

THE POETRY AND PROSE OF P. K. PAGE:

A STUDY IN CONFLICT OF OPPOSITES

by

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Patricia K. Page's prose and poetry exhibit a dynamic creative tension resulting from the conflict of opposites in theme and imagery patterns and in the poet's attitude and perception of her subjects.

The concept of separateness results from the thematic opposition of forces of solitude and multitude which focus on the despair of the isolated individual unable to emerge from his 'frozen' cave-like existence and to attain a community of shared feeling. Highly developed black-white dichotomy of images reinforces the conflict of obsessive self-love and pity with the universal need for self-awareness. Some of the poet's subjects succeed in this human search for truth, beauty, and self-fulfillment. Many, however, succumb to loneliness and paranoic isolation.

The basic conflict is seen through surface-depth alternations of imagery, the phases of the Rebirth archetypal pattern of transition from terrestrial to aquatic form. The conflict of opposites of isolation and involvement in her early work emphasizes the strength of the pull towards confinement of the self. Then, as Page progresses in objective perception of her individuals, there is a loosening of the force of isolation and a gradual emergence of the individual from solitude into multitude.

The conflict of opposites of restraint against freedom grows out of the basic juxtaposition of forces. Self-isolation and the vulnerability of innocence are linked as states of unawareness. Children, social

classes and adult individuals are portrayed as victims of indifferent constraining authority, social barriers, and war. Page's Marxian love of humanity dissolves into a Freudian interpretation of communal existence as an escape from the fears of solitude. The poet's presentation of an active social consciousness is a continuance of the contrapositioning of freedom and restraint operating on and within individuals.

In Page's work, organic imagery is suggestive of the powers of vitality and the life force - of multitude, universality, and personal freedom. Stagnation, inertia, isolation, and self-love are visualized by images of metal, stone or rock. This metal-flower contraposition evolves into archetypal antipathies of Paradise and Hades. The descent from sunlit gardens above to the dark caverns below takes the form of Freud's Nirvana principle or the first phase of the Rebirth cycle. And the renewal of vitality, the modulation from stone into flower marks the final ascent stage of Rebirth.

The pattern of Rebirth related to man's rituals has symbolic meaning for Page's work. The goal of the poet is to remove the "filter of subjectivity" placed over reality and to realize the potential of being reborn into awareness. Ararat becomes a symbol of the power of regeneration and of the unity of all life. P. K. Page presents conflict of opposites in themes and imagery. Yet her primary concern remains that the need for communal experience is greater than the negative desire for self-isolation from reality; that love is more sustaining than pity; that freedom is preferable to indifferent authority; that the search for beauty and truth must overcome fear and horror in the lives of individuals.

This paper was written under the supervision of Dr. Donald G. Stephens, who always found the time to encourage me and to criticize my work as it progressed. Dr. Stephens deserves special thanks for stimulating my interest in P. K. Page. Since I was at liberty to accept or reject his suggestions, I am alone responsible for any errors.

CHAPTER 1

CONFLICT OF OPPOSITES

Some people have thought that her poetry was prose; others have thought that her prose was poetry. But, if it is impossible to categorize her, it is worthwhile to understand her.¹

The creative art of Patricia Kathleen Page has not been the subject of any comprehensive study in Canadian criticism since John Sutherland, in a 1947 volume of Northern Review, presented some comments of interpretation of Page's prose and poetry. He did however set forward a justification for such an activity by helping to formally establish Miss Page as a poet worthy to be understood and to be critically examined. Since the appearance of Sutherland's article, such critics as George Woodcock, Millar McClure, Munro Beattie, Northrop Frye and Fred Cogswell, to name but a few, have briefly reviewed individual volumes of verse published by Miss Page - such criticism culminating in a 1967 review in the University of Toronto Quarterly of her latest book, Cry Ararat! by David M. Hayne who emphasized transitional aspects in her writing, showing influences and evolving developments in Page's work.

Neufville Shaw, a fellow poet and Page's co-editor of the magazine Preview, provided a contemporary's impression of the poet and her

art; the interrelationship between Page's poetry and her more recent proffering of painting is examined by Anne Francis in Canadian Art 1963; and an illuminating personal glimpse of the poet, by Page herself, can be found in Canadian Literature 1969.

Yet, despite such critiques, P. K. Page still resides in most studies of Canadian literature as 'one-of-a-list' - perhaps of poets of the forties, a period of great awakening in the evolution of Canadian poetry; of Canadian women poets, at times viewed as a subculture; or of the Montreal Preview group. David Hayne remarks that Page's literary reputation has been sustained over twenty-five years, laudable since it is based on infrequent and sporadic publishings. In all, Miss Page has presented four collections of her poems, several uncollected short stories, most of which originally appeared in volumes of Preview, and one novel written under the pseudonym of Judith Cape.

A study of Page's writing when viewed in total perspective tends to substantiate the idea that the most sustaining works are marked by a vivid and distinctive "creative tension". It is the major purpose of this thesis to examine the nature and origin of such "creative tension" directly exhibited in the prose and poetry, and indirectly in the etchings and paintings of P. K. Page, to show that such elastic vitality resides in the poet's presentation of "conflict of opposites" in her dominant themes, recurring imagery patterns, personal attitudes to her subjects and in the unique focus of perception in her art forms. The creation of a state of tension through the juxtaposition of opposites pervades Page's work and a descriptive analysis of this quality reveals a unified sensibility operating in Page's art that uniquely distinguishes her approach from that of other writers.

Shaw and John Sutherland in respective reviews of Page's work comment on a form of this "tension". Shaw writes that, "It is this internal tension which makes so much of Miss Page's poetry good. Generally for the real poet there are no solutions but only problems. No writer can be without a conflict of this sort to energize and motivate his work".² Sutherland reinforces this idea when he affirms ". . . the tension of Miss Page's better poems where there is never any truce between the opposing attitudes".³

The definition of "creative tension" in this thesis will center around the literary use of the term by such critics as John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren and Allen Tate. Prior to Ransom's book The New Criticism in 1941, Allen Tate in an article "Tension in Poetry" (1938) proposed the word "tension" as a term to be made by "lopping the prefixes off the logical terms extension and intension";⁴ or more generally that a valuable poem be a synthesis of both concrete and abstract meaning. An expanded definition of "creative tension" as it is found in P. K. Page's writing emerges as "a pattern of opposed stresses or forces; a stability maintained through a reconciliation of disparate impulses". This "tension" is directly related to the central vitalizing force in Page's work, the use of "conflict of opposites". Sutherland pointed out a similarity in attitude to subject and manner of writing between D. H. Lawrence and Page in his study of Page's The Sun and the Moon.⁵ Then in her exploration of the hypothesis propounded by C. G. Jung of unconscious forces or "archtypes", Maud Bodkin, in reference also to D. H. Lawrence's The Rainbow, delineates the term "conflict of opposites".

Yet, at the times when the reader finds himself attuned to

Lawrence's method, a new world is revealed by it whose distinctive character appears especially in the flow and conflicting play of opposite feelings shown continually within and between the characters--such dramas of attraction and repulsion, negation and reassertion of impulse as Lawrence conveys, indirectly yet so vividly to the senses . . .⁶

What is said here of D. H. Lawrence might well be applied to Miss Page's themes, imagery, her perception of her art, and overtly, her poetic and prose technique in writing.

