliation and psychic chastisement."¹⁴

At the conclusion further on, with Eustace's death at the end of the third book of the trilogy, *Eustace and Hilda* the consequences of the devouring - woman's attitudes are felt: the utter destruction of one of them is the only way of keeping the other going. But Hilda's fulfillment is not complete. Hilda, the devouring woman, is at the same time Hilda lover-mother who

feels attached to Eustace in a complex sense and wants him to be happy. That's why she remains, as the anemone, disembowelled. Hilda is crippled for life. The fact of the anemone being deprived of its digestive apparatus strongly suggests that something 'below the waist' has been damaged crucially. This idea is emphasized in the third book of the trilogy when Hilda suffers from emotional paralysis for a time, after her breaking-off with Dick Staveley. It's the sexual appetite that has been atrophied. Hilda will go on living, but sure enough she won't ever manage to find her mate. She is condemned to live in symbiosis with the shrimp.

"The shrimp will die while the anemone though suffering will survive. This is just what happens at the end of the book: Eustace-shrimp perishes while Hilda has to sublimate her sexual feelings by dominating the clinic."¹⁵

It is also on the beach that Eustace meets his Nancy Steptoe to whom he is physically attracted and goes to play with her. During the dialogue which follows this scene, the incestuous trait in brother and sister's relationship is made evident through Hilda's jealous words about Nancy.

Nancy is digging herself a castle and Hilda snatching Eustace's hand and whirling him away says authoritatively:

"Come along... You know, you don't really want to talk to Nancy. She's stuck-up, as they all are. Now we'll see what's happened to the pond....."¹⁶

And catching a glimpse of Nancy's sandcastle she remarks:

"She'll never get that done. They're always the same. They try to make everything bigger than anybody else, and they leave it half done and look silly."¹⁷

1. *The Shrimp and the Anemone*

The central symbolic double image of the book — the shrimp and the anemone — is also a prophecy and as such it constitutes the prologue and the epilogue of Eustace's trilogy. The recurrence of this image underlines the unity of the theme — incest — secondarily illustrated by other different images all of which could be summed up in the main one.

At the very opening of the first book of the trilogy *The Shrimp and the Anemone*, the Cherrington children are playing by the sea when Eustace finds a shrimp in the act of being sucked in by an anemone.

Eustace calls Hilda and puts the situation before her, "weighing the pros and cons. Which was to be sacrificed, the anemone or the shrimp?"¹

In his enthusiasm Eustace forgets that the well-being of one depends on the misfortune of the other. Hilda, more objective than her brother, immediately enters into action. The result is as follows:

"The shrimp lay in the palm of Hilda's hand, a sad, disappointing sight. Its reprieve had come too late; its head was mangled and there was no vibration in its tail. The horrible appearance fascinated Eustace for a moment, then upset him so much that he turned away with trembling lips. But there was worse to come. As a result of Hilda's

As Hilda vehemently refuses to let Eustace go and play with Nancy, he just walks away from throwing in her face the terrible accusation that she was a murderer. She has killed the shrimp and the anemone.

Though proud, superior and rational on the surface Hilda is hurt by Eustace's desertion. We see thus their interdependence. She needs his love as much as he needs hers though for dominance in her case rather than dependence.

ooo

N O T E S

- ¹L.P. Hartley, *The Shrimp and the Anemone* (London: Faber and Faber Ltda., 1969), p. 10.
- ²Ibid., pp. 10-11.
- ³Ibid., p. 9.
- ⁴Ibid., p. 10.
- ⁵Ibid., p. 38.
- ⁶Robert Graves, *The White Goddess* (New York; Vintage Books, 1969).
- ⁷Ibid., p. 48.
- ⁸Juan-Eduardo Cirlot, *Diccionario de Símbolos* (Barcelona: Editorial Labors S.A., 1978), pp. 308-310.
- ⁹L.P. Hartley, *The Sixth Heaven* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1974), pp. 86-87.
- ¹⁰Ibid., pp. 87-88.
- ¹¹Cirlot, Op.cit., p. 364.
- ¹²*The Sixth Heaven*, p. 87.
- ¹³Ibid., p. 167.
- ¹⁴Bien, Op. cit., p. 75.
- ¹⁵Ibid., p. 77.
- ¹⁶*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, p. 12.
- ¹⁷Ibid., pp. 12-13.

2. *The Pond-Building*

Building a pond on the sands of Anchorstone is a usual game for Eustace and Hilda.

Besides its symbolic function which will be discussed further on, one should remark on its recurrence throughout the trilogy. The pond-theme is a leitmotif in the novel serving as a unifying mechanism which links past and future and vice-versa and thus preserves its inward unity and draws attention to the determinism of time.

"The pond-motif is repeated throughout the trilogy, illuminating new situations which are then seen in the light of its signification, and inevitably expanding, in its own right, to widen that signification." ¹

On the symbolic level it's an image each time more and more pregnant with meaning, since it becomes identified with more and more characters, as well as by the shifting of its own characteristics.

As a symbolic theme-carrier the pond is deeply related to Eustace and Hilda — both to their personalities as independent beings and their relationship as interdependent ones.

The children's reactions toward pond-building illuminate important traits of their personalities since they are directly reflected on their reactions to life.

The pond stands for the unity of the Cherrington children in their struggle against the outside world, and

above all, the pond, for Eustace and Hilda means protection and security. Both because of its shape and the water it contains, we may say that the pond represents the womb, water being the amniotic liquid.

Their building the pond is their returning to the womb, this return is always 'provoked' by Hilda and accepted without demur by Eustace.

One of the basic relationships between sister and brother is thus established: it is the mother — son relationship.

Hilda, perhaps because of her disguised insecurity, likes - indeed - needs to play the mother's role. This need is not easily satisfied. Sometimes she compels Eustace to work on the pond more than he wants, and in one of last pond-building scenes of the book she explicitly says: "Let's make the pond larger this time... we may not get a chance like this again. 'Much larger?' asked Eustace." ²

Eustace already reveals his position. He needs the protection of a womb, he misses his dead mother's presence and submissively accepts mother-surrogates but his needs have a limit, and when the maternal protection turns into oppression, he simply tries to escape from it, as any normal boy would.

As Peter Bien points out, it's interesting to notice that "the state of the pond's completion parallels the degree to which Eustace is united to Hilda." ³

The following excerpt from *The Shrimp and the Anemone* will serve to show that ambitious Hilda is going to display in the pond building the same passionate determinism she will later display in the clinic, while hesitant Eustace will always adhere to his modest aims for fear of changing what has already been established and facing the unknown.

[Hilda] "'Let's make the pond larger this time... We're earlier than we generally are, we may not get a chance like this again.'"

'Much larger?' asked Eustace.

'Well, we could take in this rock here', said Hilda... 'Then the wall would go like this' — and cutting with the spade a line through the sand she sketched an ambitious extension of their traditional ground plan. 'It will look wonderful from the cliff', she added persuasively. 'Like a real lake.'

'Don't you think it's more than we can manage?' asked Eustace still smarting from his defeat at the hands of the automatic machine... 'You can't tell till you try' Hilda said... For him the pond had ceased to be a symbol. Of old, each time it rose from the sands and spread its silver surface to the sky it proclaimed that the Cherrington children had measured their strength against the universe, and won. They had imposed an order; they had left a mark; they had added a meaning to life. That was why the last moment, when the completion of the work was only distant by a few spadefuls, was so tense and exciting. In those moments the glory of living gathered itself into a wave and flowed over them. The experience was ecstatic and timeless, it opened a window upon eternity and

whilst it lasted and again when they surveyed their handiwork from the cliff-top, they felt themselves to be immortal." ⁴

As a symbol of the togetherness of the Cherrington children against the world this passage of the pond-building indirectly conveys a sense of sexual unity. The description of the last moments of the pond-making - as in sexual intercourse - were *tense* and *exciting* and at this climax there was the glorious sensation of being one in an "ecstatic and timeless experience." Once more we have a clear reference to Eustace's and Hilda's incestuous tendency.

Attention should be paid to other water-images contained in the passage mentioned: "In those moments the glory of living gathered itself into a wave and flowed over them." Water, here, symbolizes the womb, the voyage of liberation. Their union is so intense that their beings are fused in one by some high feeling - strong, revolving and powerful like a wave that engulfs, that knows no limits. The image conveys brother's and sister's feeling of achieving something beyond them, while covered by a gigantic mass of water.

The title of the the second chapter of *The Shrimp and the Anemone* "Patching - it up" has then a double significance.

In it Hilda bitterly refers to the incident with Nancy Steptoe. Reproaching Eustace for his behavior she compels him once again to say that he loves her. "The pond was empty and all the imprisoned water had made its way to the sea." ⁵ The 'patching up', the mending of the pond indicates a partial reconciliation - the temporary mending in Eustace's and Hilda's relationship.

Harmony was restored when

"together they repaired the damage and with it the lesion in their affections; a glow of reconciliation pervaded them, increasing with each spadeful. Soon the bank was as strong as before. But you could not help seeing there had been a catastrophe... [from] the channels the new supplies came down from the pools above in the thinnest trickle, hardly covering the bottom and leaving bare a number of small stones which at high water were decently submerged. They had no function except by the order of their disappearance to measure the depth of the pond; now they stood out, emblems of failure, noticeable for the first time, like a handful of conventional remarks exchanged between old friends when the life has gone out of their relationship."⁶

On pages 23-24 of *The Shrimp and the Anemone* we have a picture of a completely dry pond. Since it was left only a quarter full it could not have overflowed. "The gaping hole in the retaining wall must be the work of an enemy and they are to discover soon that this "enemy" is Gerald Stepoe.

As Peter Bien has pointed out we can observe that other people's actions toward the pond indirectly reproduce the impact of their attitudes towards Eustace and Hilda.

Nancy Steptoe, Hilda's rival in Eustace's affection, treats the pond superciliously. In her superiority the children's pond is something foolish enough to be compared to the sand-castles she herself is building. This same attitude of indifference and disdain is going to be kept in her scornful remarks about Eustace's submission to and dependence on his elder sister.

Eustace's worries about Hilda's well-being as well as his devotion to his sister as a symbol of perfection are contemptuously rejected by Nancy.

This can be observed from the first chapter of the book. The Cherrington children are playing on the beach, building a pond as usual, when the Steptoes - Nancy and her brother Gerald - arrive. It is interesting to call attention to the children's surname - Steptoe. To step on people's toes means to offend them, and that is exactly what they do all the time. Eustace tells Hilda he would like to play with Nancy and suggests they should both go and help her build her sandcastle. Hilda not only rejects the idea but also forbids Eustace to go. He vehemently disagrees and after much quarreling, Hilda hurt in her pride, orders him to go. Eustace is not touched by Hilda's anger or tears, as he usually is. He immediately abandons Hilda and their unfinished pond and goes over to Nancy.

After playing with Nancy for a time, guilt and remorse begin to torment Eustace's mind. Doing his best to disguise from Nancy the real reasons of his departure, he politely says:

"I think I'll go back now, if it's all the same to you'.

He hoped by this rather magnificent phrase to make his departure seem as casual as possible, but Nancy saw through him.

'Can't leave your big sister?' she inquired, an edge of irony in her voice. 'She'll get over it quicker if you let her alone.'

"Well, give her my love." said Nancy.

Eustace felt a sudden doubt, from her tone, whether she really meant him to deliver the message.

'Shall I?' he asked diffidently, 'I should like to.'

Something in the question annoyed Nancy.

'You can say I hate her, if you would rather,' she remarked."⁷

And on the same page, making fun of Eustace's earnestness and anxiety to please, Nancy tells him:

"'It's very kind of you to have stayed so long, Eustace. Look what a lot you've done!'" A kind of comic wonder, mixed with mockery, crept into her voice: Eustace was fascinated. 'Gerald will never believe me when I tell him I built it all myself!'"⁸

As time passes by the more fascinated Eustace becomes by the 'belle of Anchorstone'. For so many times does Nancy get in Eustace's way and to such an extent does she disturb their relationship, that, in the end, the whole Cherrington family, and not only Hilda, consider her to be an 'enemy'. Consequently, Eustace is forbidden to talk to her.

This is summed up in Mr. Cherrington's remark about the girl:

"'She's a silly, vain, badly brought-up little girl, who has done you nothing but harm, and your aunt has forbidden you ever to speak to her again.'

'But what am I to do,' said Eustace in a choking voice, 'if she speaks to me? I'm always

seeing her, on the beach, in the street, everywhere. I can't help it.'

'You must raise your hat and walk away,' said Mr. Cherrington firmly. 'But she won't speak to you; she knows very well what we think about her.'" ⁹

The second person, to be considered here is Gerald Steptoe, Nancy's brother, who deliberately destroyed the children's pond while walking along the beach.

"There lay the pond... but — horrors! — it was completely dry... The gaping hole in the retaining wall must be the work of an enemy. A small figure was walking away from the scene of demolition with an air of elaborate unconcern. 'That's Gerald Steptoe,' said Hilda. 'I should like to kill him.'" ¹⁰

The fact of Gerald having made a gaping hole in the retaining wall of the pond, maliciously letting all the water out, at first does not appear to fit the plot since Gerald is not going to have any kind of sexual relation with Hilda; and making the gaping hole undoubtedly means defloration.

And once Gerald begins to be observed it will be seen he does not act much and he is in fact a secondary character. But a secondary character whose importance is relevant for the story since he embodies Eustace's penis envy.

For the first time, when Gerald makes the gaping hole he symbolically embodies the phallus, an idea that will be repeated and reinforced.

That is why Gerald is considered an enemy. To Hilda he is a rebel boy, Nancy's brother and, above all, a menace

to her role of castrating woman, since to Eustace he is the embodiment of all the manly features he lacks and envies. There are several instances in which one feels Eustace's castration complex and his envy and admiration for Gerald.

In the first chapter of *The Shrimp and the Anemone* Gerald is depicted as climbing up the cliffs alone. Such a feat filled Eustace with awe and "elation at the spectacle of Gerald's independence."¹¹ One should remember that Eustace is never allowed to climb the cliffs by himself.

When he does so he is guided by Hilda who generally reaches the top first.

Climbing the cliff symbolically means sexual prowess. Gerald is able to do it by himself and so is Hilda whereas Eustace is only allowed to do it if his sister is guiding him.

Afterwards while Hilda and Eustace are walking on the cliffs, the first image of Gerald climbing them alone is reinforced and a stronger sexual coloring is added when Eustace remarks to Hilda in admiration:

"Gerald got as far as that once," indicating a peculiarly dangerous-looking tuft of grass, between which and the true face of the cliff the weather had worked a deep trench, plain for all to see."¹²

The sexual coloring is given by the two images: tuft of grass and trench both meaningful of the female genitals and thus reinforcing the idea of Gerald's masculinity.

At the end of the book we have the pond again, this time all covered up by water. Eustace has just shared with Hilda the money he received as a legacy from Miss Fothergill and has secretly designed two hearts pierced by an arrow which meant their total union.

In this mood of intense communion they start for home and from the cliff-top they have a glimpse of the pond all covered up. To Eustace's remark that nobody would know they had ever been there and that it was just as though nothing had happened all the morning, Hilda significantly replies: "There's still a bit of the pond left that we didn't finish," ... "and our footmarks coming away from it." ¹³

To Hilda, though they are very close to each other, they aren't yet completely united and she is to suggest a three-legged race on their way home. By tying their legs together she will make their communion deeper since physical union will be involved as well as spiritual.

One last remark about the pond is perhaps worth making. As a symbol of union between brother and sister the environment around the pond always carries a sensual connotation.

The Cliff - with its obvious phallic connotation - is always present witnessing their pond - building.

The image of Hilda as the phallic woman and castrating mother and of Eustace's penis envy is evident from the very first chapter of *The Shrimp and the Anemone*. As we have already mentioned Hilda always helps Eustace to climb the cliff, and when Eustace sees Gerald Steptoe climbing them up by himself he has "a feeling of elation at the spectacle of Gerald's

independence" because his sister Nancy can't stop him.¹⁴

In relation to the environment there is a meaningful description of the dry pond¹⁵ which has already been pointed out. A number of small stones lay bare at its bottom. They are hardly ever visible. The stones have as their only function to measure the depth of the pond - which in turn symbolizes brother and sister's joint achievement. The fact that the stones are bare and water drained away hints at the frustration of the children's union.

The stones could symbolize the masculine testicles. Water, on the other hand, stands for the female element. The description stresses once more female dominance, that is, Eustace — stones — covered up by Hilda — water-power.

This meaning is reinforced when it is explicitly said that they were only noticeable on account of the shallow water since "at high water [they] were decently submerged."

The adjective 'decently' no doubt allows for the sexual colouring of this interpretation, obviously meaning repression. Once their relationship is an incestuous one, water has the function of concealing this abnormal relation.

"They had no function except by the order of their disappearance to measure the depth of the pond; now they stood out, emblems of failure..."¹⁶

Every time a stone disappears there is an indication that the pond is becoming fuller - that is, the incestuous relationship is getting deeper and more comprehensive. Conversely, when the stones can be seen again, failure to achieve the union sought for is suggested.

A third image yet to be discussed is the spade - another constant in the pond-building episodes.

Building the pond necessarily requires that the brother and sister should use their spades. They are the weapons to build their private universe against the real outside world. Accordingly Eustace and Hilda are said to be "armed with their spades."¹⁷

As instruments which help them make their pond they are symbolically the tools they use in establishing their incestuous union and fighting for it in the face of social laws.

On the very first page of the book¹⁸ a significant reference to the spades is made when Eustace leaned on his wooden spade sees Hilda signalling with her iron one. "An ancient jealousy invaded his heart. Why should SHE have an iron spade."¹⁹ A picture of Hilda as the phallic castrating woman is here clearly hinted at. No less evident is Eustace's penis envy, which makes him somewhat feminine. Eustace is well aware of this, and envies Hilda for possessing what he lacks.

In their peculiar relationship, the partners seem to be inverted. Hilda stands for the male, Eustace for the female. This fact proves typical in their relationship, throughout the trilogy. Hilda is going to be the active partner, Eustace, the passive one. She is to have the leading role. He is to obey and admire her determination - like any female in a macho society.

While Eustace is more easy-going and easier to deal with, Hilda is rigid in principles, determined and stubborn, and hardly ever changes.

The contrast between their individualities - represented by the spades - is reinforced in the passage which follows.

"They were off. Hilda had her right hand free. Grasped in the middle like a weapon at the trail, and swinging rhythmically as she ran, her iron spade seemed to be making jabs at the vitals of the future; while the wooden one that served Eustace as a symbol of Adam's destiny, dangling from his nerveless fingers, wove in the fantastic pattern of arcs and parabolas, and threatened momentarily to trip him up." ²⁰

The opposition of individualities is shown not only by the constitution of the spades - material they were made of - but also by the way they were carried. Hilda's weapon is wielded with confidence and soldier-like precision, again with phallic connotation. The 'vitals of the future' no doubt suggest the womb. Eustace's movements, on the contrary, convey a sense of roundness, often symbolic of the female genitals.

Emphasis to the idea of incest is given, when Eustace's spade is said to be a symbol of Adam's destiny. Eve - Hilda in the case - has led Adam - Eustace - to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. In the story Eustace doesn't eat the fruit, but he surely tastes it.

In the second book of the trilogy, *The Sixth Heaven*, Eustace and Hilda will no longer be at Anchorstone. They will

have left Eden. Each will have been 'expelled' to a different place: Eustace to Oxford and Hilda to a London clinic for crippled children. But the initial image of an idyllic life in the childhood seaside paradise will linger in the reader's mind and remain expressive of brother and sister's emotional involvement.

The symbolism of the spades in the first book of the trilogy, is reinforced in "Hilda's Letter" by Eustace's and Hilda's jumping-poles.

Eustace and Hilda decide to play on the sands. With the help of their jumping-poles, they go to the beach, to compete one with the other: each of them has to jump from a pre-established point to a specific rock. For each jump, with a successful landing, the candidate could score one point.

Before narrating their jumps, L.P. Hartley describes the jumping-poles:

"Eustace's jumping-pole was a stout rod of bamboo, prettily ringed and patterned with spots like a leopard. By stretching his hand up he could nearly reach the top... Hilda's jumping-pole was made of wood, and much longer than Eustace's; near to the end it tapered slightly and then swelled out again, like a broom-handle. It was the kind of pole used by real pole-jumpers at athletic events." ²¹

Hilda's superiority and potential domination is shown once more in the description of her jumping-pole, contrasted with the description of Eustace's, which symbolizes his inferiority.

Far more important than this is the idea that it is Hilda who possesses the male characteristics of the couple. Her jumping-pole is stronger and longer than Eustace's feminine stout rod of bamboo.

She is no doubt the leading partner - her jumping-pole is like the official ones used by "real pole-jumpers at athletic events.²²

The concept of Hilda as the leading female-partner in the couple's relationship is emphasized by Hartley once more.

oOo

N O T E S

- ¹Bien., op. cit., pp. 87-88.
- ²*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, p. 157.
- ³Bien., op. cit., p. 88.
- ⁴*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, p. 157.
- ⁵Ibid., p. 22.
- ⁶Ibid., p. 23.
- ⁷Ibid., pp. 18-19.
- ⁸Ibid., p. 19.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 105.
- ¹⁰Ibid., pp. 23-24.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 12.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 52.
- ¹³Ibid., p. 188.
- ¹⁴Ibid., p. 12.
- ¹⁵Ibid., pp. 22-23.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 23.
- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 154.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 9.
- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 9.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 189.

²¹L.P. Hartley, "Hilda's Letter", in *The Complete Short Stories of L.P. Hartley*. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1966), p. 449.

²²Ibid., p. 449.

oOo

3. *The Bath-Ritual*

Second in importance only to Eustace and Hilda is the character of Miss Fothergill the half-paralysed old lady who leaves Eustace an £ 18.000 legacy and thus completely changes the course of his life.

One may say that the old lady brings a many-faceted, even contradictory influence to bear upon the boy's life.

It is she who tries to reveal him to himself, and prepare him for a confident launching into the world.

This is shown in the several passages of the first volume of the trilogy, when the old lady makes pointed remarks on Eustace's self-effacing, self-denying habits.

On playing cards Eustace makes a mistake to which Miss Fothergill observes: "No good. Now you can see what comes of throwing away your opportunities." ¹

And again on the following page:

"... you know how you're pleased really."

"I suppose I am."

"You certainly ought to be. It's a great mistake not to feel pleased when you have the chance. Remember that, Eustace." ²

But it is on pages 118 and 119 that Miss Fothergill's most pointed comment is made. It's a straightforward remark on the submissive and passive Eustace who totally lacks confidence in himself. To him appearances and public opinion are far more important than his own beliefs.

He is always worried about hurting people unintentionally and incapable of violent or gruff attitudes even if they might in context protect his own self. His guiding principle is to please everybody everywhere every time.

As this is humanly impossible Eustace is always struggling with his guilt complex: incapable of satisfying everybody at the same time he consequently cannot be at peace with his conscience.

All this becomes apparent to Miss Fothergill through her sensitivity and her experience of life. She has already detected this flaw in the boy's character, a flaw he will never be able to overcome. She clearly calls his attention to the fact through a wise piece of advice.

She points out to him that the repression of his inner life, that is, the annihilation of his own ego, would not give him peace either with himself or with the world in general.

Her advice associates her own observations with those of Dr. Speedwell who had assisted the boy during a peculiarly acute period of his heart disease:

"He [Dr. Speedwell] said you had a lot in you, and it only led bringing out. Don't forget that, Eustace don't forget that ... He said ... that you can't please everyone - nobody can - and that if you minded less about disappointing people you wouldn't disappoint them. Do you see what I mean?"

"You mean Hilda and Aunt Sarah and Daddy and Minney and -."

"And me too, if you like. We are all

designing women. You mustn't let yourself be sucked in by us. " 3

The expression 'sucked in' suggests the shrimp as an image of the boy himself, and all his mother - surrogates as devouring women, and castrating mothers.

Miss Fothergill herself admits being so and here she has associated herself with the people closest to the boy; three of them - the boy's aunt, the family servant, and his sister - playing the role of mother - surrogates.

That is the reason why on one hand, the old lady tries to prepare the young by for a successful launching into the outside world as any good mother should.

We shall see on the other hand, that again like any mother, she cannot fail to try to hold his affections and thus thwart her liberating role.

The ambivalent relationship between Miss Fothergill and Eustace is clearly shown by the fact that, mother-surrogate as she is, Miss Fothergill paradoxically also stands for the boy's - indeed any child's - fear of the outside world.

This explains Eustace's reluctance in talking to her the first time he meets her on the beach and in going to tea with her for the first time.

[Hilda] "Remember what Aunt Sarah said. She said, 'Eustace, next time you see Miss Fothergill I want you to speak to her.'

'But next time was last time!'

.

'Go at once Eustace.'

'I can't. I can't,' E. . . wailed, beginning to throw himself about. 'She frightens me, she's so ugly! If you make me go, I shall be sick at dinner!'" ⁴

In fact, the boy had strange fantasies about the old lady. Before he finally accepted her invitation for tea, he imagines her as a monster, only half-human, with the paws of a lion - a sphinx-like figure standing for the fearful mysteries of the world.

It requires of him a great effort to overcome such fantasies.

"Without too much mental suffering, Eustace was able to make a visual image of himself shaking hands (only the phrase wouldn't fit) with Miss Fothergill. He almost brought himself to believe — what his aunt and Minney with varying degrees of patience continually told him - that Miss Fothergill's hands were not really the hands of a lion, they were just very much swollen by rheumatism...

But neither of his comforters could say she had ever seen the hands in question, and lacking this confirmation Eustace's mind was never quite at rest.

But it was sufficiently swept and garnished to let in (as in the way of minds) other devils worse than the first. With his fears concentrated on Miss Fothergill's hands, Eustace had not thought of speculating on her face.

On Monday night this new bogey appeared, and even

Hilda's presence was at first powerless to banish it." ⁵

In fact Miss Fothergill was a half-paralysed old lady who went about in a bath-chair, always careful to half conceal her face and hands wearing a hat, a veil and gloves.

Living in a solitary house, and having withdrawn herself from social affairs she can thus hardly be spoken to. People were not able to form a consistent opinion about this peculiar person.

The visual image of that strange and solitary figure who did not belong to their daily world made them resort to the supernatural: they came to think of her as a witch. This partly set their mind at rest. It explained the old lady's seclusion and also provided an exciting answer to their curiosity.

Thus for a long time Eustace keeps the witch image of the old lady. Well aware of that, Miss Fothergill takes severe precautions.

... first time the boy goes to have tea with her she carefully chooses their places at the tea table. She is wearing neither hat nor veil and her fingers are visible peeping out of black mittens curiously humped.

"He'd better sit there," said Miss Fothergill, 'so as to be near the cakes.'

Eustace was too young to notice that, as a result of this arrangement, Miss Fothergill had her back to the light." ⁶

Miss Fothergill's strategical position leads the boy to have a better impression of her mishappen face and hands and "that afternoon marked more than one change in Eustace's attitude towards life. Physical ugliness ceased to repel him and conversely physical beauty lost some of its appeal." ⁷

It is significant that Eustace's lovely schoolmate, his beloved Nancy Steptoe, is now going to be removed from his path almost completely. The fairy is replaced by the witch. From that day on the path of Eustace's life will take such a direction that Miss Fothergill will come to mean everything to him.

It is also remarkable that Nancy Steptoe - the charming and beautiful girl - is the person who mostly talks of the old lady as a witch. She obviously senses the rival in her. This rivalry shows up in many ways.

On one occasion for example Eustace declines Nancy's invitation to a paper-chase because of a former promise to have tea with Miss Fothergill. His remaining fears are renewed by Nancy's comments on the old lady.

"'But she's old and ugly, and I suppose you know she's a witch?'

Eustace's face stiffened. He had never thought of this. 'Are you sure?'

'Everyone says so, and it must be true. You know about her hands? Eustace nodded. 'Well, they're not really hands at all but steel claws and they curve inwards like this, see!... And, once they get hold of anything they can't leave go, because you see they are made like that. You'd have to have an operation to get loose.'" ⁸

This anticipates Eustace's fear of getting caught in the old lady's spell, which is prophetic and symbolic.

The first image of the book - the shrimp caught by the anemone - is recalled through Nancy's image of Miss Fothergill's claws. To be released from them Eustace would need an operation. There is a hint at the possibility of mutilation - which calls to mind the central image of the novel.

Eustace, the shrimp, is in a symbolic way seized upon by Miss Fothergill, the anemone.

He became so attached to the old lady that, as time passed by, she "had come to mean to him all those aspirations that overflowed the established affection and routine employments of his life at Cambo; she was the outside world to him and the friends he had in it; its pioneering eye looked no further than Laburnum Lodge, the magnetic needle of his being fixed itself on Miss Fothergill."⁹

The world 'magnetic' clearly hints at Miss Fothergill's charms. Eustace is in fact 'charmed', completely subdued by Miss Fothergill's spell, reinforcing the idea of bewitchment and Nancy's prophetic image.

In the relation Miss Fothergill - Eustace there is no need however for physical operation as in the case of the shrimp and the anemone at the beach. Fate provides the operation: Miss Fothergill's abrupt death. But, as the disenbowed anemone which leaves a part of its body attached to the shrimp, Miss Fothergill leaves an everlasting mark on Eustace's personality.

Death - the operation brought about by fate - will mean just a partial separation, for Miss Fothergill's influence upon the boy will be much deeper than at first expected.

It is the money left to Eustace in her legacy that enables the boy to go to Oxford.

It is also this amount of money which will make things too easy for Eustace. It gives him a position where most struggles for an ordinary existence become unnecessary. This makes him finally unable to fight, face up to or cope with life. He is to be eternally submissive, passive, incapable of taking decisions.

The lion claws will never actually leave him. Once started the relationship with old Miss Fothergill will never really be broken.

Another aspect of this relationship will now be broached: the double nature of the mother figure, which in fact includes the good mother, represented by the fairy - godmother in children's tales, and the bad stepmother or witch.

Miss Fothergill like most real mothers, plays both roles in Eustace's life. From one point of view, she paves the way to a fuller and easier life. From another she also stands for frustration, for the fear of the unknown.

Miss Fothergill knows that, and even while trying to liberate Eustace she frustrates the boy by trying to keep him in that kind of relationship. As selfish mother-surrogate she, in turn, appreciates him precisely because of his childish

passivity and dependence.

When playing cards with him she bribes the boy offering him money if he wins but demanding kisses no matter whether he wins or loses. She manoeuvres the situation in such a way that the boy himself is led to say: "But you'll let me kiss you all the same? Once if I lose, twice if I win."¹⁰

If the agreement suited the boy, much more did it suit the old lady: he would get money from her some times, that is, when he won, while she would always be kissed, no matter what happened.

While "buying" some kisses, Miss Fothergill demanded 'free' kisses as a gift.

Bribing Eustace in order to get his affection and companionship, Miss Fothergill realizes, in the meantime, as any reasonable person, that it was bad for the boy to be lost in that unique and private relationship with her.

That's why she tells him:

"You mustn't come so often... if that's the way your father and your aunt feel about it. I shan't be hurt, you understand!"

Eustace's face fell.

'But I wish you had some... some other friends...'

'You mustn't spend too long playing cards with an old woman.'

'It's what I like doing best,' said Eustace lugubriously."¹¹

The word lugubriously, on the other hand, ambiguously hints at Eustace's unconscious awareness of the harm that is being done to him: he really wanted to kiss his partner. But he also unconsciously knows the morbid character of his affection.

In his eternal submission Eustace is going to obey her new orders of not coming so often but he feels small, unhappy and terribly sorry for having to do so.

Miss Fothergill's mark of ownership upon Eustace is going to outlast her life. She is conscious of her role as a castrating mother and tries to overcome it.

Events however take another turn.

She perpetuates the symbolic castration through her legacy. It handicaps Eustace in a such a way that he will remain forever submissive, restrained and passive.

It is then not to be wondered at that the fairy - witch's death leaves an indelible mark on Eustace's mind.

This appears very clearly in the episode when Minnie, the devoted family servant, bathes the boy and gently tells him about his benefactress's funeral.

In this episode, prompted by conscious and unconscious associations with the dead lady, the crucially symbolic episode of the mutual destruction of the shrimp and the anemone which opens the book is re-lived once more through Eustace's fantasies.

This scene has a multiple significance. Probably as a compensation for his submission and weakness, Eustace has a liking for powerful and grand things as well as for destructive games. This is explicitly mentioned in the

" cone of Cotopaxi, for which he had a romantic affection, as he had for all volcanoes, earthquakes and violent manifestations of Nature ... In his progress he conceived himself to be the Angel of Death, a delicious pretence, for it involved flying and the exercise of supernatural powers."¹²

In the bath episode the thread of Eustace's fantasies is taken up again. In his imagination the bathtub appears as a place of danger, terror and destruction.