Conflict of opposites in Page's themes can be found in those selections that focus on the dichotomy existing within an individual between the constricting force of self-love or pity, and its inversion, the wish for a sharing of feeling, an experiencing of love. A further discernment of polarity can be observed in Page's writings that involve an individual on one hand with a desire for solitude, an isolation of the self from any disruptive external forces, and on the other, with a yearning for a community of feeling, for being part of the multitude, involved and sharing. Miss Page juxtaposes the forces that inhibit, restrain or impose constraints on an individual, often a child, with the inherent drive for personal freedom and self-fulfillment. This positive motivating drive, or force, is a further refinement of the search for love, innocence and beauty, a search that leads directly away from those pressures that inspire fear, ugliness and horror in a person.

The static opposition of the life-giving force with the inert power of death is present in the poems and stories. Imagery conveys the conflict of opposites. Page's choice of imagery assumes certain distinctive forms. Flower visions strike against metal or stone patterns: a 'water self', or submerged state is in contraposition to the 'land' form of individuals: a cave existence or snow blanket opposes the communal life or the green-garden world: a metaphoric shifting between organic

and inorganic and between animate and inanimate states is established: black is superimposed on white; white on black; darkness on light; the negative on the positive. All these imagery patterns highlight the poet's thematic presentation of dichotomy and in doing so, give her work vitality and build "creative tension".

Miss Page's attitude to and perception of her subjects invests itself with the pattern of conflicts of opposites. She acknowledges the vision through her "subjective" and "psychological" eyes and yet her wish, stated in her self-explanatory article "Questions and Images"⁷ is to "remove the filters" of subjectivity and achieve greater objective distance from her art. The conflict in manner between a wish for simplicity of expression and a self-consciousness that drives one to complexity may be noted in various works, as can a tendency towards astringency of style in some instances and yet, at times, she creates works that exhibit a distinct "clottedness" of image-piling.⁸ "Creative tension" resulting from the presentation of conflict of opposites may again emerge in a selection when the surface "brilliance" of the piece contrasts sharply with the sombre, solitary intense emotion beneath it.

These are various forms that opposition of elements take in Page's poetry and prose and the thesis will focus on the kernel conflict and its expansion through theme, imagery, and the poet's perception of her art. The diffusion of conflicts of opposing elements provides a nexus between the disparate genre. P. K. Page's first poems appeared in Ronald Hambleton's anthology, Unit of Five in November 1944, along with the poetry of Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, James Wreford and Hambleton. Her first self-contained volume, As Ten As Twenty, was published two years later in September 1946 and contained poems previously printed in such

publications as Preview, Poetry (Chicago), and Canadian Forum, along with new selections as yet unpublished. Eight years later, in 1954, The Metal and The Flower won for Miss Page the Governor General's Prize for poetry and the praise of such critics as Northrop Frye who felt it the most enjoyable book of poetry he had read in 1954.⁹ The twelve years between the appearance of The Metal and The Flower and a fourth collection of printed verse, Cry Ararat!, mark the emergence of Page as an artist with an established reputation in Brazil and Mexico. Cry Ararat! combined in its format Page's poetic and artistic talents. As well as the collections, there are many poems to be found in magazines such as Saturday Night, and periodicals like Canadian Poetry Magazine, Contemporary Verse, and Poetry (Chicago).

P. K. Page is not as well known as a writer of short stories, yet Preview was the vehicle for her publication of this genre, nine of which will be examined with respect to conflict of opposites in this thesis: The Resignation (1942); The Green Bird (1942); The Rat Hunt (1943); Leisure Class (1943); Under Cover of Night (1943); Miracles (1944); Them Ducks (1945); Weekend-West Coast (1946); and The Woman (1947). As Judith Cape, Page wrote her one novel The Sun and The Moon which was published in 1944 by MacMillan. A study of the available prose works evinces the author's presentation of conflict of opposites. Along with selected poems, these selections form the original material base for a discussion of Miss Page's unique development of "creative tension" through the contrapositioning of forces in theme, imagery and perception. Some examination of P. K. Page's gradual development as a writer may help to suggest the origins of such a polarized perception that saw ideas and individuals as being balanced or juxtaposed within the subjective frame-

work of poem or story.

Born in England November 23, 1916, the daughter of a professional soldier, Major-General Lionel F. Page, D.S.O., Patricia K. Page was to know an early life of frequent changes of location. At the age of two she came to Canada settling first in Red Deer, Alberta, and then later in Winnipeg and Calgary, where she graduated from Saint Hilda's School for Girls. After this matriculation Miss Page spent one year in England and it was there that her first poem was published in the London Observer and she was to gain self-recognition as a new poet.

Her prompt return to Canada led her to Halifax where she met Alan Crawley, the editor of the newly emerging Contemporary Verse, whom she acknowledged as the person who helped her most in her work.¹⁰ After Halifax, and a brief sojourn in St. John, N.B., Miss Page left the Maritimes and in 1941 continued her travels to Montreal. P. K. Page's early days in Montreal were filled with various forms of employment, none directly related to her career as a writer, but all full of experiences and impressions from which she drew for inspiration for her poems and stories. She worked as a salesclerk and as a stenographer; on the radio and at a filing job. Later writings were to illustrate the deep-felt despair and desperation that accompanied the monotony of such tasks, and they were also to show Page's increasing sensitivity of the inner turmoil masked by the deceptive exterior calm of individuals trapped by society or their own insecurity in such humdrum jobs. Gradually her poems came to light in such publications as Saturday Night, Contemporary Verse and Poetry (Chicago).

1941 marks her first association with Patrick Anderson and that group of young Montreal writers who banded together to print a poetry

magazine, Preview, which they introduced on the Canadian literary scene in 1942. In his autobiography, Search Me: the Black Country, Canada and Spain, Anderson describes the activities of this Preview group when he writes:

I helped to found a literary magazine of which she [Peggy, his wife] became the business manager, despite all her other work--my new friends and I on the editorial staff discussed poems pretending not to know to what revolutionary den Peggy whisked the efforts we accepted in order to have them mimeographed. The sheets were stapled in our kitchen and more than once, in an orgy of coffee making, they caught fire. Within a few months, professors were talking about us on the radio as the new Montreal group. One day we were told that W. H. Auden had been seen reading our magazine at the British Embassy in Washington.¹¹

Along with Anderson and Page, the editorial staff of this new and vital publication consisted of F. R. Scott, Bruce Ruddick, Neufville Shaw and James Wreford [a late colleague]. Preview II, 1942, contained the first Canadian publication of poems of P. K. Page and the following issues, until 1946, were to contain her short stories and new poetry.

The year 1944 saw the publication of Page's one novel The Sun and The Moon written under the pseudonym of Judith Cape; her inclusion in Hambleton's anthology, Unit of Five; and her choice as recipient of the Oscar Blumenthal Poetry prize by the Chicago publication Poetry for her selection "Young Girls". Following such an active year as this she left Montreal briefly for a trip to western Canada. Miss Page spent several months in British Columbia mainly on Vancouver Island where her acquaintance with the vitality of life on the west coast provided a new set of experiences for the poet. The confrontation of new settlers with the vestiges and remnants of an older British society and the inevitable clash of personalities and attitudes served to enlarge the already present use of conflict of opposites in them, image and perception in her

work. Earlier hints in Page's poetry of an awareness of decay and contagion associated with the polarity of new with old and youth with age emerged in such work as Weekend-West Coast, "Round Trip" and "Stories of Snow". Upon her return the following year she accepted a position as script writer with the National Film Board, a novel encounter that undoubtedly affected both the subject and the style of her writing. Then in 1946 Page's first complete volume of poetry was published, As Ten As Twenty.