The description starts factually enough, but soon takes another turn.

"The taps were of a kind that would turn interminably either way without appreciably affecting the flow of water. Even grown-up people threatened with a scalding or a mortal chill, lost their heads, distrusted the evidence of their senses, and applied to the all-too-responsive taps a frantic system of trial and error. And there were many other things that might go wrong. Eustace no longer feared that he would be washed down the waste-pipe when the plug was pulled out, but he had once put his foot over the hole and the memory of the sudden venomous tug it gave still alarmed him. If his whole leg were sucked in he might be torn in two.

The fear that the bath water might overflow, sink into the floor and dissolve it, and let him down into the drawing room, the accident costing his father several hundred pounds, was too rational to scare Eustace much, though it

sometimes occurred to him; but he had conceived another terror more congenial to his temperament. The whitish enamel of the bath was chipped in places, disclosing patches of a livid blue. These spots represented cities destined for inundation.

... Sometimes a single submersion satisfied his lust for destruction, but certain cities seemed almost waterproof and could be washed out time after time without losing their virtue. Those he cared about least came lowest in the bath, and as the upper strata of sacrifice were reached so Eustace's ecstasy mounted. When at last, ... the water rose to Rome, his favourite victim, the spirit of the tidal wave possessed him utterly. But he rarely allowed himself this indulgence, for above Rome, not much above... there was another spot, the Death-Spot. If the water so much as licked the Death-Spot Eustace was doomed."¹³

Eustace fears his death - for he knows he is doomed to destruction - even when he himself is in control of things. But he imagines somebody else, particularly Hilda, to be the tidal wave. Then his destruction and death are not only just a possibility: they seem to be imminent.

Eustace comments:

"'Supposing I was the city of Rome', he thought, 'and the tidal wave, was really somebody else, perhaps Hilda, then it would kill me and without ever touching the Death-Spot at all.'"¹⁴

To this Peter Bien remarks: "In the case of the bath which is the Death-Spot scene, it is clear that though Eustace may be the destroying force, the object of his destruction is himself. This is consistent with his masochism."¹⁵

It is also meaningful that Rome is Eustace's favourite victim. As of the main symbols of Christianity Rome means to Eustace the rigid religion which oppresses and suffocates him, the Scarlet Woman of Protestant polemic .

It's significant that soon after Miss Fothergill's death Eustace should be depicted as having a bath.

Water, in this case, conveys one of its most universal symbolic meanings, that of purification.

The bath become a ritual: Eustace is to be purified from Miss Fothergill's inhibiting influences, but, paradoxically, the bath is also to be his baptism - his initiation into another life which is going to begin with the old lady's legacy.

On the other hand the bath-scene is basically a repetition of the first image of the book: the mutual destruction of the shrimp and the anemone is clearly re-lived here, through Eustace's fantasies.

Eustace as once the shrimp now lies in the water. Hilda the anemone becomes the equally destructive tidal wave.

The image of the half-eaten shrimp is re-created through Eustace's morbid fantasies: the fear of his leg being 'sucked in' by water down the waste-pipe and of his being torn into two.

The bath and the initial scene of the mutual destruction of the shrimp and the anemone are deeply connected through the use of similar imagery. In addition the same verb of action 'to suck in' is used to convey the destruction of both the shrimp at the beach and of Eustace in the bath. Both are killed by being 'eaten' - sucked in - by someone stronger. Two quotations, one from the initial scene and the other from the ritual bath fit in here: 'It was a shrimp, Eustace decided, and the anemone was eating it, sucking it in.'¹⁶ "If his whole leg were sucked in he might be torn into two."¹⁷

oOo

N O T E S

¹*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, p. 111.

²Ibid., p. 112.

³Ibid., pp. 118-119.

⁴Ibid., p. 25.

⁵Ibid., p. 63.

⁶Ibid., p. 109.

⁷Ibid., p. 109.

⁸Ibid., p. 71.

⁹Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 116.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 115-116.

¹²Ibid., p. 20.

¹³Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁵Bien, op. cit., p. 77.

¹⁶*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, p. 9.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 125.

4. The Nightgown

In the social world of the novel the fact that a nine-and-a-half-year-old boy and his thirteen-year-old sister sleep together in the same room strikes the reader as unusual, but this is what happens to Eustace and Hilda: at that age they still sleep in the same room.

Two important remarks about this fact are made in chapter eight of *The Shrimp and the Anemone*.

When Eustace is taken ill and Nurse Hapgood comes to look after him, Eustace naively suggests that his father should sleep with Aunt Sarah so that they would have a room for the nurse.

Nurse Hapgood then objects that "'brothers and sisters don't sleep together when they get to that age.'

'Oh, why?' said Eustace. 'I shall always want to sleep with Hilda if she'll let me.'

'Oh no, you won't, you'll see.'

'Do you mean I shan't love her so much?'

'I daresay you will, but things are different when you're grown up.'"¹

The subject is broached again when Dick Staveley is visiting Eustace during his illness. At the sight of Hilda's and Eustace's beds in the same room he remarks:

"'What a lucky chap you are to have two beds to choose from.'

'The other one's Hilda's, really, Dick,'

said Eustace.

'Oh, is it?'...

'So you have company? Very pleasant, I should think.'

'I bet you would. Getting a bit big, isn't she?'

'Oh, but the bed's quite big, Dick,' said Eustace misunderstanding him. 'Her feet don't touch the bottom, nearly.'" ²

This dialogue displays two important points: on the one hand Dick's words reflect social attitudes towards the subject. On the other, Eustace's answers show how natural, indeed how vitally gratifying it is for him to share his room with his already pubescent sister. The latent incestuous character of the relationship is immediately revealed from Eustace's point of view.

A complementary attitude is seen a little earlier, this time showing the same attitude on Hilda's part.

During a dancing class at school, Nancy Steptoe chooses Eustace to be his partner. Eustace is delighted and they stay together nearly all the time.

Nancy finally invites him to accompany her on a paper chase. Eustace hesitates and tells her he has already promised to have tea with Miss Fothergill that very same afternoon. Nancy doesn't accept excuses and after assuring him Miss Fothergill is a witch she gives him her ultimatum: "Well, I shall expect you. If you don't come the whole thing will be spoilt and I'll never speak to you again!" ³

Eustace is dazed and torn between the desire of having Nancy's pleasant company and his feeling of moral obligation to visit Miss Fothergill. Incapable of taking decisions, the necessity of choosing between Miss Fothergill and Nancy leaves Eustace in great conflict with himself and he then realizes for the first time how he is being manipulated by his sister to do what she wants. It is this new feeling that prompts his decision, he sees he must make a stand for his personal liberty and resolves to show his independence by going secretly to the paper-chase with Nancy.

Eustace leaves home and doesn't come back. All the family is anxious, for they already know he hasn't been to Miss Fothergill. Hilda tries to dissimulate her anxiety by thinking over the best way of punishing him.

Meanwhile the weather suddenly changes and it begins to rain hard. Anxiety grows to tension and worry. Eustace and Nancy are lost in the woods of Anchorstone Hall.

Hilda-mother blames herself for neglect in not keeping Eustace under a stricter control. To his father's remark that she'd beter sleep for there was no news up to that moment, we have Hilda's passionate reaction.

"Hilda undressed slowly. The sight of Eustace's empty bed affected her so painfully it might have been his coffin. She saw that his nightgown had not been folded properly... Taking it out rather gingerly she folded it again; her tears fell on it; she carefully dabbed them up with a handkerchief. Then she

changed her mind, took the nightgown once more from its case, and put it in her bed. 'I'll keep it warm for him,' she thought." ⁴

The nightgown here clearly stands for its owner, for Eustace himself. Hilda's fetishist attitude toward it amply illustrates, once again, her incestuous longing for her brother. Symbolically it is Eustace that she is carrying to her bed where she will keep him warm.

Hilda is mother and lover at the same time. And in her lover's role it is stressed once more that it is she who is the active partner in their relation. Passively Eustace' is carried to her bed' and 'is kept warm'.

o0o

N O T E S

¹*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, p. 90.

²Ibid., p. 95.

³Ibid., p. 72.

⁴Ibid., p. 86.

o0o

5. Nancy Steptoe's Influence and the Toboggan Ride

Before discussing another of the erotic symbols - the toboggan ride - it would be as well to comment on Nancy's effect upon Eustace.

G.E. Brown remarks:

"Apart from Eustace and Hilda, Nancy is the first person to be mentioned in *The Shrimp and the Anemone*. This is significant because she represents one course which Eustace might have followed, the other being exemplified by Miss Fothergill."¹

Nancy is slightly older than Hilda and is very conscious of her attractions. Eustace is really captivated by her, in spite of Hilda's opinion that she is conceited and over-ambitious. This is the reason why Eustace does not hesitate to leave his sister Hilda alone, together with their half-built pond to play with Nancy, who was building a sandcastle.

"'Good morning, Nancy,' he said... 'Would you like me to help you with yourcastle? I'll go on digging and you can just pat it down,' he added heroically.

Nancy accepted this chivalrous offer, thanking him briefly."²

It's significant that Nancy is first depicted as building a sandcastle. Castle is an old symbol of virginity

and also of sexual yearning in men; and so the sandcastle at the very beginning of the book, gives the clear dimension of Nancy's character. The verb used by Eustace in his offer of help, also carries a sexual connotation. As the man, he would dig while she would just pat it down.

This image takes on even more significance when Eustace observes that Nancy has built an entry to her sandcastle:

"he glanced uneasily at Nancy who was constructing a garden out of seaweed and white pebbles at the gateway of the castle — an incongruous adjunct, Eustace thought, for it was precisely there that the foemen would attack."³

Nancy's free-and-easy attitude towards life, symbolically shown here, will be explicitly reinforced not only by the slang she constantly uses but also by the way she plans and conducts things, aiming exclusively at her own pleasure.

Nancy is able to involve Eustace in such a way that he forgets, even if for a while, all his repressing moral and religious standards.

While helping Nancy build her sandcastle "Eustace let his sister and her troubles slip out of his mind."⁴

But Hilda still exerts sufficient power to bring him back to reality, his heart turned over with remorse.

At the beach, Eustace with all possible subtlety, asks Nancy if she wouldn't mind his going away, 'but Nancy sees through him' and scornfully replies: 'Can't leave your big sister?'⁵

Hilda's reaction after this first incident with Nancy is a prototype of all her reactions in subsequent episodes involving Eustace and Nancy.

In her jealousy she makes Eustace feel guilty and ashamed of his deeds and the incestuous trait of their relationship is clearly demonstrated as she compels him to protest he loves her, much more than he loves Nancy, and say it is better to be with her than with Nancy. The discussion flows in this way:

"'You've been very cruel to me, Eustace,' she went on. 'I don't think you really love me.'"

.....

'I do love you,' he asserted.

'You don't love me.'

'I do.'

'You don't - and don't argue,' added Hilda crushingly. 'How can you say you love me when you leave me to play with Nancy?'

'I went on loving you all the time I was with Nancy,' declared Eustace, almost in tears.

'Prove it!' cried Hilda.

To be nailed down to a question he couldn't answer gave Eustace a feeling of suffocation. The elapsing second seemed to draw the very life out of him.

'There!' exclaimed Hilda triumphantly. 'You can't!'

For a moment it seemed to Eustace that Hilda was right: since he couldn't prove that he loved

her, it was plain he didn't love her. He became very despondent. But Hilda's spirits rose with her victory, and his own, more readily acted upon by example than by logic, caught the infections of hers. Side by side they walked round the pond and examined the damage." ⁶

But Hilda is well aware of Nancy's effect upon Eustace, and when their aunt gaily announces they are going to a picnic on the Downs together with the intruders Steptoes, Hilda promptly reacts by emphasizing Eustace's weak heart

"'Do you think we ought to go?' she asked anxiously. 'Last year when we went Eustace was sick after we got home.'

'I wasn't!' Eustace exclaimed. 'I only felt sick.'

'Eustace must try very hard not to get excited,' Aunt Sarah said in a tone that was at once mild and menacing. 'Otherwise he won't be allowed to go again.'

'But he always gets excited,' Hilda persited, ignoring the faces that Eustace, who had jumped up at the news, was making at her from behind his aunt's back. 'Nancy excites him; he can't really help it.'" ⁷

On the Downs, after a good and unexpected performance on the toboggan, Eustace is requested by Nancy to be her partner in following rides.

He accepts the offer, and being praised by Nancy for previous rides Eustace blooms: he totally forgets his illness

and presents an excellent performance. Nancy then confesses to him that she was the one responsible for the picnic; she had arranged it all so that Eustace and she could be together.

Having been invited to participate, Hilda refuses until she realizes that Eustace and Nancy are enjoying themselves.

[Nancy] "'You're so good, Eustace, may I come with you?' Eustace, in the seventh heaven of delight, got up and looked round awkwardly at the company." ⁸

Once more the fact that Eustace attains a state of ecstasy when with Nancy is reinforced. Eustace is said to be in the seventh heaven of delight. This feeling of total elation is going to recur in the passage of the dancing-class and in hare and hounds—episodes in which Eustace is the active participant. After the hare and hounds Eustace is no more in such close contact with women. Even for his incestuous relationship with his sister Hilda he is satisfied through the surrogates — Dick Staveley namely. Once the surrogates appear Eustace no more reaches the seventh heaven. The sixth heaven is the utmost, and this is perhaps the reason for the name of the second book of the trilogy.

Focusing our attention on the toboggan again, we have Miss Cherrington's observation to Hilda, and her consequent jealous reaction:

"'That's the third time Nancy and Eustace have come down together,' observed Miss Cherrington.

'Yes. Don't they look charming? And not one spill. Eustace is an expert, I must say. Here they all come. Don't you feel tempted, Hilda?

No reply.'"⁹

At this moment, Hilda's wishful determination to push Eustace away from Nancy - her rival for Eustace's affection - makes her react. Almost mad with jealousy she compels her brother to descend the slope again and again till he is exhausted.

"'I feel a little sick, Hilda,' whispered Eustace as he toiled after her up the slope.

'What nonsense! You didn't feel sick with Nancy.'

'I do now.'

'You don't - you only think you do.'

'Perhaps you know best!'"¹⁰

Eustace gives up his judgment and Hilda's jealous reaction is again of the same pattern. She bitterly reproaches Eustace for his interest in Nancy and for leaving her alone. The incestuous extension behind Hilda's words is very clear as she tries to make Eustace feel not only guilty but also ashamed of his behavior.

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

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

'Because I saw you wanted to be with Nancy,' said Hilda sombrely. 'You never left her alone

for a moment. You don't know how silly you looked - both of you, 'she added as an after-thought.

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

'I did try not to see you,' said Hilda, remorselessly... 'But when I couldn't see you I could hear you. I was ashamed of you and so was Aunt Sarah and so was Daddy.'

... Eustace felt profoundly depressed and as the tide of reaction rolled over him, a little sick." ¹¹

The initial scene of the book is once more evoked: the shrimp is being hurt by the anemone again.

The fact of Eustace feeling sick is not enough for Hilda, nor is the Cherringtons' victory over Nancy and Gerald Steptoe at tobogganing.

Eustace is totally exhausted and can hardly get along well, but Hilda, the phallic woman, is already carrying the toboggan up the slope and once she realizes he can't get on by himself, she takes his hand and says: "Here, hang on to me." ¹²

The passive Eustace is by now utterly submissive but even this does not satisfy the leading partner. Once more Hilda requires Eustace's protestations of endearment. The incestuous side of their relationship again comes to the fore.

"Isn't it glorious us being together like this?"

"It's getting so dark, Hilda."

.....

"Wasn't it lovely, Eustace?"

"Yes, but oh, Hilda, I do feel sick!"¹³

The toboggan overturns and Eustace vomits. The brilliant performance of the beginning ends disastrously.

Peter Bien has observed that each of the symbolic actions which suggest the incestuous relationship between Eustace and Hilda includes an ecstatic union between them "followed by deflation, tragedy and failure — either presented or implied."¹⁴

But deflation isn't enough to satisfy Hilda's ego. As a devouring woman she needs more, she wants more. Neither Eustace's feeling sick nor the overturning of the toboggan lead to the sucking in she longed for, so much so that she compels Eustace to state dearly how marvellous it was to ride with her, how much he loved her, how far better than Nancy she was.