In the meantime Preview had ceased its publication after a lengthy period of literary rivalry with John Sutherland's First Statement, a poetry periodical conceived apparently as a counterweight to the English background of many of Preview's editors and contributors. The amalgamation of Preview and First Statement under Sutherland's editorship was a shortlived attempt to harness both creative forces at work in Montreal and the editorial board saw such figures as Scott, Klein, Layton, Shaw, Anderson and Smith. P. K. Page remained with this association as a regional editor only until 1947, when along with most of the Preview group she resigned in protest over editorial policy. This association with the new wave of poets in eastern Canada had been a fruitful one for Page, but with the breakup of the poetry clique she was even freer to pursue her own patterns of style and thought. Soon after this, in 1950, Miss Page married her employer, National Film Board director William Arthur Irwin and later embarked on a new series of moves associated with her husband's diplomatic career, first to Australia, then to Brazil, Mexico and finally in the 1960's, back to Canada. The ensuing experiences while on this travel cycle gave poet-artist Page further expanding baroque vistas of the same conflict of opposite forces and

pulls so early evident in her writing.

It was her second major collection of verse, The Metal and The Flower, that received the Governor General's Award for the best in Canadian poetry published in 1954 and that marked the temporary halt in the appearance of her poetry. Fred Cogswell relates, that while in Australia . . . she abandoned poetry for painting, which was relaxing to her whereas poetry made her tense and set her nerves on edge.¹² Page herself comments that she didn't stop writing, ". . . It stopped . . . Blank page after blank page. The thing that I had feared most of all had happened at last. This time I never would write again. But by some combination of factors--co-incidence, serendipity--the pen that had written was now, most surprisingly, drawing".¹³

Brazil followed Australia, and Mexico, Brazil. There in Mexico City in 1962 P. K. Irwin held a 'one-man show' of her drawings at the Galeria del Arte, and public reaction was most favourable to the exotic and bizarre black-white etchings and vivid tempera colours of her animalistic and organic art. While she declined any attempts at poetry for publication at this stage, her return to Canada parallels her own belief that more poetry may be in the offing. Certainly the 1967 appearance of Cry Ararat! Poems New and Selected, suggests that her poetic talent is still alive. This then is the personal background of the poet, a background that reveals upon study of her work, the development of a pattern of balance and counterbalance, of combination and deliberate disharmony in theme, imagery and poetic vision.

The presence of "conflict of opposites" in theme, imagery and attitude is the focal point for study. Initially the thematic contraposition of the isolation of the self and its opposing force, the need

for universality of emotion and for self-awareness will be examined in prose and poetry selections. It was Dr. C. G. Jung who in first commenting on the psychological significance of poetry, described "primordial images" or "archtypes" as "psychic residue of numberless experiences of the same types, experiences which have happened not to the individual but to his ancestors, and of which the results are inhibited in the structure of the brain, a priori determinants of individual experience".¹⁴ Archetypal patterns such as that of the Journey under the sea, Paradise and Hades, the saga of the Moon-Goddess, and the Fatal Woman, are an integrative factor in the development of thematic conflict of opposites and can be observed in Page's writing. An ever-expanding baroque vista, another perspective of the same 'solitude-multitude conflict' comes into focus - the conflict of those forces of restraint on an individual with the opposing struggle of the individual to be free. Page presents this opposition in poems and stories of childhood, of lost innocence and in works that prick the social consciousness of her readers.

The development of the thesis concentrates on thematic and imagistic conflict of opposites symbolized in the dichotomy of flower with stone, of metal with rose, of darkness with light. The "archtypal" discord of Paradise with Hades is in evidence in selections that reveal such imagistic opposition. All such conflicts relate to the major contraposition in Page's writing, one in perception on the part of the poet. The subjective view of an individual or an object is set against a desire on the part of the poet for greater poetic objectivity. There is a realization of the need to ensure that the whole is not distorted by a part. It is in P. K. Page's latest volume, Cry Ararat!, that the ultimate representation of conflict of opposites is presented in the form of

the archtypal cycle of Rebirth - the transitional form of such oppositional conflict - "of life in death in life".

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 1

¹John Sutherland, "The Poetry of P. K. Page", Northern Review, I, (Dec.-Jan. 1947), 13.

²Neufville Shaw, "The Poetry of P. K. Page", Educational Record, (Quebec), LXIV, (July-Sept. 1948), 154.

³Sutherland, op. cit., p.20.

⁴M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, (New York, 1957), p.97.

⁵Sutherland, op. cit., p.14.

⁶Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, (New York, 1958), p.284.

⁷P. K. Page, "Questions and Images", Can. Lit., XLIV, (Summer 1969), 21.

⁸Munro Beattie, "Poetry (1935-1950)", Literary History of Canada, ed. C. Klinck, (Toronto, 1965), p.770.

⁹Northrop Frye, "Review of The Metal and The Flower", Letters in Canada: 1954, U.T.Q., XXIV, (April, 1955), 251.

¹⁰"Along Poet's Row" (anon. biog. note), Canadian Author and Bookman, XXXIV, (Spring 1958), 9.

¹¹Patrick Anderson, Search Me: Autobiography -- The Black Country, Canada and Spain, (London, 1957), p.149.

¹²Information in a letter to Mrs. Carol Jerusalem from Professor Fred Cogswell of the University of New Brunswick, Feb. 20, 1970.

¹³Page, op. cit., p.18.

¹⁴Bodkin, op. cit., p.1.

CHAPTER 2

CONFLICT OF SOLITUDE WITH MULTITUDE

Part of the fascination of P. K. Page's writing lies in her acute grasp of a fundamental conflict for all individuals in a modern complex society - that of the withdrawal of the self into an isolated, protected state, and of the inherent need or desire of the self to still be a part of a larger community of feeling and action: of solitude with multitude. This thematic conflict is not unique to Page, but is present in the works of many recent Canadian writers such as Leacock, Frye, Frederick Grove, and Irving Layton. In an address at York University in December 1969, Layton presented his interpretation of what he felt to be a distinctive dichotomy in Canadian life in much the same literary vein as Grove, Frye and Leacock. Layton saw in Canada a juxtaposition between two impersonal forces with man and the Canadian poet caught between their menacing power. The land itself and the power of nature found in such physical entities as the vast reaches of forest and plain and the presence of great snow falls, comprise a huge unthinking physical mass that opposes the force of a complex civilization, highly developed in business, scientific and technological areas.¹

Layton's ideas are echoed by Northrop Frye who also writes of a human conflict: "I have long been impressed in Canadian poetry not by a tone of deep terror of the dangers or discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of the soul at something that these things manifest. The human mind has nothing but human and moral values to cling to if it is to preserve its integrity or even its sanity, yet the vast unconsciousness of nature in front of it seems an unanswerable denial of those values".² But P. K. Page, like Layton, sees that the way to harmonize this conflict within the individual lies through the experience of shared feelings of love and association with others, and that by such contact and communication one can achieve greater self-awareness. R. E. Rashley notes that Page believes in the love of humanity not only as a Marxist concept, but also as an escape from the notion of life as sheer horror.³ Love is of importance to her poetic subjects; it gives a sense of community. Love is of importance to Canadians; if there is no hand to hold, we may disappear into the whiteness of snow and forest.⁴

In Page's poetry and prose, the conflict of solitude with multitude - the theme of 'separateness' - generally takes three interrelated forms: the juxtaposition of self-love, or an emotion of pity, with shared feelings of love; the inner conflict of an ignorant isolated self with his need for community and for awareness; the dichotomy between surface appearances of individuals and the reality of their depths of feeling. These conflicts of opposites are not to be found only in Miss Page's themes. The prose and poetry imagery patterns further reinforce the thematic polarities. Her earliest writing focuses on the stage of unhappy love or on the despair of isolation. The results in the selections of these personal conditions are usually dark periods of loneliness,

neurotic behaviour, madness or retreat into nature, into a 'frozen' state. Recurring imagery centers on eyes, and their revelation of deep inner madness or despondence in individuals. There is frequently a shifting of metamorphic quality to the imagery as organic forms blend into inorganic, as inanimate becomes animate and a 'fantastic' characteristic emerges that is related to the themes. Isolation and solitude are presented through the use of caves, vaults, mines; through the image of submersion in water; and through the symbolic employment of snow and ice, and later, stone and metal to represent a 'frozen' suspended human existence. The beginning of Page's highly developed black-white dichotomy emerges early in her work and this constant interplay of 'non-colour' serves to express a sense of polar extremes in perception and theme.