And this is the dialogue Hilda frames:

"'Wasn't it lovely, our last ride?'"

'Better than the ones you had with Nancy?' muttered Hilda, affectionate menace in her tone.

'Oh, much, much better,' whispered Eustace..

'And do you love me more than her?'

'Oh, much, much more.'"¹⁵

As Hilda forces the comparison between Nancy and herself, Eustace shows his superficial acceptance by 'whispering'. He is but an unwilling echo.

With protestations of endearment, their conversation goes on till they catch a glimpse of the chimneys and turrets and battelements of Anchorstone Hall, and Eustace prophetically exclaims: "Oh, isn't it lovely? If I ever make enough money to buy it, will you come and live there with me, Hilda?"¹⁶ It's the world of romance which Eustace envisages for them after Hilda's instigations.

Focusing our attention on the toboggan-rides again we may refer to Bien's comment on the incestuous characteristic of their tobogganing. To him (Bien) ecstasy and communion are found in contexts of jumping and racing, actions which could be symbols of sexual import.

On tobogganing a sexual connotation is conveyed by both the position of the partners while tobogganing, as well as by the sensations caused by movements of sliding, jumping, and touching the ground continually, that is, orgasm.

And that is how the author describes Eustace's sensations:

"... so sharpened were his senses by the exhilaration of the movement, to guide the toboggan a little with his body. And when the pace slackened at the fatal bump he felt excited, not frightened... Eustace forgot where he was, forgot himself, forgot everything."¹⁷

Later references are made to the toboggan episode, so that its meaning continues to expand. When Eustace mentions to Miss Fothergill, for instance, that pushing her bath-chair downhill would be like tobogganing, she replies: "That would be too fast and my tobogganing days are over."¹⁸

That is significant coming soon after the chapter of the toboggan ride.

"Eustace is about to embark on a relationship with Miss Fothergill (representing age) which will entail the rejection of the world of youth (represented by Nancy) after the paper chase."¹⁹

There's also a similarity between his relations to Hilda and to Miss Fothergill: in both his sublimation is clear. The toboggan symbol is no doubt effective and Bien comments about its dimension:

"The toboggan-slide symbol is expansible in both directions. Its Nancy-aspect connotes fulfillment, personal development, life; its Hilda-aspect connotes further subjection, retrogression, incest, death. Ambivalent symbols, such as this, since they approach the comprehensiveness and illogicality of life itself, are among the most effective ways of conveying life in literature."²⁰

The ecstasy Eustace reached while tobogganing with Nancy and the sensation of being at harmony with himself, and with the rest of the world is going to be repeated, but with a greater intensity, at the dancing class when Nancy chooses him among all boys for a partner. At first amazed and shocked by Nancy's lie, telling her would-be partners she has promised

to dance with him, Eustace comes to think of her deed as heroic and under her influence he dances much better.

"Never, even in the most ecstatic moments of the toboggan run, had he felt so completely at harmony with himself, or with the rest of the world... he did not even notice Hilda passing by on the arm of a tall youth in spectacles. Only when the music stopped did he realize how giddy he was." ²¹

The situation-pattern of Eustace and Nancy is seen once more. Nancy is able to arouse in him strong sexual sensations and, more than that, to make him forget Hilda while with her. This has already happened at the beach and during the toboggan ride, and is now repeated at the dancing class.

The last time Eustace spends some time with Nancy as an adolescent — since they are going to meet each other as adults in the third book of the trilogy, *Eustace and Hilda*, is at hare and hands.

It's also Eustace's only positive attempt to reach out for liberty. At the dancing class Nancy has invited him to go with her on a paper chase. Eustace at first declines the invitation as he is supposed to go to Miss Fothergill. But Nancy doesn't want excuses and tells him she would wait for him at the soaring water tower.

The soaring water tower is an explicit sexual image and it is significant that Nancy chooses it as the suitable place for their meeting.

With twinges of conscience, unable to decide what to

do Eustace finally realizes how he had been manipulated by Hilda as well as by people in general.

His decision to follow Nancy on the paper chase then comes as a chance to escape the repression he had been victim of and to get rid of the unpleasant duty to call at Miss Fothergill's.

Though afraid Eustace is submissive to Nancy and again the same sensation of ecstasy makes him forget everything. He minds not even his total loss as long as Nancy is with him.

And that's why he remarks:

"'Isn't it funny,' said Eustace bravely,
'if we got lost they mightn't ever find us.
We should be like the Babes in the Wood.'

'Should you mind?'

'Not as long as you were with me.'"²²

On the day of the paper chase Nancy's true character is seen. She is ready to cheat the pursuers in the game of hare-and-hounds, and her conduct thrills Eustace while causing him disquiet. Nancy does not want the hounds to catch them and lays the paper trail very sparingly.

The weather is threatening as they enter Anchorstone Park. It begins to rain hard, the children get lost and the weather deteriorates. Eventually Eustace's strength fails and he collapses.

They are found much later by Dick Staveley, who in a later visit to Eustace tells him how poor his state had been

and what a panic he was in.

On the day of the paper chase Eustace loses his chance with Nancy. After his physical collapse Nancy is considered "persona non grata" and his father and aunt forbid him to talk to her.

And that follows Mr. Cherrington's remark about Nancy:

"'And now I hear,' he said, 'that you actually have the cheek to want to see this Nancy Steptoe again.'

(Eustace had been about to explain that he hadn't much wanted to see Nancy until the removal of Dick Staveley from the foreground of his imagination had necessitated the introduction of a substitute that he could feel romantic about).

'I should have thought your commonsense would have told you better. She's a silly, vain, badly-brought-up little girl, who's done you nothing but harm and your aunt has forbidden you ever to speak to her again.'

'But what am I to do,' said Eustace in a choking voice, if she speaks to me? I'm always seeing her, on the beach, in the street, everywhere. I can't help it.'

'You must raise your hat and walk away,' said Mr. Cherrington firmly. 'But she won't speak to you; she knows quite well what we think about her.'" 23

Nancy has to be avoided by all means, since her sexual appeal to Eustace is doubtless.

N O T E S

- ¹G.E. Brown, *Brodie's Notes on L.P. Hartley's. The Shrimp and the Anemone.* (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1978), p. 48.
- ²*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, pp. 14-15.
- ³Ibid., p. 18.
- ⁴Ibid., p. 15.
- ⁵Ibid., p. 18.
- ⁶Ibid., p. 21.
- ⁷Ibid., p. 29.
- ⁸Ibid., p. 44
- ⁹Ibid., p. 44
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 47
- ¹¹Ibid., pp. 46-47.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 48
- ¹³Ibid., p. 48
- ¹⁴Bien, op. cit., p. 85.
- ¹⁵*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, p. 49.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 49.
- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 43.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 56.
- ¹⁹G.E. Brown, op. cit. p. 65.
- ²⁰Bien, op.cit. p. 87.

²¹*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, p. 69.

²²Ibid., p. 82.

²³Ibid., p. 105.

o0o

6. *The drawing of the heart*

Aware of being the inheritor of Miss Fothergill's legacy Eustace feels in ecstasy not on account of the money itself, but at the good news that his going away just meant going to school and not dying as he had been supposing.

At the beach he talks enthusiastically to Hilda about the fact, but she, in her usual rational mood, makes him see that if his prospects of life had been broadened by the amount of money he had received, hers were not since she had inherited nothing. She also tells him she will probably be a governess in future so as to earn her living.

Eustace can't accept the idea and almost on the spur of the moment offers to share his fortune with her.

Contrary to Hilda's remark — that it was vulgar to write things on the sand — Eustace begins to draw the figures with his spade and to make calculations. After he arrives at the brilliant conclusion that the money will last till he is seventy-eight years old and Hilda eighty-two, his sister bursts into laughter pointing out that since there are two of them the calculations will have to be done all over again.

In a state of misery and disappointment Eustace comes to the final result:

" What use was a fortune if it failed one at the age of forty-four? ... And the alternative? Five hundred a year till he was seventy-eight. But what was five hundred a year to someone who could have had a thousand? " ¹

Eustace regrets his generous offer. In his imagination he pictures Hilda asking him to forgive her and begging his money for she doesn't want to be a governess at all.

But in reality things go to the contrary. Supposing that he has repented of his generous attitude Hilda tells Eustace to keep all the money for himself and assures him she will not in the least mind being a governess.

Eustace is touched by her speech and feeling guilty of his former thoughts he decides to make her a peace offer.

With his spade he draws hearts on the sand with an arrow sticking through. After that he writes: Eustace to Hilda — £ 34.000. Eustace then decides to rub out all of their names except the capital letters. "Now it just says E. to H." ²

When Hilda asks him whose heart it was that he had drawn on the sand, Eustace answers:

"Well, I meant it to belong to both of us. I ought to have drawn two, perhaps, but I didn't quite know how to make them fit. If you like you can imagine another heart at the back of this one, exactly the same size. It would be there though you couldn't see it. Then the arrow would go through both and then of course they would be joined for ever. Unless you would rather think of us as just having one heart, as I meant before."³

The symbolism of the heart is as clear as it is universal.

The heart stands for love, and the drawing of a heart pierced by an arrow with the names or initials, a traditional way for couples to proclaim their love to the world.

Once more the incestuous characteristic of brother and sister's engagement is re-inforced, particularly since the second heart (Eustace's) is totally hidden behind the first (Hilda's), although transfixed and bleeding with the same arrow.

oOo

N O T E S

¹*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, p. 183.

²Ibid., p. 187.

³Ibid., p. 187.

oOo

7. *The Three-Legged Race*

The Shrimp and the Anemone ends up with probably the most effective symbol of the incestuous trait in Eustace and Hilda's relationship: the three-legged race.

The beach with the two children playing in their usual way is once more the setting.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, Eustace repents of his idea of sharing Miss Fothergill's large amount of money with Hilda.

As we have seen he decides for an offer of peace. The drawing of the heart on the sands is the way he chooses to show Hilda his love and to tell her that the former offer is still standing.

On the way back home, feeling they need a physical extension to complement their spiritual one, Hilda proposes a three-legged race. Eustace agrees at once, but his enquiries soon begin:

"'Who would it be against?' Eustace asked

.....

'Well, the Steptoes perhaps... But anyone you like, really. The whole world.'

.....

'What will the prize be if we win ' he asked.

'Of course we shall win,' said Hilda. 'Won't that be enough for you? You think too much about prizes. Prizes are only for games.'

'But isn't this a game?' said Eustace...

'You can think so if you like,' said Hilda. 'I shall pretend it's real...'

... Sinking on to one knee she passed the handkerchief round their ankles.

'Won't it come undone?' asked Eustace anxiously.

'Not if I tie it,' muttered Hilda. 'I know a knot that can't come undone, no matter how hard you pull.'"¹

After Hilda ties their legs together they set off towards Cambo with Hilda running confidently, and Eustace just managing to maintain his balance. The interdependence of the two children is again brought out together with the fact that Hilda is the leading partner and the knot that cannot be undone.

In Methuen's *Study Aids*, Notes on L.P. Hartley's *The Shrimp and the Anemone*,² we find this comment on the last chapter of the book:

"Both Eustace's design of the heart and Hilda's idea of the three-legged race help to symbolize their mutual dependence, but Hilda's is the more significant symbol, for it brings out clearly the ill-matched and dangerous nature of their unity. Through the watching Minney, we are given a forewarning that it can

only lead to disaster. Even their spades show the opposition between their individualities. Hilda's a weapon which 'jabs at the vitals of the future' in her determined grasp, while Eustace's dangles and threatens all the time to trip him up. And below on the beach, the waters of the tide of life relentlessly obliterate their pleasures and their plans, as though they had never been."²

In fact, by uniting their legs Hilda attempts to fuse them in a single person. As one being they will challenge and defy the Steptoes — Nancy, Hilda's arch-enemy and her rival in Eustace's affections is surely implicit — or the whole world if it should come to that. The incestuous trait of their relationship, some pages before emphasized by Eustace's drawing of the heart is now stressed by Hilda.

In this episode, the idea of Hilda - anemone and Eustace-shrimp is recurrent again through Hilda's words: "I know a knot that can't come undone, no matter how hard you pull."³ It's Hilda's prophecy. No matter what happens they are doomed to be joined forever.

oOo

N O T E S

¹*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, pp.188-189.

²*Methuen's Study Aids. Notes on L.P. Hartley's the Shrimp and the Anemone*, (London: Methuen Educational, Ltd.,1970) pp. 21-22.

³*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, p. 189.

ooo

PART II: HILDA'S LETTER

PART II - HILDA'S LETTER

1. *Mustard and Hot Water*

The short episode of "Hilda's Letter" clearly shows the continuance of the incestuous relationship between Eustace and Hilda.

Knowing that Eustace is to go away to school Hilda tries to convince him not to . Unsuccessful in her aim she tries to convince her family, once more in vain. Then Hilda appeals to Eustace's sentimentality, using emotional blackmail.

"'You're so selfish,' she sobbed. 'You only think about being good — as if that mattered — you don't think about me at all. I shan't eat or drink anything while you are away, and I shall probably die.'"¹

The episode closes with a symbolical action. Coming back from pole-jumping Hilda promises to put his feet into mustard and water.

When she arrives home Eustace is already seated on the edge of the bath, his legs bare and his feet submerged. He urges Hilda to do the same but she retreats: " I don't think you need this time."

Eustace does not give up easily.

"'... But you must put your feet in too. I won't be half the fun if you don't. Besides, you said you would, Hilda! In his anxiety to share the experience with her he turned round again. 'Please! You got much wetter than I did.'

'I got warm running...'

Then, seeing the look of acute disappointment on his face, she added, 'Well, just to please you.'.... Soon they were sitting side by side, looking down into the water. The clouds of steam rising round them seemed to shut off the outside world. Eustace looked admiringly at Hilda's long slim legs.'"2

The recurrent symbolism of the pond-womb appears in the hot water of the bath-tub. Once more Eustace and Hilda are physically together. The allusion to sexual intercourse is present in their attitude of immersion, in the contact of bare legs and feet and mainly in the intermingled sensation of pain and pleasure. It is one of the rare moments of close physical contact.

"Hilda flicked the water with her toe, far enough to start a ripple, and then withdrew it.

"It's still a bit hot. Let's wait a minute.'

"Yes," said Eustace. 'It would spoil EVERYTHING if we turned on the cold water.'

They sat for a moment in silence. Eustace examined Hilda's toes. They were really as pretty as fingers. His own were stunted and shapeless, meant to be decently covered.

'Now, both together!' he cried.

In went their feet. The concerted splash was magnificent, but the agony was almost unbearable.'

'Put your arm round me, Hilda!'

'Then you put yours round me, Eustace!'

As they clung together their feet turned scarlet, and the red dye ran up far above the water-level almost to their knees. But they did not move, and slowly the pain began to turn into another feeling a smart still but wholly blissful.

'Isn't it wonderful?' cried Eustace

'I could never have felt it without you!'

Hilda said nothing, and soon they were swishing their feet to and fro in the cooling water. The supreme moment of trial and triumph had gone by; other thoughts, not connected with their ordeal, began to slide into Eustace's mind.'"³

The ritual of the immersion of feet is developed in a way very similar to a first sexual intercourse. The girl's hesitation and the boy's urgency, the girl's withdrawal because of pain, the bearing of agony, the ecstasy of climax, the peace of fulfillment.

The last paragraph well conveys the idea of a couple after satisfactory intercourse:

"Hilda said nothing and soon they were swishing their feet to and fro in the cooling water. The supreme moment of trial and triumph had gone by...."⁴

oOo

N O T E S

¹"Hilda's Letter", p. 434.

²Ibid., p. 459.

³ibid., pp. 459-460.

⁴Ibid., p. 460.

o0o

PART III: THE SIXTH HEAVEN

PART III - THE SIXTH HEAVEN

1. *Concerto for Two Violins*

The Sixth Heaven tells us about Eustace's life at Oxford.

Having met Stephen Hilliard in Summer Term, then becoming one of his closest friends, Eustace is invited to go to his rooms.

While talking informally Eustace tells Stephen how Miss Fothergill's money had provided for his education. He also mentions his role during the war and Hilda's name inevitably comes up. To Eustace's praise of his sister, Stephen ironically comments: "How terrifyingly efficient she sounds. I think I should faint in her presence."¹ Soon after that Stephen tries to decline Eustace's invitation to meet Hilda.