The original conflict of man and nature is expanded in P. K. Page's work into a triangular conflict of nature, society and the individual, with the individual in alliance with nature and in opposition to society. Northrop Frye, in describing what he felt was a "garrison mentality" evident in Canadian life, further delineates the nature of Page's presentation of conflict when he writes: "Real terror comes when the individual feels himself becoming an individual pulling away from the group, losing the sense of driving power that the group gives him, aware of a conflict within himself far subtler than the struggle of morality against evil".⁵ Another critic reinforces this view. Neufville Shaw observes Page's recurring presentation of the result of conflict of the individual and his society, commenting that "The alternative to the apparently hopeless task of trying to amalgamate one's cherished values with social reality is to retreat, to become a thing or anything quiet, unresponsive, without demands and undemandable, to become frozen".⁶

P. K. Page's only novel, The Sun and The Moon, provides a good beginning for study of the conflict of solitude and multitude, portrayed by the opposition of pity and love, and the immanence of ubiquitous nature which can provide sanctuary from dejection in the way that Frye and Shaw described. From the opening line of the book Miss Page injects a high drama of mystery and magic into her story of a romantic heroine, Kirsten, a "schizophrenic" character who suffers from an unnamed clinical form of "empathy":

The world throbbed to the excitement of a lunar eclipse. Astronomers and their bastard brothers, the astrologers, worked busily charting the heavens, linked at this moment by a mutual concern for the moon.

In a hospital, a pale pile of yellow brick on the top of a hill, which strove to touch the sky with its longest finger of stone, doctors, nurses and a young mother worked to bring a girl-child into the world.

An astrological link with the life of an individual is established at the start, and from such an auspicious birth Kirsten identifies closely with the moon and comes directly under its influence. She senses the 'see-saw' of meaning between the association of moon and sun when she explains to her lover, Carl, that, "'It's more as if you're the sun and I the moon. You the strong vital element and I but a pale thin light--and yet in spite of the difference in quality you are able to eclipse me and . . .'" she stopped. 'And you able to eclipse me?' He waited a long time for her answer. 'Yes,' she said at length, 'Yes'."

At times in the story Kirsten expresses her dislike for her environment, her distaste with the pettiness of class structure, and her desires to escape from the organized existence within the community of society. This escape seems embodied in marriage to the young artist. But the central picture of alternate victories and defeats within the

self present a contrasting view of Kirsten as flesh retreating into and becoming one with the forms of nature. As a child playing on a beach she first experiences such a supernatural empathetic change:

She gazed up at the rocks and climbed carefully to a ledge of stone and flung herself down on her stomach . . . Lying there unmoving, Kirsten felt something . . . A change came over her. Slowly she stiffened and became hard and still knowing nothing but the sun beating on her back . . . Then suddenly there was movement . . . But she knew without hearing, for her ears were stone; she knew only as a rock can know, by the vibrations of sound striking an inanimate thing. Then, as gradually as she had stiffened from flesh to stone she melted from stone to flesh and heard then as a person hears and knew as a person knows, that her mother and father were standing over her, worried . . . "She's got a touch of the sun".

This sublimation of the human physical state into an inanimate form, an unfeeling solitary condition, reinforces Page's presentation of the clash between conflicts of opposites in her novel. To be a rock is to completely negate all human characteristics and to escape from the community of man and this her heroine is able to do. Why such a transformation occurs is unclear.

John Sutherland in his review of the novel, believes that it could be interpreted as a "tale of Lawrentian romanticism contaminated by self-love".⁷ Kirsten, as the moon-figure, the archetype of the Fatal Woman, remains indifferent to the approaches of the male sun, a weak reflection of her own power, as she, herself, is the victim of "unreciprocated love". Carl, the sun, is attracted by the moon-pull, by her deep indifference to a love of equals. While watching the white figure of Kirsten moving through the darkness of a lunar eclipse night, he muses that "'I am in love with a moon-child . . . She will never be mine, never'. And as he started after her he was filled with the same fascination, the same melancholy he felt when swimming at night, following

the path of the moon". Carl, the "Sun" of the title, echoes the words of the agonized Othello who lamented that:

It is the very error of the moon.
She comes more near the earth than she was wont
And makes men mad.

Kirsten embodies the allure and repulsion of the earliest moon-deity, Ishtar, creator of people, "the fruitful mother who knows lamentation".⁸ This mythical figure holds within herself the representation of magic power that controls women's actions and distorts men's passions. Many writers have adapted the myth in their work. One, Hannah Green in her recent novel I Never Promised You a Rose Garden presents a somewhat similar figure, Idat, a goddess in the dream world of the emotionally disturbed heroine Debbie. The parallel in atmosphere between Page and Green in their two works is a strong one with respect to such a goddess of celestial powers. In I Never Promised You a Rose Garden Green writes:

At a certain time Idat, the Dissembler, came to her in the shape of a woman. Idat was always veiled when she came so, but she was beautiful and never came without reminding her queen and victim of her beauty...

Suffer, Idat, why do you flow White?

Shroud and wedding gown, Idat said. Two gowns that are the same gown. Behold! Should you not dying, live; and living, die; surrender, fighting; and fighting, surrender? My road will give all opposites at the same time, and the same means for the opposite ends.

I know you from the veil outward, Idat, Deborah answered. I mean that men set backfires, one to kindle yet quench the other. Is it applicable also to stone?

With my help, Idat said.

Kirsten, like the victims of Ishtar and Idat, dissolves into nature. On the eve of her wedding she becomes a tree withstanding the lashing of a storm. "No worry could touch her. The problem was solved though the answer was still not in her possession". The novel's epilogue shows

Kirsten retired into rock-like self-sufficiency, immovable and indifferent to Carl and her surroundings. She has assimilated all his potential power as an artist and as a man. Solitude has predominated over multitude in the conflict of opposites.

Leonara Speyer's poem "Kleptomaniac" quoted in Page's novel reinforces this triumph of the moon force:

She stole his eyes because they shone
 Stole the good things they looked upon;

 She stole his strength so fierce and true,
 Perhaps for something brave to do,
 Wept at his weakness, stole that too.

 As she forgave she snatched his soul;
 She did not want it, but she stole.

Only by a complete break with Kirsten can Carl hope to survive this lethal osmosis, and so he leaves Kirsten to her isolation protected by her assimilation into nature, untouched by human emotions, a 'moon riding out a storm far above the earth'. In this novel the author has equated pity, self-love and the obsession of the individual for solitude, counter-balancing all these against the more desirable state of community, multitude and shared feeling. She did not confine such a conflict of opposites just to her prose efforts however.

The contrast of pity and love parallels the conflict of isolation and universality in Page's poetry. In "Portrait", later entitled "Paranoid", the retreat of the self into a state of self-love progresses in stages. Natural images show a progression - from sun and flowers of childhood where "his mother was a love--a warm projection of him like a second heart--to the darkness of a tomb", the stained-glass chapel of his body. The individual in this poem evolves from being a vital body, the sun, into a dead planet, a moon spinning far out in vast cold space.