"Oh no, I should make a very bad impression. She would leave by the next train. You must invite some of your smart friends, Antony Lakeside and His Royal Highness."²

And while trying to make Stephen realize the great difference there was between his sister and himself Eustace says: "I'm like a top that always needs whipping; I'm inert, I don't go by myself... Hilda relies on something outside herself, ... she's like a dynamo."³

Stephen who has patiently listened to the story of Eustace's life finally asks him to have a drink while he puts a record on the gramophone. When Stephen asks which composer he would like to listen to Eustace immediately answers he would

like to hear Schubert — Stephen promptly reacts and goes through an enormous roll of composers — Beethoven, Brahms, Boccherini, Berlioz, Borodin, but none of them seem to fulfill his wish of conveying in musical terms the kind of relationship there is between Eustace and Hilda. Stephen finds something at last that he thinks will do. It's Bach's "Concerto for Two Violins."

While the first movement goes on Eustace submerges in thoughts of self-depreciation and it is almost finishing when he realizes it has been on for some time. Stephen also observes his light-heartedness. To Eustace's comment that it has been lovely, Stephen just replies:

"I don't believe you heard a note" ... "But you must listen to the next movement, for this is just how I imagine you and Miss Hilda in your times of greatest spiritual" (he paused for a moment) — "interpenetration".⁴

Stephen's position is not yet clear enough so we have some difficulty in establishing if his pause was a sign of hesitation in the choosing of the adequate word — interpenetration or if what he means is to pause on purpose just to give emphasis to the word "spiritual" or to the word "interpenetration".

As a matter of fact, considering our awareness of Eustace and Hilda's incestuous relationship, the pause strikes us twice. It gives emphasis to the word spiritual and it establishes a contrast between the words spiritual and interpenetration. This contrast once more emphasizes both words.

As the second movement begins, Stephen comments:

"You see that you begin to repeat what your sister says."⁴ Eustace who is already touched by the spirit of the music "heard as well as saw what Stephen meant."⁵

Listening to Bach Eustace's thoughts travel back:

"It was not in their everyday relationship, he realised, that such harmony was to be found. There Hilda always took the lead. Stephen should have chosen an air with accompaniment as his symbol of their relation to each other. This was all give and take.

The music went on, establishing in his mind its convention — ... of flawless intellectual sympathy, of the perfected manners of the heart. ... Eustace's mind travelled back, looking for the moments when he and Hilda had been most nearly in accord. He seemed to have to go a long way back, to the cliffs of Anchorstone, when she asked him to partner her in a pretence three-legged race; to the Downs, after another race in which they had defeated Nancy Steptoe and her brother, Hilda's traditional foes. He remembered the exquisite sense of communion he had with her then; he remembered a similar enlargement of the spirit when he had persuaded her to accept the half of Miss Fothergill's legacy. The quality of these moments could be heard, he fancied, in the serene interaction of the two violins. But they were the outcome of emotional stress, in one or two cases of differences and hard words; how could they compare with this music, which was like a reconciliation without a quarrel?"⁶

As Eustace himself observes, his everyday relationship with Hilda would be better put in terms of an air with accompaniment. The interplay of two violins could only stand

for their moments of deeper communion of greater fusion, and Eustace again recalls two episodes of their childhood which have already been discussed in the first book of the trilogy, *The Shrimp and the Anemone*, as evidence for their incestuous relationship: the three-legged race and the toboggan-ride. Even then a restriction is made. Both the toboggan-ride and the three-legged race were the outcome of emotional stress. Again we come to Bien's idea that each symbolic action suggesting the incestuous relationship between Eustace and Hilda includes an ecstatic union between them followed by deflation, tragedy and failure either presented or implied. ⁷

And this really happens in the two episodes mentioned above. In the toboggan-ride Eustace feels like vomiting and there is a description of a dark cloud over the white gate of Cambo as Eustace and Hilda enter the house, their legs joined in a three-legged race.

So, it's difficult for Eustace to find parameters to his comparison. "How could they compare with this music, which was like a reconciliation without a quarrel?"⁸

When the second movement has been played Stephen makes another remark before the third starts.

"'I could see you liked that', said Stephen, 'and I think Miss Hilda would have liked it too. In the third movement, which I'm just going to put on, I'm afraid you'll have to face ordinary life again, and a moment comes, I must warn you (indeed it comes twice), when you both grow rather strident and shout defiance in unison, whether at each other, or at a third party, I leave you to decide.'" ⁹

Here again the idea conveyed by two images of *The Shrimp* and *the Anemone* recurs. The first one is the times of pond building when the Cherrington children always join their forces in a struggle against the whole universe.

"Of old, each time it rose from the sands and spread its silver surface to the sky it proclaimed that the Cherrington children had measured their strength against the universe, and won. They had imposed an order; they have left a mark; they had added a meaning to life."¹⁰

The second one is the three-legged race, where to Eustace's question of who the race would be against, Hilda replies: "Well, the Steptoes perhaps. They always want taking down a peg. But anyone you like, really. The whole world."¹¹

The music starts off but Bach's typical quick trot, appealing more to the mind than to emotions leaves Eustace unmoved. "This was a case for understanding, not feeling, and he did not understand."¹²

The music is suddenly interrupted by some cries in the street below, shouting up to Eustace. Perhaps this is something prophetic. In the third book of the trilogy we are going to see that Eustace and Hilda's daily relationship will be suddenly interrupted by a final blow — Eustace's death.

As matter of illustration we could mention some examples of other people's relation to Eustace and Hilda as seen in musical terms.

To Stephen's remark that perhaps there isn't any music that expresses his relationship to Hilda, Eustace replies:

"'It must bring you in too'...'It must suggest the story of your life that you're to tell me.'

'Rather a difficult synthesis,' Stephen said. 'Much as I should like to be admitted, I think I had better be kept out. I should strike an alien note.... I should have to be presented as a ground bass, growling and droning away while you and Miss Hilda disport yourselves on the upper registers. I keep forgetting Miss Barbara.... Perhaps she could be introduced as a note that is always forgotten?...The music could pause — *pausa lunga*, *pausa grande* — to indicate that Miss Barbara has been suitably forgotten, and then start again.'

'... We might have a trio in which one part was always silent, except for a brief passage marked *allegro giocoso*. Then the 'cello would describe the carpet being rolled up and the furniture put out to freeze in the hall, or break its legs on the staircase, followed by an outburst of jazz, with some ingenious double-stopping to give the effect of feet shuffling on the floor. During that movement the first and the second violins would leave the platform in a marked manner, and only return to play their *andante con massima tenerezza* when the carpet had been relaid, and the furniture fetched out of hiding.'

Eustace laughed. 'I'm afraid we are a bit like that,' he said.

'I knew,' said Stephen. 'The new movement would start with a lovely, slow, ascending passage... There might be a bar or two of restrained welcome to your Aunt Sarah on being allowed to return to her own drawing room.'"¹³

NOTES

- ¹*The Sixth Heaven* , p. 12.
- ²Ibid., p. 15.
- ³Ibid., p. 16.
- ⁴Ibid., pp. 22-23.
- ⁵Ibid., p. 23.
- ⁶Ibid., pp. 23-24.
- ⁷Bien, op. cit., p. 85.
- ⁸*The Sixth Heaven*, p. 24
- ⁹Ibid., pp. 24-25.
- ¹⁰*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, p. 157.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 188.
- ¹²*The Sixth Heaven*, p. 25.
- ¹³Ibid., p. 21.

oOo

2. *Highcross Hill*

As Eustace tells Stephen about his life we become aware of what has happened to Hilda.

"Since the war she's been helping to run a clinic for crippled children. It's called Highcross Hill. It was quite a small affair to begin with, but she took it in hand, and built on to it, and it's going splendidly now"¹

It's significant that Hilda's clinic is meant for crippled children. Crippled people are easily dominated. She has been doing this to her brother throughout his life: Eustace's life as a man is totally crippled by Hilda's dominance. Returning to the first image of the trilogy we could say that like the anemone Hilda is aware of her crippling Eustace — the shrimp.

Whereas the shrimp is physically crippled by the anemone Eustace is crippled in the mind. But in both cases the wound will remain forever and lead to death.

In their relation, the anemone eats the shrimp but becomes disembowelled. This is what happens in Eustace and Hilda's relationship: by damaging Eustace's mind Hilda also becomes internally crippled.

The following passage is significant in relation to the kind of neurotic and crippling relationship between Eustace and sister.

"Had it been for Hilda's good that he had always

(except in the disastrous matter of the paper-chase) given way to her? In his mood of melancholy and self-reproach, Eustace didn't think it had. Centred in him, she had neglected other human beings. She had exercised her will, she had over-exercised it, and in doing so had impoverished herself. She had renounced, almost without knowing she had renounced them, all the prerogatives, the master-keys to the treasuries of life, which her beauty had put into her hand. Her beauty bloomed, not like a flower on a dunghill, but more sadly, it seemed to Eustace, like a tulip in a hospital ward...

Still, she had found compensation in the clinic; she had made a place and a name for herself in the world. Her energies were unbounded, she could not slake them merely by acting as Eustace's director, she had to go farther afield. The clinic was an extension of Eustace. Owing to his long absences from home she had perforce relaxed her hold on him..."²

Hilda's nature reaches out to dominate and control people. As Eustace is at Oxford, and so most times far from her, Hilda finds a good substitute for him in the clinic.

Hilda's role is kept basically the same. It's she who makes the clinic develop, who supervises children and staff at once, who puts things in their right place and order. The clinic is entirely controlled by her and her merits earn an article in a paper: "Brains, Beauty and Benevolence at Highcross."

N O T E S

¹*The Sixth Heaven*, p. 13.

²Ibid., pp. 74-75.

o0o

3. *The Sixth Heaven*

A passage in *The Shrimp and the Anemone*, describes Dick Staveley's visit to Eustace Cherrington. Eustace is recovering from his heart disease after his escape with Nancy Steptoe in the paper-chase. Dick's interest in Hilda is obvious. Hilda tries to evade him in all possible ways but she can't help being hypnotized by him. "He turned to Hilda with his hand outstretched. Looking frightened and hypnotized she entrusted hers to it."¹

And in this same passage before Hilda's arrival, Dick catches sight of the two beds in Eustace's room, and comments:

"Well, I'll put this bed straight. I've made it in awful mess. What a lucky chap you are to have two beds to choose from."

'The other one's Hilda's, really, Dick,' said Eustace.

'Oh, is it? The sound of patting and smoothing stopped, and Dick Staveley stared intently at the bed.

'So you have company? Very pleasant, I should think.'

'Oh, yes, Dick. I'd much rather have Hilda than Nurse or even Minney.'

'I bet you would. Getting a bit big, isn't she?'

'Oh, but the bed is quite big, Dick, said Eustace, misunderstanding him. 'Her feet don't touch

the bottom, nearly.'

'Where do they come to?' Dick asked

'Just about where your hand is.'

Dick Staveley stared at the hand, and then at the end of the bed, as if he were making some sort of calculation. Keeping his thumb on the place he spread his fingers out, then moved his thumb to where his little finger had been and repeated the process. Now his little finger touched the wooden rail. Two hand-breadths. At this moment the door opened."²

The mention of horses in Hilda and Dick's conversation both in the first and in the second book of the trilogy is significant.

Dill in Juan-Eduardo Cirlot's *Diccionario de Símbolos*³ considers the horse as symbol of passionate desires, of instincts. As everyone knows horses seem to stand for women's sexual yearning. Hilda admits she likes horses but only to look at. She refuses Dick's invitation to go to Anchorstone for a ride, justifying her refusal by saying she couldn't ride and wouldn't like to try⁴.

The dialogue between Dick and Hilda is as follows:

[Hilda] "'I thought you would have gone,' she said...

[Dick] 'I should, but I waited to see you. Eustace says there is a chance you might come over to Anchorstone one day and go for a ride..."

'We've got a very quiet horse,' pursued Dick Staveley... 'Just the thing for you.'

'I don't know why Eustace said that,' Hilda observed, continuing to look at her feet. He knows

I can't ride.'

'But wouldn't you like to try?'

'No, thank you, I shouldn't.'

'But you told me you were fond of horses.'

'Just to look at.'"⁵

This excerpt becomes more significant if we compare it with a passage from *The Sixth Heaven* when it's explicitly said that Hilda was not at all against men, only she didn't like their proximity.

It is Eustace who tells Stephen about Hilda:

"Then the war came, and she trained as a V.A.D. but she didn't get on very well with the other nurses, and I think she found the men a bit trying..."

"You mean, she found their attentions distasteful?"

"T- I think so. But they had a high opinion of her in the hospital..."⁶

And there is yet another comment by Eustace about Hilda as a V.A.D.

"she admired soldiers in the abstract, but she never liked them near her — it was one of her troubles when she was a V.A.D."⁷

Dick's interest in Hilda becomes even more evident as the second book of the trilogy, *The Sixth Heaven*, develops.

Before her arrival at Anchorstone Hall, Dick Staveley, who usually doesn't care for people, has already told his family about Hilda and how he remembered her from early childhood.

On Hilda's arrival at Anchorstone Dick is all attentions. He is eager to be with her and Hilda is receptive to his appeals. He invites her to play Billiard-Fives. Although everybody comments on the violence of the game especially for a woman Hilda does not hesitate in accepting Dick's invitation.

As Dick's partner she plays with all her heart to compensate for her lack of experience since it was her first time. Dick and she lose and at the end of the game Hilda's hands are badly bruised.

Hilda's hands, bruised by Dick, look forward symbolically to their sexual intercourse on their nuptial flight. It's going to be Hilda's first time with a man and her bruised hands are a forecast of her loss of virginity.

Lady Nelly's comments about the hands of the players:

"'Well, Antony's hands are black and yellow', she said judicially; 'Anne's are black and blue, Miss Cherrington's hands I won't attempt to describe — my dear, why did you use such beautiful hands for such a purpose? — but there's nothing at all wrong with Dick's — they must be made of leather.'" ⁸

Dick no doubt, is able to cast his charm over Hilda. At Billiard-Fives she seems hypnotized by him again. That's why Eustace observes:

"To Dick, Eustace realised, all this display of animal spirits was part of the game, just as his exhortations to Hilda were, and his constant barracking of his opponents. He hated to let things take their course; he must turn the most hunderum

happening into an occasion, with plumes and banners and sideshows. Beneath it all he remained cool and detached; but Hilda drank the excitement like wine, it possessed her completely."⁹

Eustace's dreams of Dick in Hilda's room, though in the area of fantasy, also provide hints for what is to happen between Dick and Hilda.

In this dream Eustace sees Hilda's shoes outside her bedroom door. Uneasy, for it was not very polite to put one's shoes outside one's door, he turns the handle and goes into.

"But could this be Hilda's room when Dick was sitting on the bed clad only in his pyjama trousers?

He rose from the bed and moved slowly towards Eustace, his eyes glittering in the moonlight.

'I was expecting you,' he said. 'I knew you'd come sneaking in.'

'I'm looking for Hilda,' said Eustace wildly.

'Haven't you made a mistake? Isn't this her room?'

'It's you who've made the mistake,' said Dick, coming nearer... "¹⁰

Another thing to be taken into account is Dick's surname — Staveley — the verb 'to stave off' meaning 'to defend from.' That is what Hilda was supposed to do during Dick's attacks. In its origin 'stave' comes from the same source as 'staff', which in colloquial language means 'penis'. Hartley also uses a linguistic device to hint at the kind of relationship Dick and Hilda are progressing towards.

The first full description of Dick Staveley at

Anchorstone Hall portrays him naked in his bedroom. It's given by Antony Lackish reporting to Eustace what he has seen.

"When I went into his room he was stark naked, and his skin fits him like armour-plating — it's almost disgusting. His body is like a lethal weapon. There's something repellent in sheer masculinity."¹¹

Once more we have a hint. Dick's body is a weapon able to hurt mortally.

In fact Hartley, through a sequence of hints, makes us grasp the kind of relation we are to expect from Dick and Hilda.

While talking to Dick, Eustace shows in a clear and straightforward manner the incestuous characteristic of his relationship to Hilda.

Dick asks Eustace to tell him about the first man who was in love with his sister Hilda.

"The question staggered Eustace. It seemed unfair, against the rules, below the belt, the kind of question no gentleman would ask. In the passing of thirty seconds he discarded as many answers.

'In love with her?' he repeated.

'Yes!'

'I couldn't tell you,' said Eustace slowly, trying to keep resentment out of his voice.

'You couldn't? You must be very unobservant. Well, the first man who kissed her, then.'

.

'I don't think any man has, except me,' he said.

'Oh, come,' said Dick, polite but incredulous."¹²

The kind of incestuous relationship between Eustace and Hilda is clear enough as well as Dick's intention towards the girl, revealed by his probing questions.

Although Eustace denies the existence of any person of the male sex in Hilda's life except himself, the possibility of Hilda getting mingled with another man first appears when Stephen Hilliard — Eustace's classmate — makes her a visit at Highcross Hill.

After discussing some subjects they decide to explore the place. Stephen enters a chicken house and out of curiosity Hilda follows him. And that is how Hilda describes the incident:

"... Suddenly the thing tilted up — from our weight, I suppose — and for a moment we couldn't get out. It was just then that Alice came to look for me. Of course she couldn't see us, but she saw the chicken-house rocking up and down and heard us inside, and guessed what had happened... I've never laughed so much."¹³

Eustace is in fact jealous of Hilda and Stephen's friendship but things are different when Dick Staveley is the one involved.

Barbara's wedding is the first instance of how Eustace always seeks fulfillment through vicarious experience.

At the same time Eustace is talking to a girl at the party he is also paying attention to Hilda.

"Another man had joined the group round her; they were all talking with animation, no one seemed to be left out. He noticed how one or two more stragglers paused as though wondering whether to risk it, and gravitated towards her. The sight gave him a sense of inner harmony and self-congratulation; he felt he had helped to complete something."¹⁴

Eustace dreams of marrying Hilda to Dick Staveley. Although such dreams exist in *The Shrimp and the Anemone* they become more evident in *The Sixth Heaven*, perhaps due to the fact that both Hilda's and Dick's ages are now more suitable to marriage.

That is how Eustace views his future life, with a sister married to Dick Staveley:

"I'm just going to Anchorstone to spend a day or two with my sister, Hilda Staveley. Oh, didn't you know? Yes, in July. (Eustace's imagination never allowed much time for things to happen) at St. Margaret's, Westminster. We couldn't very well have the reception here, so Lady Nelly kindly lent us her house in Portman Square. But surely you knew, Stephen? We sent you an invitation... The chicken-run? Oh, I expect she's forgotten about that now — she's given up the clinic — it was just a pastime really — she's busy trying to make Anchorstone a little more habitable — it's so Victorian — you must come and take a look at the old house some time — I'll get Hilda to write to you, if that seems more in order."¹⁵

Dick and Hilda's flight in Dick's plane, is the title and climax of the second book of the trilogy, *The Sixth Heaven*.

Dick and Hilda arrange their flight secretly and when Hilda announces it she is brief and objective: "Dick may be taking me up in his aeroplane when we get this meal over."¹⁶

As the plane takes off Eustace's sensation grows in a 'crescendo' till he is about to reach his climax vicariously. Dick is the perfect surrogate.

Watching the plane's flight,

"Eustace felt his mind growing tenuous in sympathy: Something that he had launched had taken wing and was flying far beyond his control, with a strength which was not his, but which he had had it in him to release. Somewhere in his dull being, as in the messy cells of a battery, that dynamism had slumbered; now it was off to its native ether, not taking him with it — that could not be — but leaving him exalted and tingling with the energy of its discharge. The sense of fulfillment he had felt when Hilda promised to come to Anchorstone returned to him, the ecstasy of achievement which is only realised in dreams."¹⁷

But this vicarious fulfillment could only mount up to the sixth heaven. The seventh heaven could only be achieved if he were an active physical partner as he had been with Nancy Steptoe in the toboggan ride and the dancing class. Having surrogates to act for him could fulfill him, but only partially. Lady Nelly illustrates the point by making the following remark soon after Eustace has said he suddenly felt the air was Hilda's element.

"I agree with you, and now she's in it. But when

she comes back, I shall tell her that whichever heaven she was in, you were certainly in the sixth."¹⁸

Hilda and Dick take a long time to come back. It's another means Hartley uses to convey their being together.

As anxiety and tension grow at Anchorstone Hall and malicious comments are made, Dick and Hilda return. The door opened and

"Hilda stood on the threshold, with Dick's head and shoulders outlined against the sky behind. Dazzled and blinking, with jerkey cramped movements, she came down the steps like a marionette, and Dick followed her, his arms swinging a little from the elbows...

'What on earth happened to you?'...

'We came down rather unexpectedly,' he said. You didn't worry about us, did you?'

.

Hilda was standing by herself outside the circle, enveloped in her own sense of strangeness and fixed in the spotlight of her vitality. She did not answer Eustace's look."¹⁹

Then, "with a proud and free gesture"²⁰ she takes her hat off and almost in commanding tones asks Sir John Staveley to take it.

This fact is highly symbolical and it is one more hint of Dick and Hilda's relationship.

According to Cirlot,²¹ some hats have a special phallic connotation or have the property of making invisible, thus being a symbol of repression.

Hilda does not need to repress her sexuality any longer. Nor does she want to conceal the true nature of her affair with Dick. That is why she takes her hat off in public with a free and proud gesture and gives it exactly to the head of the family, Sir John Staveley, who politely accepts it.

Hilda has challenged all the social conventions and has certainly won.

The kind of relation between Dick and Hilda is yet emphasized by Sir John's cheer after they are back. "'Now we must drink the health of the happy — of the happily returned pair,' he said."²²

Sir John is about to say 'the happy couple' suggesting an engagement or something of the kind when he retreats and changes his exclamation to a more suitable one.

Last but not least comes Eustace's dream of Hilda as Lady Godiva.

A first introduction to the subject appears in "Hilda's Letter". On talking to his father about Hilda going to a school near his, Eustace draws an apparently foolish comparison between Hilda and Lady Godiva.

"'Yes, St. Willibald's is a pretty good school,' said his father carelessly. It isn't so far from yours, either...

'I hope they won't try to copy us too much. Boys and girls should be kept separate, shouldn't they?' He thought for a moment and his brow cleared. 'Of course, there was Lady Godiva.'

'I'm afraid, I don't see the connection,' said his father.

'Well, she rode on a white horse.'

Eustace didn't like being called on to explain what he meant. 'But only with nothing on.' He paused. 'Hilda will have to get some new clothes now, won't she? She'll have to have them tried on.'"²³

And then comes Eustace's dream:

"'This door should be your sister's because, you see, she has put her dress outside. What a funny thing to do...' 'She isn't used to staying in houses like this... But, of course, the house belongs to her in a way, doesn't it?' 'Yes, but why she has put *all* her clothes outside? Here are her stockings and her — well, everything — What can she be wearing? She can't have any clothes on at all, she must be a regular Lady Godiva.'

'If you knock' said Eustace, gathering the clothes into his arms, 'I'll bring them all in.' 'She doesn't answer,' said the guide.... 'Try the door.' There was a pause. 'It's locked on the inside', said the guide, — that shows he doesn't want you to come in. She doesn't want anyone to come in.' 'I'll call her,' cried Eustace in agony. 'Hilda! Hilda!'"²⁴

This time the image of Hilda as Lady Godiva is a compensation for Eustace's frustration.

Aware of the sexual relationship between Hilda and Dick and in his ambivalence of feeling, fulfilled vicariously through Dick but hesitating to accept the fact, Eustace seeks for an explanation in dreams. He needs the figure of the

charitable woman to justify Hilda's deeds.

Once more the sexual intercourse of Dick and Hilda is emphasized. Dick's presence is suggested by Eustace's saying that the house was Hilda's in a way. In describing the clothes out of the room, stockings — a universal erotic symbol — are the only article of clothing mentioned besides the dress. Eustace is in agony when he realizes the door is locked on the inside. It suggests that Hilda is not alone and doesn't want to be disturbed. If we associate this dream with the previous one where Eustace enters Hilda's room to find Dick there, it's not very difficult to find out who her partner is.

This is the second time in the book Hilda is said to be Lady Godiva

The first time is when Eustace is going to Highcross Hill and a workman tells him :

"'Wish we were cripples, chum. They don't half have a good time here. Nurses to dress' em and bath 'em and kiss' em good-night. And the boss is a real Lady Godiva.

The 'boss' must mean Hilda. Feeling a little guilty, Eustace smiled at the man..."²⁵

Here Hartley uses the symbolism of Lady Godiva in reverse. Lady Godiva was beautiful and selfless. According to the legend, she rode naked through the streets of Coventry for a charitable purpose: to win relief for the people from a burdensome tax.

In what concerns Hilda we can clearly see that she is as beautiful as she is selfish. Her good work at the clinic

has no other aim than her own social projection. She would be known for her efficiency and that is what interested her; also it enabled her to indulge her desire to dominate.

In the third book of the trilogy Eustace is away from Hilda. Since he does not act anymore as a sharp observer of his sister, the relationship Dick and Hilda is no more described in details.

We only get to know about it after their breaking off, through Eustace's talk to Dick and to Anne Staveley or through letters either from Stephen to Eustace or from Lady Staveley to Lady Nelly.

But symbolically Hartley keeps alive the idea conveyed by the nuptial flight of the second book. Hilda no doubt has a deep relation with Dick, basically a physical one. Since they are not married Eustace can't avoid thinking of her as a kind of prostitute. Then, symbolically, Hilda appears dressed in scarlet — the scarlet woman.

In Venice Eustace goes shopping and in a shawl shop buys a heavily fringed scarlet silk shawl for Hilda.

"As he carried it out Eustace looked with pleasure at a few threads of silken fringe peeping out of the paper. But why, he wondered, had he chosen scarlet? Blue was Hilda's colour, yet for this shawl, as for her new dress, he had felt impelled to choose scarlet. The thought of Hilda as the scarlet woman, or even as the wearer of the Scarlet Letter, made him smile."²⁶

In one of her letters to Lady Nelly, Lady Staveley

comments on the bad taste of the red dress Hilda is wearing
— another of Eustace's presents.

"Miss Cherrington wore a red dress — my dear, there was nothing really AGAINST it, it would have looked all right on the stage, I dare say, but it wasn't right for Anchorstone. Dick, you know, notices anything of that sort perhaps more than you or I would, and I happened to hear him say to her (he thought they were alone), 'That dress of yours, Hilda, will set the Thames on fire. Did you choose it yourself, or did you send someone round the corner for it?' She said, 'Why, don't you like it?' And he said 'Only behind a fireguard,' or something like that. Well, Monica would just have laughed, but Miss Cherrington was thoroughly upset and looked like a thundercloud."²⁷

ooo

N O T E S

- ¹*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, p. 97.
- ²Ibid., pp. 95-96.
- ³Cirlot, op. cit., pp. 110-111.
- ⁴*The Shrimp and the Anemone*, p. 96.
- ⁵Ibid., p. 96.
- ⁶*The Sixth Heaven*, p. 12.
- ⁷Ibid., p. 18.
- ⁸Ibid., p. 142.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 140.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 145.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 121.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 160.
- ¹³Ibid., p. 92.
- ¹⁴Ibid., p. 61.
- ¹⁵Ibid., p. 85.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 165.
- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 167.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 167.
- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 192.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 193.
- ²¹Cirlot, op. cit., p. 419.

²² *The Sixth Heaven*, p. 194.

²³ "Hilda's Letter" in *The Collected Short Stories of L. P. Hartley*, pp. 448-449.

²⁴ *The Sixth Heaven*, p. 198.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 90.

²⁶ L.P. Hartley, *Eustace and Hilda* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1975) p. 63.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 66.

o0o

PART IV: EUSTACE AND HILDA

PART IV - EUSTACE AND HILDA

1. *Gothic and Baroque*

A peculiar trait of the third book of the trilogy, *Eustace and Hilda*, is Eustace's identification with the Gothic and his dislike for the Baroque.

Venice is chosen as the background of the story. It is above all a baroque city and the church of Santa Maria della Salute is a representative baroque monument.

On the other hand we find examples of gothic buildings with hybrid sculptures in this baroque city, as the vaults and the pointed arched façade of the Grand Canal.

The reason for the choice of Venice as a background is made clear.

The depth and curves of the baroque style suggest unconscious instinct and are deeply connected to the feminine principle whereas the spires and vertical lines of the Gothic, connoting an idea of conscious intellect, stand for the masculine principle.

Eustace's search for stability in the Gothic is nothing more than his search for independence from feminine domination represented by the Baroque ; his desire to pursue gothic structures is nothing more than his desire to move away from instinct, specifically from sex instinct.

Eustace identified himself with the vertical effects of pointed arches and vaults, flying buttresses and slender spires, and with the mystery conveying stained windows of

the gothic art.

The search for freedom from the body, the spirituality and feeling, and the infinite evolutive process transmitted in the gothic architecture have a strong and immediate appeal to him.

In fact they represent Eustace's aspiration and ideals of life, thus their powerful attraction and Eustace's immediate response.

On the other hand baroque multiplicity and confusion of overlapping elements, its opulence, its search to startle by the unusual and the unexpected, puzzle Eustace.

Its emphasis on depth and recession on diagonal lines and on spirals to express strong emotion and demand, trying to capture the participation of the observer, affects Eustace deeply, but essentially he is frightened by it. Trying to escape the baroque element in his own nature, Eustace shows he just can't cope with more turmoil and tension doubts and agonies.

His sense of equilibrium demands compensation and the Gothic provides him with the squareness he needs.

On his arrival in Venice Eustace feels puzzled and uneasy with the baroque structures surrounding him.

In fact he feels as if he was being attacked from all sides:

"His thoughts were at home with the bridge; elsewhere they were still uneasily resisting the seduction of the indisciplined unashamed opulence around him. He felt more at ease with the Gothic than the Baroque and with brick than stone or stucco; happily this palace, the Palazzo Contarini Falier,

was Gothic, and the window he was looking out of, though to an eye accustomed to lancets their outlines seemed wanting in modesty, were undoubtedly Gothic windows.

Everything Eustace saw clamoured for attention. The scene was like an orchestra without a conductor; and to add to the confusion the sights, unlike the sounds, did not come from any one place: they attacked him from all sides, and even the back of his head felt bombarded by impressions. There was no refuge from the criss-cross flights of the Venetian visual missiles, no calculating the pace at which they came... Upon examination, every angle in the room seemed out of true; he was living in a trapezium, and would never be able to feel a mathematical relationship with his surroundings. Good-bye to the sense of squareness! But could a thing, or a person, be fair without being square?

How did Venetians ever achieve stability of mind, Eustace wondered..."¹

The allusion to lancet windows as well as the statement that the outlines, seemed "wanting in modesty" appeal again to the feminine principle while conveying the idea of something unconscious and instinctive, not dominated by intellect.

In Eustace's puritanism the lack of modesty is connected with female domination.

Eustace's identification with the Gothic and his dislike for the Baroque is present as long as Venice serves as background.

Among the several descriptions of baroque structures the one of the church of San Mois  s stands out for the implied conflict in Eustace's mind. He would really like to

know, though he is unable to arrive at any conclusion, the thoughts and feelings of people who lived naturally among such exuberant architecture.

One day Eustace is compelled to go home on foot since the four seats of the gondola had already been occupied. He enters Via Venti due Marzo, and

"not for the first time the crumbling, florid front of the church of San Moisè claimed his attention. Ruskin had loaded it with obloquy: in his eyes it was frivolous, ignoble, immoral. Eustace was determined to like it: half one's pleasure in Venice was lost if one could not stomach the rococo and the baroque. But this evening, as he stood on the little bridge and watched the pigeons strutting to and fro, hardly visible among the swags, cornucopias, and swing-boat forms whose lateral movement seemed to rock the church from side to side, his interest was not in the morality or otherwise of the tormented stonework, but in the state of mind of people to whom such exuberance of spirit was as natural as the air they breathed. Never a hint, in all that aggregation of masonry, of diffidence or despondency, no suggestion of a sad, tired mind finding its only expression in a stretch of blank wall."²

The mention of Ruskin is relevant. Ruskin was impotent which may explain his hatred for baroque architecture with its implied symbolism of the feminine principle.

His describing of the church as "an aggregation of masonry", and thus his rejection of it and all it represents may be an indirect reference to his basic feeling of impotence when faced by such "feminine exuberance."

N O T E S

¹L.P. Hartley, *Eustace and Hilda*, pp. 24-25.

²Ibid., p. 133.

ooo

2. The Ritual Bath

Adding to the sense of symmetry of the trilogy the book *Eustace and Hilda* presents us with a long episode of Eustace bathing himself for redemption and purification. It's no longer the bath ritual of his childish times with floods, earthquakes, all sorts of games of destruction and fears as in the book *The Shrimp and the Anemone*. No more does it intend to set the boy free from the undesirable influences of Miss Fothergill, though it still implies an effort of liberating the boy from any thwarting feminine influence either Hilda's or Lady Nelly's.