Page has her subject "cast the world out" because he "loved himself too much". The idea in the line, "Each year he grew more holy/and more wholly himself" is repeated in altered form in "Elegy", a poem filled with beautiful images, dedicated to a dead individual who chose to retreat "When that black haemorrhage began", into self-isolation and thereby cut all ties of shared humanity. The speaker addresses a person once "white and scarlet" who "walked giddy with gold", but who is now "shut up . . . with the night". A spring that "is all small horses and stars" provides startling contrast with a self turned to coal, black under a deadly nightshade. The tension in the poem that results from this juxtaposition emerges in theme and imagery. Again, like the enigmatic Kirsten, the individual in "Elegy" retreats into an isolated mineral form devoid of emotion and awareness. As with much of Page's early work, the solitary state predominates and subjugates the communal for the individual who is at cross-currents in this inner conflict.

To further illustrate this tendency in her work, "Foreigner", written in 1944, reveals P.K.K. Page as both spectator and subject when she depicts an individual isolated from the rest of society by his inability or fear to communicate. Images of silence and isolation are prevalent: "strange walls", "sheltered from eyes", "shady clouds of fear", "suddenly dropped blinds", "wearing blinkers". The poem incorporates a Freudian interpretation of the premise that an accumulation of past incidents may make one afraid to trust others or to commit oneself to any action. This "Foreigner" can not, or will not, see his human relationship with others: "A room will hold you a smile/but you will not look". He has lost any individuality, he cowers alone to "cry for love/in the leaning tower of self". He is not unlike ". . . you, the

person you call 'I',/the one you loved and worked for", of the poem "If it Were You" - a person disoriented and confused by his loss of identity and place in society with ". . . the broad avenue erased, the landmarks gone". The question Page asks as observer or as subject is "What would you do in such a situation?" Would you retreat into the green garden, live a meaningless isolated existence "mechanically occupied", "slash your own wrists", or "perhaps go mad":

grow phobias about calendars and clocks,
stare at your face in the mirror, not knowing it
and feel an identity with idiots and dogs
as all the exquisite unborns of your dreams
deserted you to snigger behind their hands?

Page sees these horrifying results of such isolation only too clearly. While such a state may be safe from Fortune's untimely blows and human problems, it is, nevertheless, the world of "idiots and dogs" and robots; of "ignorance", less desirable than the more tumultuous state of awareness and involvement with others.

Only in one early poem "Remember the Wood" (1942), does Miss Page suggest that a retreat into an isolated retarded state is preferred:

When the face grows cheese-pale and bitter with the
deception of the mood,
heart, remember the wood.

Deep in the dark woods, a place "unsweet as carrion", can be found the secret heart of isolation, "the trillium". It exists as if hope or love is precariously alive beneath the terror and horror of the outer world. Dark contrasts with light; fear with hope; the fragility of love with the brutality of indifference:

A foot could crash the midnight skies:
stamp on the Star of Behtlehem. So when the face grows
pale and bitter
with the deception of the mood
and mind draws down the last dark shutter heart, remember
the wood.

The poem is unique in that the withdrawn solitary image is more appealing to Page's individual than the vital picture of the community of men. Multitude is imagined as deceptive and ominous and the poet creates the impression of retreat as being safe for the nurturing of fragile love. The indication is still there however, as it is in most of Page's work, that solitary love is self-love and creative tension is established by the conflicting images as the individual must decide which path to follow - into the wood or into the world.

Two poems, "The Condemned (For L.O.)" and "Summer Resort", both written in the mid-forties portray this search for shared love. Page captures the studied leisure of resort vacationists who "change colours like chameleons and seem/indolent and somehow flat and sad". Such surface calm inadequately camouflages a deep and desperate search for illusive love. They,

Dread the return which magnifies the want
wind in high places soaring round the heart
and carried like a starfish in a pail
through dunes and fields and lonely mountain paths.

If by luck these postcard people find a love, it is "worn like a badge" to help overcome the fear of being alone and unloved. Loving is a frantic spinning sensation that P. K. Page somehow finds sad and not fulfilling.

In "The Condemned" there is an expansion of this image to show love as a releasing force that enables two people to escape the confines of an imprisoned solitary existence. Its "forbidden message" is heard despite the restrictions of the "wide-eared warden". In three memorable stanzas the poet describes the beauty of the experience of love in a description much more sympathetically viewed than that in "Summer Resort":

And as if their fingers, groped and came together
 it was so suddenly tender in that prison
 birds might have sung from water--just as if
 two mouths meeting and meeting had become each other.

Later the whole hand grasped and the ultimate escape
 plunged through velvet to an earth so stiff
 their football left no mark
 though their feet felt sharp, resuming use and shape.

Their lungs, in all that air, filled like balloons,
 pastel and luminous against the dark:
 No angels could have had more grace
 in a children's heaven full of clouds and moons.

There is a multitude of two in conflict with the prison of solitary confinement. The lovers are at first submerged in a watery state of self-love, and unawareness; but their sharing of emotion provides the impetus for upward thrust through the velvet darkness into the outer world of air and light. Love, the intermingling of two selves, invests them with ethereal beauty and grace. "But light destroyed their splendor".

Whether it is the reality of human existence, or the shock at emerging from self-isolation, or the bursting of an imaginative bubble world, this form of love cannot yet survive. Page is still in the formative stage of her perception of the bond of shared love and it is only in her later writing that the conflict of solitude with multitude evolves sufficiently to show the strengths of the communal state when in opposition to the protective solitude of self-love.

The love of self exerts tremendous pull on an individual as another poem, "Romantic" shows. Here Page's individual "heavy for love" is unable to find such happiness. He searches in the wrong places in the "city of wood". And, disillusioned, returns to settle for the security of the familiar isolation of self. Yet he never loses the desire for love. His journey and search prove futile, frustrating and ultimately unsuccessful:

And the hob-nailed heart yearning--
 over and over, journeying, returning,
 until in eyes that loved him, saw himself
 minute, distorted, double.

Loneliness and paranoia are the lot of such an individual who continues in the early pattern of Kirsten, the "Foreigner" and the summer vacationists - all caught in the trap of self-pity and self-love and unable to pull themselves into an alignment with other individuals. These are the 'dark' figures in Page's presentation of the conflict of solitude and multitude.

The dichotomy of love and pity, however, is only one facet of P. K. Page's conflict of the opposites solitude and multitude. Many of her poems center on a conflict of ignorance of self with self-awareness, and these poems generally present individuals, almost 'types' vulnerable to the pressures of a society they never created, struggling to attain a feeling of community with other and in doing so gain a greater knowledge of their own uniqueness and purpose. Not all Page's 'cases' reach self-fulfillment; some are ignorant of the need for such effort, others are confused or incapable of initiating the search.

In an analytic interpretation of D. H. Lawrence's The Plumed Serpent, Maud Bodkin coins a phrase "half-created men" which is an apt description of Page's trapped individuals. Miss Bodkin writes that:

The Mexicans, as Lawrence presents them in this tale, illustrate abundantly the resistance of the earthly, fleshy, thing, the "half-created being", against the fuller life that is beyond it. The Mexicans are "a people incomplete", tortured by the "fathomless resentment . . . of men who have never been able to win a soul for themselves . . . an individual integrity out of the chaos of passions and potencies and death. They are caught in the toils of old lusts and old activities as in the folds of a black serpent". The imaginative adventure of the tale is the attempt to show how "half-created" men might be helped to awaken the serpent power within themselves, to unite it with the bird, the eagle-power of the heaven and vision, and thus find true self-hood.⁹

True self-hood is the desired destination of Page's subjects, but how to escape "the room with invisible walls"?¹⁰ For ". . . there would be walls of air, invisible, holding/you single and directionless in space" ["If It Were You"] Some do not go far beyond this prison.

In "Round Trip" a passenger ". . . white/and posed as the sculptured gull in flight" embarks on a journey of passage in the hope of learning all he can about the world and himself:

A lifetime lies behind him
he has left
the tightly frozen rivers of his blood
the plateaux of his boredom
and the bare
buttonholes his pallid eyes had cut.

A faintly overrealistic dream sequence unfolds in the poetic presentation of the train trip. Appearance and illusion become confused to the traveller; the past and the unknown crowd his vision. Such lines as:

In such sweet rain his ears and armpits grew
flowers and humming birds were part of him--
hanging jewels upon lapel and hat.

embellish the hallucinogenic tone of the poem. The dream world is more appealing than the parched vision of reality. However, even reality is obscured by the mists of subjective perception; "far and near are now identical--/colourless, shapeless,--echoing ghosts of snow". Too late, the train stops at his Home Town. The deception of a forward drive towards new truth is complete; the traveller's dream betrayed, "Forever, everywhere, for him, the same!".

Like the traveller, "The Permanent Tourists" in another poem by Page are blind to their own realities. They are the "photograph", devoid of great depths of feeling. They skim the surface of experience, "the terrible tourists with their empty eyes/longing to be filled with monuments". The need for a deep drink from the Pirean spring is there,

but they are incapable of it. Yet the poet senses the desire within these people to know and to feel the past. While passive and placid in contrast to the ruined vitality in the ancient columns, these people exhibit a beauty that the poet captures; they are "classic in their anxiety". Imagery and theme create the tension through the clash of diametrical opposites.

Even "The Landlady", a caricature in curiosity, is not entirely unsympathetically presented by Page as a lonely isolated individual without a life of her own, living vicariously through the experience of her boarders. She sees all and knows all, yet can't get outside herself. The craving desire for personal contact is there, but incapacitated. She is another of the "half-created" men of Lawrence's writing, a modification of the dark individuals in Page's poetry and prose.

"Snapshot" reveals the empty shell of a person who exists as a "shadow" of her reality - an image of the actual - as Plato described the shadow on the cave wall. Trapped by a covetous society, the woman is but a token self, existing only in relation to the demands of others, "caught like a bent pin".

This selection of poems show Page's perceptive interest in a multitude of types of people. One group of individuals however, to whom she devoted special observation were those girls involved in the same occupation as she herself had once been - the stenographers. Miss Page identified with their plight of isolation. In "Offices" she writes with the authority of the genuine:

O believe me, I have known offices--
 Young and old in them both--
 Morning and evening:
 felt the air
 Stamp faces into a mould;

Trapped by the triviality of office routine, the girls become insular in their outlooks, ", . . never once question the future, look ahead/beyond payday or ask the 'if' that makes them angular". Developing in the final stanza a conceit of girls with birds, P. K. Page emphasizes the harshness of young lives eroded by their uncongenial environment.

The following year, 1944, Page published a poem closely related to "Offices", "The Inarticulate". Again, the poet presents her stenographers as "misers of words" incapable of communicating their feelings or desires, grown dumb as a result of the restrictive inhibiting nature of their jobs. This poem vibrates with sound images: "screaming eyes", "sirens blowing in their necks", "hammer all day at keys", "fingers creak" - yet these are but "sounds of silence":

People talking without speaking, people hearing
without listening
People writing songs that voices never shared, no
one dared
Disturb the sound of silence.¹¹

The inarticulate office workers are the epitome of self-isolation within a modern social structure. Page shows them as unable to bridge the communication gap between themselves and life around them. Surface calm masks their inner debility for they are lost souls in the lonely crowd.

The culmination of Miss Page's interest in the problems of such a group as these girls can be seen in her well-known poem "The Stenographers" which first appeared in 1942 in Canadian Forum. This poem contains within it all the divergent aspects of the conflict of opposites involved with the theme of separateness, as well as the basic image patterns that reinforce the opposition, and a more detailed study of this poem will help to reveal these. "The Stenographers" by P. K. Page is an insightful glimpse of the complete day in the life of an office

typist. The point of view is Page's as sensitive observer. A peculiar virtue of this poem arises from the intimacy with which the poet invites her readers to share improvisational insights and original constructs. She has to discover things and their unquittous unexpected connections for herself. Only after that can she point them out as she does in "The Stenographers".

"Perspective", or meaning in a poem, as Archibald MacLeish emphasized in his critical work Poetry and Experience, is like the unfolding of a baroque vista, one panoramic view opening into a greater connotative image, yet the parts constantly being viewed as a totality through their relationship to one another.¹² This is Page's evolving poetic technique - through intuitive understanding of her subjects, she creates a portrayal of a universal modern dilemma, the inability of a person to shape his own sense of identity, to become aware of his potential for living, to 'crack' the frozen environment of his mind and of his mechanical life routine. The typists in this poem are shown as leading pathetic existences, almost T. S. Eliot's "lives of quiet desperation". This is the 'actuality' for them, yet Page establishes the dichotomy of the 'possible' of the awareness that could be their's - if only.

Employing techniques which have become ingrown since the Imagist movement in poetry - a reliance on the image not just as sign, but as metaphor and symbol; of interlinking sounds and pauses and junctures to set the pace of the poem and to guide in entering the mental process - the poet in the line, "Their climates are winter and summer", focuses on the relationship between the actual and the possible in the lives of her human subjects.

One can appreciate the metaphor of the winter climate. This is a dominant image in the poem, the season of dormancy, of cold and snow and ice and absence of the life force, all these connotations if "winter" is viewed as a 'sign'. Yet P. K. Page carries the metaphor further emphasizing the frozen state of the girls' lives. They are buried, smothered under "the snow storm of paper": they are lost in the arctic 'Hell' of their jobs, a Dantean Hell complete with frenzied hound. In stanza four, the voice of authority, of the boss dictating compells them across this wasteland of snow,

. . . draws their pencil
like a sled across snow; when its runners are frozen
rope snaps and the voice then is pulling no burden
but runs like a dog on the winter of paper.

The feelings of emptiness, of arctic expanse of whiteness, of zero temperature, of want of human life, of the unmarked "nothingness" of a "winter of paper" - all are contained in this stanza. This is the explicit image that provides a relationship with the metaphor of the winter climate.

Page suggests, as well, a more subtle implicit winter image - ice. Briefly the typists recall "the smooth hours when they were children--/the ride in the ice-cart, the ice-man's name". Reminiscent of the situation in Gibson's poem "The Ice-Cart", the connotation of 'ice' as the frozen state of activity, an escape from the heat of the active real world, brings fuller meaning to Page's presentation of the 'actuality' of the frozen 'iced' human potential within the office workers. To become self-aware, they, or some external force, must 'crack' the ice. Page does suggest some 'ice-breaking' possibilities. To further develop the relationship of winter and the 'actuality' of the stenographers' lives, the symbol of the sea enters the poem, floating in through assoc-

iation with ice in the dreams of childhood.

As MacLeish in Poetry and Experience points out, mere intent will not produce a symbol even when the intent is in the mind of an excellent poet.¹³ Symbols are not invented at will. In much of literary tradition, the sea and the ocean, water, imply a relationship of meaning with the place where life originated, with flowing movement, with power, force, destruction, and with chaos.