Lady Nelly has made a point of Eustace's being in Venice for the Feast of the Redeemer.

On the appointed day he embarks in a gondola together with Lady Nelly and the Morecambes for a firework exhibition in praise of Christ the Redeemer.

After the show, as they decide to go back, Lord Morecambe ironically urges Eustace to go and have a bath for a complete purification.

"How nice to be going to bed. Nice for us, I mean. Not for poor Cherrington — he's got to go and have a bathe'...

'Oh, you'll never think of going now, will you, Eustace?' said Lady Nelly, 'It's so late, and the Lido's so far away.'

'He must go,' said Lord Morecambe firmly. 'It's a ritual bath, you know, and his redemption won't be complete without it. If I was his age' (Lord Morecambe was only a year or two older than

Eustace)' and half his sins on my conscience I shouldn't hesitate.'"¹

On going to the Lido to join the crowd Eustace repents having thus acted the way he did but he does not shirk from the bath.

At the beach he joins the crowd and tries to imitate them for he observes that he is the only one who doesn't know what to do.

After some time he feels he is just one among many. This loss of identity pleases him.

"He could not join in the laughter and talking, but he could feel the common impulse — indeed, he could feel nothing else; it seemed to be the first time he had ever acted with his whole being."²

Eustace enters the sea and as the water creeps higher "nothing is omitted from its intimate embrace "³ and he feels at ease with himself. The loss of identity seems a blessing for Eustace is able to get rid of his main burden: his own self.

"The effect of being with people without really seeing them was to make him feel separate but not lonely: sharing their purpose and their destination relieved him of the burden of himself."⁴

As Eustace arrives home he is pale, "grigio verde" in the words of the gondoliers, and on Lady Nelly's advice he rests most of the day.

"They could all see a change in him, but were not sure it was a change for the better. It was generally agreed that he must be spiritually very sensitive, or sadly in need of a wash, to have taken the experience so hard."⁵

The ritual bath seems to be a preparation for Eustace's death, later in the book.

Having been asked by Jasper Bentwich in what ways he felt better after the bath, Eustace replies:

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

Jasper goes on: 'Do you attribute that to the bathe?'

'In a way I do,' said Eustace. You see, I dreaded it, quite unreasonably, but when I came to the point it wasn't so very unpleasant. You see, there were so many other people doing it, and they didn't seem to mind.'⁶

N O T E S

¹*Eustace and Hilda*, p. 92.

²Ibid., p. 97.

³Ibid., p. 97.

⁴Ibid. p. 95.

⁵Ibid., pp. 104-105.

⁶Ibid., p. 114.

oOo

3. The dressing-gown

The thematic of the complete fusion between Eustace and Hilda, conveyed in *The Shrimp and the Anemone*, by the night-gown, recurs in the third book of the trilogy, *Eustace and Hilda*, this time as a dressing gown.

Together with Lady Nelly Eustace goes shopping to get a dress for Hilda.

To one of Lady Nelly's questions Eustace replies:

"'If I look cheerful it's because of the present you are going to give me.'

'I won't refuse you a present,' said Lady Nelly, 'since you ask me; but this is for your sister, you know.'

Eustace's face turned redder. 'That was a slip of the tongue,' he muttered miserably. 'When I said 'me' I meant Hilda. You see, it's the same thing.'

'Is it?' said Lady Nelly dubiously. 'Well that simplifies things very much. If I give you a dressing-gown, will your sister regard it as a present to her?'

Eustace's face fell. 'Well, you see, I have one,' he said.

'We'll think about the dressing-gown afterwards,' said Lady Nelly. 'You've convinced me that your theory doesn't work. Your sister wouldn't get any pleasure from your dressing-gown. Now put away these ideas of combined identities, and come and help me to choose something for her.'"¹

The sexual fusion between brother and sister will never

happen; their relationship is to maintain an incestuous trait only. There is never going to be incest in the full sense of the word.

The idea of an intimate relation expressed by a couple wearing either the same nightgown or dressing-gown is at once rejected by Lady Nelly's reasonable mind: Hilda will never regard Eustace's dressing-gown as a present to her, so Eustace's theory of their oneness proves to be questionable.

On the other hand, Lady Nelly's words remind us of Hilda's fetishist attitude to Eustace through his nightgown in the first book of the trilogy. This has been fully discussed in the chapter "The Nightgown".

o0o

N O T E

¹*Eustace and Hilda*, pp. 162-163.

ooo

4. *The Sixth and the Seventh Heaven*

Eustace's happiness is only achieved vicariously. He has taken for granted that the seventh heaven is unattainable and so he does not ask for more than the sixth.

The book *Eustace and Hilda* is pervaded with examples giving continuity to what was shown in the second book of the trilogy *The Sixth Heaven*.

Eustace's dreams of marrying Hilda to Dick become stronger and stronger.

As soon as he arrives in Venice he receives a letter from Stephen who, among other things, tells him about the friendly relation that is developing between Hilda and himself.

Feeling Stephen to be a dangerous rival to Dick, Eustace seeks fulfillment by imagining Hilda writing Stephen a letter. Needless to say that Hilda — in Eustace's mind — is already married to Dick Staveley.

In Eustace's imagination Hilda's letter is as follows:

"... You didn't know I was giving up the clinic? Oh, but I had to, you see, there's so much to do here — entertaining and parish work and one thing and another — since Sir John died and my mother-in-law went to live at the Dover House, a charming house, though she says it's too big for her. Of course I shall always take an interest in the clinic — a very friendly interest. To tell you the truth, Dick has partially endowed it; wasn't it good of him? Yes, twenty thousand pounds..."¹

Later in the book Stephen is again the reason for Eustace's jealous remarks about his sister and Dick.

In his imagination, he tells Stephen that Hilda is ill.

"My elder sister? Oh, Hilda's a little off colour; her illness is not so interesting as Barbara's: just a billious attack from overwork. No, she's not at Anchorstone, she's at our other house, near London."²

To Stephen's offer of help he roughly replies "Oh no, Stephen, there's nothing you can do; if anything needs doing, Dick Staveley will do it."³

This is not enough to satisfy Eustace. He has to invent something more malicious about Dick and Hilda. A conflict would fit in: Dick's jealousy because of Hilda's interest in the clinic, and Stephen's presence forming the love triangle. The plot is built up in Eustace's mind.

"I'm sorry, Dick, but I'm afraid I can't dine with you this evening. I've got to stay in and work. They don't like me to go out so often as it is. You see, the clinic can't get on without me."

'Oh, damn the clinic. It's always the clinic. I tell you, I'm getting jealous. I believe you've got someone down there who interests you. 'Oh, nonsense, Dick, of course I haven't. Who could there possibly be? 'What about the fellow I met with you last week — can't remember his name — a lawyer chap?'

In spite of her agitation Hilda smiled 'Oh, Stephen Hilliard, he's our family solicitor.

Hilliard, Lampeter and Hilliard. Aren't they your solicitors too?' 'Well, come to think of it, they are. But what's he doing down there?' 'He comes to see me on business.' 'Business, what sort of business?' 'Oh, business to do with the clinic.' 'It didn't look like that sort of business to me.' 'Oh, Dick, please don't be jealous. He's a most serious young man; he thinks of nothing but stocks and shares and cutting down expenses. He's a friend of Eustace's. I'm just his client.' 'A friend of Eustace's, is he? What a lot of friends your brother seems to have... I suppose he'd like you to marry this Stephen Hilliard?' 'Oh, Dick, how can you say such a thing? Of course Eustace is very popular, he has crowds of friends, more than I like, really. He's a friend of yours, too. I should never have met you but for him.' 'Yes, I owe him that. But he's a cunning little devil, though you wouldn't think so to look at him.' 'Well, aren't you glad he is?' 'Perhaps I am, but so no doubt is this fellow Hilliard.' 'Oh, please Dick, don't say any more about him. He simply takes an interest in me for Eustace's sake. Now do believe me.'"⁴

In Eustace's mind Dick goes on urging Hilda to dine with him, admonishing her that the time is getting near when she will have to choose between the clinic and him.

This is not enough. Hilda's bad time does not end there.

"Eustace delighted in making the bad worse. It went on at the Ritz in scenes that grew stormier with each reconstruction... Then, when all the hope seemed dead, came the final plea: the appeal to their dear love for Eustace, the yielding, and the reconciliation. When that was reached, Eustace fell asleep."⁵

And then Hartley clearly states that, as Eustace's happiness could only be achieved vicariously, Dick has taken the role of the surrogate and through him Eustace gets his fulfillment.

"The attainment of happiness now seemed to Eustace not only possible but certain; and the happiness he imagined for Dick and Hilda he now possessed himself. Indeed, by no other means could he have possessed it, for it only existed for him mirrored in another."⁶

But events take an opposite course to Eustace's thoughts. Dick jilts Hilda and Eustace has to find a new surrogate to feed his imaginings — Stephen is then chosen.

"He often used to find Stephen at the clinic when he went there; business visits Stephen called them, but he did not mean that.

At first Hilda was a little shy and standoffish with him, but after the episode of the chicken-house, Eustace knew how matters stood, and did everything he could, in a perfectly nice way, to bring them together. Aunt Sarah was very pleased with him, and he felt that at last he had made her forget whatever it was she disliked and distrusted in him. Hilda and Stephen were to be married in September, and she would leave the clinic as soon as a substitute could be found."⁷

By uniting Hilda to Stephen Eustace tries, at least in his mind, to get rid of all the encumbrances of having brought

together an ill matched couple.

In the third book of the trilogy, Eustace's inability to give himself in love is made clear in several situations.

Eustace's meeting with his childhood love Nancy Steptoe after a long time absence is the most pointed example of this inability.

Without recognizing each other, Nancy and Eustace meet at a hotel bar and begin talking. At the mention of Anchorstone recognition comes and they greet each other as old friends.

Nancy wants far more than a friendly contact and knowing Eustace is very impressed by past remembrances, she appeals to them.

Eustace offers Nancy a strega and tells her that strega is the Italian word for witch. Then he reminds Nancy she once told him Miss Fothergill was a witch and Nancy replies:

" 'Oh, that old lady... I believe she was in love with you.' Eustace says: 'Oh no, she couldn't have been. I was much too young, and besides — '

'Besides what?'

'Well, nobody has been.'

'I don't believe that. And haven't you been in love with anyone?'

Eustace hesitated. 'I — I don't think so.'

'Oh, come now, you must have been. I believe you were in love with me once.'

'... Perhaps I was.'

'Don't you think you could be again?'

'I — I — 'Eustace sighed and stopped...

'I think all that sort of thing was scolded out of me when I was a child.'

'They wouldn't let you speak to me. Did they

think I was a bad influence?'.
Eustace said nothing.

'I believe they were jealous of you and wanted to keep you to themselves. What happened to Hilda? Did she ever marry?'

'No'

'Too fond of you?'

'Oh no, I'm sure that wasn't the reason. She got taken up with — with other things.'"⁸

As Nancy used to do when they were children she teases Eustace again about the incestuous, abnormal relationship between his sister and himself.

She then comments in an inviting tone that there were no Cherrington with them at the moment, no restraining presences, they were free to behave as they wished. Nancy remembers the last time they were together was during the paper-chase and she bitterly reproaches the past: "What a difference it might have made if they'd let us."⁹

Eustace is more affected by the atmosphere Nancy had created by recollecting the past than by Nancy's charms.

When Nancy mentions her desire to be in Lady Nelly's shoes, that is of having a real love affair with Eustace, he retires in confusion.

He then says explicitly he envies people in love but the fact of being himself in love with someone was the seventh not the sixth heaven, and as a seventh heaven it was unattainable.

These are Nancy's words:

"Oh, I'm not trying to put you against her. I envy her — I'd be jolly glad to be in her shoes. I was thinking of you and the kind of things people say. They've much more sympathy, you know, with a real love-affair. Even I know that'.

'A real love-affair?'

'Yes, when there's something on both sides. Wouldn't you like that?'

Eustace felt himself being hurried towards an unknown goal.

'I like seeing people in love.'

'But don't you envy them?'

'Perhaps I do, a little. He thought of Barbara and Jimmy, of Lord and Lady Morecambe, of Dick and Hilda and a sense of far-off, unattainable sweetness possessed him. 'But I don't think it's for me, somehow.'"¹⁰

For the first time Eustace attributes his incapacity for loving to his aunt's and father's castrating effects in childhood.

He thinks he was really fond of Nancy Steptoe as a child, but his father and aunt's prohibition of his seeing the girl have cut love out of his life forever.

Seeing Eustace is not interested in her appeals, Nancy decides to change her strategies. She begins to pity herself and Eustace can't help being touched.

"I don't think you're really interested,' she said. 'I don't blame you. Why should you be, after all these years? I'm nothing to you. I don't know why I thought —'

'Oh, but you are!' cried Eustace, relieved but distressed by her change of tone.'"¹¹

In fact Eustace mishandles the whole situation. He offers help to Nancy. She accepts overjoyed. Then in a whisper Eustace asks her address.

Nancy doesn't get the point and asks:

"'My address? Why, you know it. Do you mean the number of my room?'

Eustace says: 'I mean, so that I could send it to you?'

'It?' said Nancy.

'Well , the cheque.'

(Rising to her feet, and looking at Eustace full in the face) Nancy said: 'Are you trying to pay me off?'

Eustace also rose.

'Pay you off?' he muttered. But there was no answer: she had gone.'"¹²

Never before has such a clear invitation to sexual intercourse been made to Eustace — and never after will it be again. Eustace mishandled the situation to such an extent that we are led to think he is in fact a homosexual. Such naïvety, to a twenty-five-year-old man seems more than exaggerated.

Another instance which shows Eustace's incapacity for love — besides, the incident with Nancy Steptoe and Eustace's envy of loving couples — is Stephen's letter. At the same time Stephen comments on Eustace as a match-maker he observes that this is what he'd better do, for becoming involved in a love-affair seems almost impossible.

Again the idea that Eustace could only find satisfaction vicariously is emphasized.

Stephen's letter runs as follows:

"Hilda might never have grown to care for me. I thought you would have liked her to — but you know, it is not always easy to tell what you want. I see now that you meant her to marry Staveley... How cleverly you contrived that visit to Anchorstone; what fun you must have had watching your plan work, what vicarious excitement when you saw the fly fairly in the spider's web. Perhaps you will never get nearer to a love-affair than the thought of your sister in Staveley's arms. And what a superb stroke of strategy then to hurry away, leaving her with no one to turn to, no one to consult, no man, if the expression fits."¹³

Day-dreams as escapes from reality function as compensations for Eustace who can handle them in such a way as to fit in his wishes.

For the incident with Nancy Steptoe he imagines two versions, flattering to his self-esteem. In one of them Nancy accepts his gift

"with tears of gratitude, saying that he had saved her life, enable her to face her parents and to turn over a new leaf. 'I shall never, never, be able to repay you, Eustace. You are a darling — you always were...'"¹⁴

In the other it is Eustace who accepts Nancy's invitation and goes to her room.

"At the threshold his imagination boggled, but Eustace was in no mood to be deterred; the stregas, like the true witches they were, made everything easy."¹⁵

Perhaps the best example of day-dream is Eustace's book.

With the usual change of names Eustace writes his ideal version of the love-affair between Dick and Hilda.

Eustace spends most of his time in Venice writing his book for almost no one to read. The engagement of Dick and Hilda is broken off and when an editor shows interest in publishing the book, Eustace dies.

Soon before his death, we have a friendly talk between the Cherringtons.

Hilda has been jilted by Dick Staveley who, meanwhile, has told her he was to be engaged to Miss Monica Sheldon. She doesn't believe he really means it and when she reads the announcement on a morning newspaper she becomes paralysed.

Eustace plans to give her a shock: he would make her bath-chair move along down the cliff for a while to frighten her. At the crucial moment Eustace's fingers slip from the chair handle and it moves of itself. Unable to pick up the wedges Eustace tries to grasp the wheel, his hand passes through the spokes and they close on his wrist, bringing the chair to a standstill.

Eustace's strength fails him and he faints. Hilda's movements come back and she goes to help Eustace.

After some quarrelling over the incident we have brother and sister tenderly talking to each other.

Hilda bids him good-night and he kisses her on the cheek.