In "The Stenographers" all of these relationships are recalled by the remembrance of the "sea where floats at high tide/were sea marrows growing on the scatter-green vine". Yet Page infuses a wider sense of meaning through the introduction of her sea symbol. The sea, like the winter climate, is a state of submerged awareness; of beauty, but also of dormancy, and this 'meaning' reinforces again the trapped lives these girls live. Even in their nostalgic remembrances they sink back into the essentially unaware, non-creative lulled state of childhood, of the protective primordial sea-world. Miss Page is effective as a poet in this stanza in creating a poetic view of a world of childlike imagination where sea floats appear "like sea marrows" on the vine, or "spools of gray toffee, or wasps' nests on water" - on first reading, a beautiful scene, but on closer observation a metaphor of rather unlovely images, "gray" toffee, not golden brown, and "wasps'" nests.

Once more Page presents in stanza seven the ocean symbol. Even the choice of 'ocean' and not 'sea' seems suggestive of a more impersonal force. The girls' "beds are their oceans". The security, the protection of the bed, the refuge after the hard office routine, recall the idea of the ocean as the womb of all life. This phrase seems to echo, perhaps obliquely, the line from Thomas Gray's "Elegy", "Full many

a gem of purest ray serene/The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear". To let one's metaphorical imagination roam, the stenographers in the refuge of their ocean beds at night are like undiscovered sea pearls whose full value, or in this case, human potential, can only be seen when they are brought up above the ocean's surface into the light.

To further extend the metaphorical relationship now in terms of 'sea life', the typists are in the 'tadpole' stage of awareness of self. And the paradox that Page strikes so vividly is that, rather than struggling to surmount the waves and emerge into the 'possible' world, they are "fighting to drown". A paradox surprises, it does not move. Yet this line moves. It is the combination of the unexpectedness and the rightness of the paradox that gives it vitality. The girls do not wish to act, for to act is to be aware, never to forget, and this is a painful, though exhilarating, task. They are of their own volition, or so Page intimates, drowning into the oblivion of the sea rather than attempting their own rescue from a watery grave.

This then is the 'actuality' of their 'winter' existence. P. K. Page in her understanding does not neglect to suggest that there is another possibility for a fuller richer life for these individuals - that there could be a 'summer' climate. Winter is the 'actuality' of life, summer only the 'possibility'. The summer is always present, but it is hidden just as a seed deep in the earth is hidden beneath the frost and snow of winter. The natural forces associated with winter, snow, ice and cold, prohibit germination of the seed's potential vitality. It requires that the seed be nourished by summer's natural forces, air, sunlight and gentle rain, if it is to come into 'awareness'.

In the opening line of the poem, "After the brief bivouac of

Sunday", one sees the first indication of any hope for these prisoners of a mechanistic environment. Did this one respite, this Sunday, provide any impetus for revolt against the regime of the office? On this day was there a brief battle of will, a battle that resulted however in a surrender to the enemy on Monday - "their eyes, in the forced march of Monday to Saturday, /hoist the white flag . . ."?

It is not until stanza five that another summer image appears, the wind. In much the same vein as Coleridge in "The Ancient Mariner", Page in possessing the tendency to find in natural objects an expression of the inner life, feels in wind and in stagnant "terrible calm" symbols of the contrasted states of ecstasy and of dull inertia, of awareness and unawareness, of possibility and actuality.

In the poem there is "no wind for the kites of their hearts", there is no wildly impulsive life force to allow them to soar in child-like flight above their mundane daily existence, "Only a breeze". The poet through the coupling of images establishes a metaphorical relationship between the breeze, a weak form of wind, and the boyfriends of the stenographers. Perhaps these "boyfriends of blood" could melt the frozen world and release the human potential of the girls. The blood image, violent and startling in a poem void of strong colour - a poem of ice-white, of sea-green, of gray - suggests a chance, a force of warmth; if only physical sex, it is better than no attachment at all.

But the total metaphorical image points up the callousness of the 'love' relationship. The girls are like the "leaves of the country", they are "tumbled" sexually by the physical force of love, only scattered by this breeze and left as "rubbish". The passion is not a natural force of summer that results in regenerative change. It is lacking true power

as it lacks true emotion.

Stanza six may be viewed as a third chance for escape into a 'summertime' world through satisfying relationships with others, with friends through verbal intercourse and dialogue. Sundays, coffee breaks, lunch hours, after work time, are usually felt to be moments of release from either the pressures or the monotony of modern work. Page again employs a paradox to show a seeming contradiction on the part of her subjects. They are incapable of any meaningful communication with others, with any attempt to fill the emptiness of their lives. It is noon hour; they are out for lunch; it should be a moment for fun and contentment. Yet, "In the inch of the noon as they move they are stagnant! The terrible calm of the noon is their anguish". This is Page's uncanny way of relating the unrelated; of twisting the expected response. The girls have such a brief moment to "make hay while the sun shines"! Just an "inch" as the sun moves slowly, and the world is bathed completely in real light and not in illusionary shadow. Yet like the Mariner's "painted ship upon a painted ocean", they are becalmed. The juxtaposition of "terrible" with "calm" reinforces the inner anguish of these girls. Leisure time presents a problem to them in how to fill it.

Page's sensuous images abound, and in stanza six these lines are most effective: "The lip of the counter, the shapes of the straws/like icicles breaking their tongues are invaders". The senses of sight, hearing, taste and touch are aroused. The hunger for some communication is compared to brittle icicle-tongues breaking the calm of noon; incongruous, yet sensuous.

Finally a last glimmer of the 'summer of the possible' appears

in the quiet of the bedroom, in that moment of semi-awareness between wakefulness and sleep when the individual is alone unto himself. The girls weep. Their salt tears are "the tide before sleep". Here, if ever, perhaps they might be able to save themselves, to melt their frozen shells. Yet they refuse: "they are fighting to drown". Not counting blessings they assemble sheep in linear columns, possibly reflecting the linear dimensions of their lives, and "watch them leap desks for their fences". The last breath of summer, the last ray of sunlight is gone in the poem.

As the line "Their climates are winter and summer" provides an insight into the relationship of images in the poem, so also does the line "[they] stare at them with their mirror-worn faces". Page opens and closes her poem focusing on the eyes of the stenographers. These eyes that stare are outward-looking only. They, like the Janus figure of mythology, see but a mirrored reflection of themselves, a shadow on the cave wall that Plato spoke of, a 'carbon copy' of the 'first draft'. They are not the eyes of a Buddha that seek the inner self.

The final metaphorical image of the eye is a most provocative one. In a sense it is a modern metaphysical image, a twentieth century Donne eye image. The eye, with its connotations of light, knowledge, double vision, reflection of inner awareness, and source of perception, is shown as a reflector of the inner fever of the anguished girls. The marathon race of the pin men, is analogous to the Oriental image of the serpent chasing his tail and to the laboratory white rat on an exercise wheel, an endless futile race to madness:

In their eyes I have seen
the pin men of madness in the marathon trim
race round the track of the stadium pupil.

The stenographers are trapped within themselves and within their jobs. The army imagery of the opening stanza reveals that they are prisoners in this office chain gang. The natural forces of snow, ice, cold - forces beyond man's control - reflect the mechanistic impersonal business world, as in the fourth stanza. The bell and the voice, symbols of impersonal authority, impose restrictions on the typists' lives. Even the sheep are in columns. The girls themselves are "sufficiently starched, insert papers, hit keys,/efficient and sure as their adding machines". The "keys" when coupled with "vault" and taut net curtains stretched on frames, give added meaning to the idea of the typists as prisoners in a tomb of mechanical work, going mad within and yet presenting an illusion of calm normalcy and efficiency. One question posed implicitly is 'Of whose making is this prison, society's or the stenographers'?' P. K. Page does not supply an answer.