"'That's not the way to do it,' said Hilda. 'He's a lot to learn, hasn't he, Minney? *This is the way.*' And she gave him a long embrace on the lips.

Eustace, though a little breathless, was grateful to her. The gesture crowned the evening with a panache he couldn't have given it — nor could Hilda, a few months ago.'" 16

Eustace believes he is in the seventh heaven. And that is how he telegraphs to Lady Nelly.

"Such wonderful news. My sister Hilda quite cured. ... Am in Seventh Heaven at last. Hope you are well. Writing. Love. Eustace." 17

But the seventh heaven seems to be forbidden to Eustace. After the telegram he goes to bed never to wake up again.

ooo

N O T E S

¹*Eustace and Hilda*, pp. 30-31.

²Ibid., p. 109.

³Ibid., p. 109.

⁴Ibid., p. 173.

⁵Ibid., p. 174.

⁶Ibid., p. 174.

⁷Ibid., p. 195.

⁸Ibid., p. 140.

⁹Ibid., p. 141.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 142.

¹¹Ibid., p. 143.

¹²Ibid., pp. 144-145.

¹³Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 298.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 299.

5. *The Shrimp and the Anemone*

The central and main symbol of the book, the shrimp and the anemone, appears both in the first chapter of the first book and in the last chapter of the last book of the trilogy as a unifying element both in thematic and in structural forms.

From the nine-year-old-boy to the grown up man the incestuous trait of the relationship between Eustace and Hilda is always kept alive.

On meeting Nancy Steptoe again in Venice Eustace is asked about his sister. On his saying she hasn't married, Nancy is sharp: "Too fond of you?"

Though also an adolescent at that time of Anchorstone, Nancy was perfectly aware of the unusual kind of relationship between Eustace and Hilda.

Hilda's protestations of endearment never end. After her shock and recovery, she confesses to Eustace how important he is to her.

"Oh, Eustace, you must be careful, you are so precious to me; I don't believe you realise how precious you are."

"And you to me, Hilda darling."

"No, not in the same way — not in the same way. You had Miss Fothergill, and now your friend Lady Nelly, and I don't know how many more. You collect friends like you do paper-weights. But I only have you. I feel jealous sometimes".

"But, Hilda —"

"Don't argue, it is so. And if anything happened

to you, I don't know what would become of me. You must look after yourself."¹

After this comes the climactic event in their relationship where Hilda teaches Eustace how to kiss properly, perhaps the strongest overt symbol of the incestuous trait of their relationship

"Eustace kissed her on the cheek.

'That's not the way we do it,' said Hilda. 'He's a lot to learn, hasn't he, Minney? *THIS* is the way.' And she gave him a long embrace on the lips.

Eustace, though a little breathless, was grateful to her. The gesture crowned the evening with a panache he couldn't have given it — nor could Hilda, a few months ago."²

As a preparation for the last appearance of the shrimp and the anemone, we have Lord Morecambe talking to his wife. He makes an ironic comment about shrimps and anemones, to which Lady Morecambe replies, referring to Eustace:

"Of course, I don't know how he'd put it, but he sees those boatmen in their cute pink shirts and big straw hats ... and the darling little crabs that the poor people eat, and those swell sea-anemones —'

'He couldn't possibly see a sea-anemone from here,' objected Lord Morecambe, almost sneezing over the words. 'Besides, they've all died from the drains. You'll be saying he can see a shrimp next."³

Without knowing Lord Morecambe is making a premonition, and the episode has its symbolic level.

Shrimps, which are invisible, will no longer exist by the end of the book with Eustace's death.

As for the anemones, they'll be hardly visible. Pollution is going to kill them. Hilda who has already retired on account of her paralysis will probably be hardly visible after Eustace's death.

Before the last appearance of the shrimp and the anemone Hartley builds up the background by means of a flashback.

In Eustace's dream Hilda and he are children again, alone together on the sands of Anchorstone.

"Eustace knew that it was the visit he had been denying himself for so long, and he knew also that never in actuality or in memory had the pang of pleasure been as keen as this. For his sense of union with Hilda was absolute; he tasted the pure essence of the experience, and as they began to dig, every association the sands possessed seemed to run up his spade and tingle through his body. Inexhaustible, the confluent streams descended from the pools above; unbreakable, the thick retaining walls received their offering; unruffled, the rock-girt pond gave back the cloudless sky."⁴

Eustace's communion with Hilda is total, and then everything is perfect, this perfection mirrored in an unbreakable pond giving back a cloudless sky.

"They did not speak, for they knew each other's

thoughts and wishes; they did not hurry, for time had ceased to count; they did not look at each other, for each had an assurance of the other's presence beyond the power of sight to amplify. Indeed, they must not look or speak, it was a law, for fear of each other.

How long this went on for Eustace could not tell, but suddenly he forgot, and spoke to Hilda. She did not answer. He looked up, but she was not there; he was alone on the sands."⁵

But this is Eustace's last dream. Before the image of the shrimp and the anemone there comes the image of death symbolized by the dark air, and cliffs extremely high and dangerous to climb.

"'She must have gone home,' he thought, and at once he knew that it was very late and the air was darkening round him. So he set off towards the cliffs, which now seemed extraordinarily high and dangerous, too high to climb, too dangerous to approach. He stopped and called 'Hilda!' — and this time he thought she answered him in the cry of a sea-mew, and he followed in the direction of the cry. 'Were are you?' he called, and the answer came back. 'Here!' But when he looked he only saw a sea-weed-coated rock standing in a pool. But he recognized the rock, and knew what he should find there."⁶

And then comes the final symbolic image of the shrimp and the anemone as a close-up to the book.

"The white plumose anemone was stroking the water with its feelers.

The same anemone as before, without a doubt, but there was no shrimp in its mouth. 'It will die of hunger, thought Eustace. 'I must find it something to eat,' and he bent down and scanned the pool.

Shrimps were disporting themselves in shallows; but they slipped out of his cupped hands, and fled away into the dark recesses under the caves of the rock, where the crabs lurked.

Then he knew what he must do. Taking off his shoes and socks, he waded into the water. The water was bitterly cold; but colder still were the lips of the anemone as they closed around his fingers. 'I shall wake up now,' thought Eustace, who had wakened from many dreams.

But the cold crept onwards and he did not wake."⁷

The same plumose anemone of the first book appears, but now the episode has a different ending. It will surely die but not disembowelled as in the first book. It will die of hunger for the shrimp no longer exists.

The dream acts as a premonition. Hilda — anemone with the death of Eustace — shrimp will also probably die.

As Hilda herself had said before, Eustace is the only person she could count on. He is too precious to her.

"Oh, Eustace, you must be careful, you are so precious to me... And if anything happened to you, I don't know what would become of me. You must look after yourself."⁸

N O T E S

¹*Eustace and Hilda*, p. 296.

²Ibid., p. 298.

³Ibid., pp. 117-118.

⁴Ibid., p. 309.

⁵Ibid., p. 309.

⁶Ibid., p. 309.

⁷Ibid., pp. 309-310.

⁸Ibid., p. 296.

oOo

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

In telling his story or in between telling his story, the novelist is also organizing his criticism of life. He may be fitting the complexity and contradictoriness of life into a predetermined dogmatic pattern — as for example Daniel Defoe, or Thomas Hardy, and, in our present context, L. P. Hartley. The moral view is always present; its form is the form of moral categories, when the novelist shares with the psychologist's case book or with almost anyone's gossip, but in order to be a novel and not an abstract analysis, substance must be given to individuality as well as to categories.

The novel holds us by its story and informs us by its moral arguments, but it moves us by its individual presences and moments — its truth to life.

We have presented in this thesis an analysis of thematic organization. Essentially we have tried to show that the organization of recurrent symbols give depth to our apprehension of both Eustace and Hilda as human beings and enables us to understand the determinism which entraps and gradually destroys them.

The three books deal with Eustace's incestuous desires — directed towards Hilda. Neither Eustace nor Hilda consciously know it. As to the reader, he only realizes it fully through Hartley's open hints and by examining symbols and interpreting dreams.

Though the books may be considered separately, there is perceptible unity in them.

The Shrimp and the Anemone (1944) introduces the problem together with the central image of the trilogy: a shrimp half-eaten by an anemone. Other symbols occur to reinforce this idea and emphasize Eustace's unconscious masochistic desire to satisfy his sexual needs through Hilda's domination.

The ideas presented in the first book — when the Cherringtons are still children — are illustrated in the second book and concluded in the third.

In *The Sixth Heaven* (1946) the idea of incest is reinforced by Eustace creating surrogates to be Hilda's partners in love-affairs. Eustace's vicarious satisfaction contributes to reinforce the idea of incest always latent and frustrated.

In the third book, *Eustace and Hilda* (1947), the Cherringtons are adult people, but as the story develops and Hilda becomes very ill they come to know how dependent they are on each other.

These recurrent symbols work more powerfully than any "flashback" to underline the presence of the past in the present, the inescapable determinism of the incestuous binding together of brother and sister.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Augras, Monique. *A Dimensão Simbólica*. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 1967.
- Bien, Peter. *L.P. Hartley*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1963.
- Bloomfield, Paul. *L.P. Hartley*. London: Longman Group Ltd., 1972.
- Brown, G.E. *Brodie's Notes on L.P. Hartley's The Shrimp and the Anemone*. London: Pan Books Ltd., 1978.
- Burgess, Anthony. "Utopias and Dystopias" *The Novel Now: A Student's Guide to Contemporary Fiction*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1967.
- Cassirer, Ernst. *Antropologia Filosófica*. São Paulo: Editora Mestre Jou, 1972.
- Cecil, David. "Introduction". *The Collected Short Stories of L.P. Hartley*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968, pp.V-VIII.
- Cheney, Sheldon. *A História da Arte*. São Paulo: Livraria Martins Editora S.A., 1963, II & IV.
- Civita, Victor, ed. "Vocabulário da Música". *A Arte da Música*. São Paulo: Editora Abril S.A., 1979.
- Cirlot, Juan-Eduardo. *Diccionario de Símbolos*. Barcelona: Editorial Labor, 1978.
- Clark, Kenneth. *Civilisation*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972.

Hartley, L.P. *The Shrimp and the Anemone*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1969.

_____. *The Sixth Heaven*. London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1973.

Hauser, A. *História Social da Literatura e da Arte*. São Paulo: Editora Mestre Jou, 1972.

Jones, Edward T. *L. P. Hartley*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978.

Jung, Carl Gustav. *O Homen e seus Símbolos*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 1977.

Kitson, Michael. *O Mundo da Arte: O Barroco*. Rio de Janeiro, Livraria José Olympio Editora e Editora Expressão e Cultura, 1966.

Langer, Susanne Katherine. *Feeling and Form*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953.

Laplanche, J. et Pontalis, J.B. *Vocabulário da Psicanálise*. Santos: Livraria Martins Fontes Editora Ltda., 1970.

Melchiori, Giorgio. "The English Novelist and the American Tradition". *Sewanee Review*. 68, 1960, pp. 502-515.

Methuen's Study - Aid Series. *Notes on L.P. Hartley's The Go-Between*. London: Methuen Educational Ltd., 1976.

_____. *Notes on L.P. Hartley's The Shrimp and the Anemone*. London: Methuen Educational Ltd., 1970.

The M.L.A. Sheet. 2nd ed. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1970.

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

Mullahy, Patrick. *Édipo - Mito e Complexo*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Editores, 1965.

Rycroft, Charles. *Dicionário Crítico de Psicanálise*. Rio de Janeiro: Imago Editora Ltd., 1975.

Saraiva, Paulo. "Dialética do Complexo de Édipo". *Minas Gerais, Suplemento Literário*. 257 (July 17, 1971).

_____. "O Ateneu e o Complexo de Édipo". *Diário de Minas*. June II, 1950; June 25, 1950.

Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Curso de Linguística Geral*. São Paulo: Editora Cultrix, 1971.

Seymour-Smith, Martin. "L.P. Hartley". *Who's Who in the Twentieth Century Literature*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976, pp. 151-152.

Silva, Oscar Vieira da. *Elaboração de trabalho escrito: uma orientação*. Belo Horizonte: UCMG, 1973.

Silva, Vitor Manuel de Aguiar. *Teoria da Literatura*. Coimbra: Livraria Almedina, 1969.

Thrall, Hibbard & Holman. *A Handbook to Literature*. New York: The Odissey Press, 1960.

Tindall, William. "Excellent Dumb Discourse". Stevick, Phillip, ed. *The Theory of the Novel*. New York: The Free Press, 1967.

Vernier, L.P. "La Trilogie Romanesque de L.P. Hartley". *Études Anglaises*, 13 (1960), pp. 26-31.

1

ERRATA

- p. 1. line 24 - frustrated instead of frustated.
- p. 5. line 7 - comma after trilogy.
- p. 8. Footnote- page 87 instead of 85.
- p. 9. line 18 - He instead of she.
line 24 - comma after Hilda.
- p.11. line 2 - comma after away. Omit from.
- p.14. line 14 - one of the last instead of last.
- p.18. line 14 - comma after Hilda.
- p.19. line 20 - the instead of she.
- p.21. line 20 - double quotation marks before 'Gerald.
line 14 - envy of instead of envy.
- p.22. line 8 - covered instead of convered.
line 27 - Omit them.
- p.24. line 16 - question mark after spade.
- p.25. line 12 - wove in the air a instead of wove in the.
- p.27. line 7 - double quotation marks after events.
- p.28. lines 1 and 3 - underline op. cit.
- p.32. line 5 - as devouring instead of devouring.
line 11 - boy instead of by.
- p.36. line 25 - disentowelled instead of disenbowelled.
- p.37. line 23 - the way for instead of the way to.
- p.38. line 4 - wins or loses instead of wins a loses.
- p.39. line 14 - in such a way instead of in a such a way.
line 24. - Eustace's instead of Eustace.
- p.40. line 6 - As one of instead of as of.
- p.42. line 13 - becomes instead of become.
line 22 - Eustace, as once the shrimp did, instead of
Eustace as once the shrimp.

- p.46. line 4 - Insert (after think) 'Oh yes, Dick. I'd much rather have Hilda than Nurse or even Minnie.'
- line 18 - the same approach instead of the same attitude.
- line 20 - her partner instead of his partner.
- p.57. line 14 - clearly instead of dearly.
- p.60. line 18 - hounds instead of hands.
- p.61. line 7 - comma after afraid.
- p.70. line 18 - and the knot which she had tied instead of and the knot that.
- p.73. line 19 - I instead of you.
- line 21 - It won't instead of I won't.
- p.74. line 31 - comma after feeling.
- line 32-- comma after still.
- p.78. line 21 - tration-or instead of tration-of.
- p.79. line 4 - comma after Bach.
- p.81. line 2 - hyphen after pond.
- line 12 - when instead of who,
- line 14 - anyone instead of anyone.
- line 24 - As a matter instead of As matter.
- p.84. line 24 - and his sister instead of and sister.
- p.88. line 15 - Diel instead of Dill.
- line 16 - as a symbol instead of as symbol.
- p.89. line 19 - "She instead of "she.
- p.90. line 24 - Omit Eustace observes.
- line 29 - hundram instead of hundram.
- p.91. line 10 - goes in instead of goes into.
- p.96. line 8 - opens: instead of opened and.
- line 11 - jerky instead of jerkey.

p.98. line 21 - she instead of he.

line 29 - through instead of thrung.

p.103. lines 2 and 3. Note ns 23. Omit citation. Keep page number.

p.104. line 23 - buttresses instead of butresses.

p.105. line 3 - evolutional instead of evolutive.

line 17 - comma after tension.

line 22 - if he were instead of if he was.

line 26 - undisciplined instead of indisclined.

p.106. line 22 - No comma after outlines. Comma after modesty.

reveal instead of appeal.

line 23 - the feminine principle of Bastage's mind instead of to the feminine principle.

p.107. line 23 - despondency instead of despond-eney.

p.109. line 20 - full stop after bath.

line 20 - full stop (instead of comma) after felly.

p.110. line 4 - Omit this.

p.113. line 3 - No comma after wild or after anarchy.

line 4 - comma after dressing.

p.116. line 6 - summarized trilogy.

p.117. line 6 - physical instead of physical.

p.123. line 23 - Omit comma after besides.

p.131. line 1 - comma after knowing.

p.131. line 12 - comma after death.

line 13 - No comma after hair.

line 14 - which instead of which.

p.131. line 14 - finger instead of fingers.

p.136. line 2 - which instead of when.

line 15 - river instead of give.

line 21 - knows instead of know.