To briefly comment on the prosody of the poem it is not difficult to notice Page's delight in word sounds: "crack", "flutter", "snaps", "icicles breaking", "taut", and "stretched", are representative of the abundance of onomatopoeic diction. To highlight her sensitive free verse, the poet weaves alliteration and assonance into the lines. She introduces texture to the poem through the choice of such words as "toffee", "salt", "felt of the morning", "calico-minded" and "starched". In stanza four a staccato effect is produced by the rapid-fire succession of monosyllabic words emphasizing the brisk, efficient structured business world. "Bell rings and they go and the voice draws their pencil/like a sled across snow".

"The Stenographers" can bear much observation. The acuteness of the poem lies in Page's perception 'just beyond the senses', as the

emotional portrayal of such lives is not just a glimpse of the tension, but a tragic view of 'frozen' human beings. These trapped individuals are unable to bridge the chasm between solitude and multitude.

In quite a different poem, "Photograph", Miss Page again presents a view of individuals within shells of self, submerged under water and blissfully ignorant of the energy and substance of life above the surface of the sea. Submersion is not death, but "merely a little muted". The photograph image emphasizes the contrast between the actuality and its captured flat reproduction; between the positive substance and its negative form. The two people in the poem are called "lovers", yet they lie "apart and stiff", their language of love is garbled and distorted by their watery oasis. The idyllic love scene in the picture is described as a "pretense". Contrast is heightened in the last stanza by the lines:

While overhead the swimmers level waves
shrinking the distance between continents
and closer inland from the broken weirs
the fishermen are hauling giant nets.

Those below are ignorant of the action of those above the surface who are making progress towards greater communication between people. Some are 'surfacing' to self-awareness. A community of feeling is being formed. Water-land imagery accentuates this portrayal of the conflict of solitude and multitude and a new note of hope is sounded if only for select individuals. These are a new breed capable of adapting from an aquatic, or solitary form, to a terrestrial, or communal, existence.

P. K. Page has touched on this human search for truth and beauty and self-fulfillment in much of her work. The approach to the theme varies as does the supporting imagery. In all the writing a basic conflict of opposites is to be found. Generally this opposition involves

the antipodal conditions of solitude and multitude. There is one poem that goes beyond the basic dichotomy discussed here to show the confrontation of an individual bent on finding truth, with a hypocritical society that crushes his quest and causes him to retreat again into a shell of his former self.

"Cullen" appeared in Unit of Five in 1944. It has been described by Miss Page's critics as a "novelette"; by John Sutherland as ". . . the measure of the difference between the old poetry and the new".¹⁴ Sutherland goes on to write that,

The same sensibility which conceived the heroine of Sun and Moon is still at work in these new poems, where in 'welters of narcissus', the body is always confused with inanimate existence and the one is serving as the mirror of the other. The sensibility still depends on the struggle of the self for power over its surroundings, leading to alternate victories and defeats and never reaching a final conclusion. But now the meaningless struggle with nature, described in Sun and Moon, is grasped as the real opposition of the self to society and as the fear of the self which produces it.¹⁵

Prevalent in much of the work of post war writers is the thematic quest for self identity. Two close parallels with Page's "Cullen" can be observed in Lawrence Ferlinghetti's "Christ Climbed Down" and in Joseph Heller's novel Catch 22. A central male figure in all three works journeys into the world in search of truth, peace, beauty and self-hood, only to be continually confronted with the harshness of reality and the hypocrisy of men. The communal life loses its appealing facade and is exposed as sordid and hollow in comparison with the security and peace of the "personal shade". Heller's Yossarin stumbles through the murk of wartime Italy. Ferlinghetti's "Christ" crosses

. . . the desert to Bethlehem
Pennsylvania
in a Volkswagon sled
drawn by rollicking Adirondack deer

with German names
and bearing sacks of Humble Gifts
.....

only to run away to where "no Bing Crosby carollers/groaned of a tight Christmas". Page's Cullen encounters similar experiences. After much wandering in the city of men, Cullen rejects its sordidness for the countryside, "Decided country, which he had never seen was carillon greeness lying behind the eyes/and ringing the soft warm flesh behind the knees". This image of an area of beauty and truth "behind the eye" is unique to Page and she elaborates on it in many poems to suggest the aspect of solitude in the conflict with the forces of worldly experience.

Momentarily Cullen appears to have found his 'heaven' after a journey from the 'hell-city':

Decided that country people were big and free;
found himself lodgings with fishermen on a cliff,
slung his hammock from these beliefs and slept.
Morning caught at his throat when he saw the men
return at dawn like silver armored Vikings;
the women were malleable as rising bread--
in fact the environment was to his liking.
Sea was his mirror and he saw himself
twisted as rope and fretted with the ripples--
concluded quietness would comb him out;
for once, the future managed to be simple.
He floated a day in stillness, felt the grass
grow in his arable body, felt the gulls
trace the tributaries of his heart and pass
over his river beds from feet to skull.
He settled with evening like a softening land,
withdrew his chair from the sun the oil lamp made,
content to rest within his personal shade.

His serenity is short-lived; the very nature of avaricious men destroys the idyllic peace and disrupts Cullen's assimilation with nature.

The women, gathering, tatted with their tongues,
shrouds for their absent neighbors and the men
fired with lemon extract and bootlegged rum
grew suddenly immense.
No room could hold them--he was overrun,
trampled by giants, his grass was beaten down.

Having exhausted all possibilities for a life of peace on earth he goes to war, disillusioned, confused, uncommitted to the fight, a shadow of Sisyphus condemned to eternal frustration, a victim of the conflict between the impersonal forces of a malicious society.

A more intensive study of Freud's influence of Page's work will be appropriate with respect to later selections, but in connection with the conflict of the self with society, Page in "Cullen" does seem to adhere to Freud's thesis that society is controlled by anxieties, real or imaginary, designed to repress or sublimate any human impulses towards greater freedom.

P. K. Page broadens her presentation of conflict of opposites in poems and short stories that contrast surface appearances and human facades with the reality of the depths of feeling people experience. A. J. M. Smith in Canadian Forum writes of Page that, "In the inner life of reverie, of self-analysis, and of dreams she finds a mirror-like stage for the re-enactment of the hesitations and struggles of the outer world of objective experience".¹⁶ Exterior calm masks a desperate inner madness; beauty is only an outward covering for a hidden terror or horror. Surrealism, the French inspired movement in literature and art, was influenced by Freudian thought. The artist attempts to convey the mind's subconscious activity by presenting images out of order or sequence as in a dream. Page modified this experimentation to express "the strangeness and terror that grow naturally out of the familiar as they do in dreams".¹⁷ The poet's preoccupation is with penetrating the world of action and appearances and plummeting the depths of sea, of cave, of mine, of ice, to go beneath the surface. Concrete accurate images of illness, contagion, loss of memory support the conflict of opposites,

contrasting with more abstract impressions of dream and waking states. It is Smith who notes the "fluidity" and "impermanence" created from the poet's alternations between surface and depth when he comments that,

Metamorphoses occur here, and strange alternations of being and non-being. Yet the images in which all of this is presented are hard and clear. The writing is precise and exact. These are 'imaginary gardens with real toads in them'. Only occasionally . . . does Miss Page make use of a romantic or exotic imagery.¹⁸

It was in Contemporary Verse, 1951, that "Photos of a Salt Mine" was first published. The surface of this poem has a child-like innocence to it. The whiteness of the salt mine suggests to the poet the play of children in snow and the pleasure of lovers in bed. Miners climb "Miniature matterhorns . . . and scoop from darkness an alladin's cave:/ rubies and opals glitter from its walls". The poet's subjective surface view is deceptive however. "Salt's lovely ice" dissolves into "a lake within a cave/laquered with jet/white's opposite". The surface is the photograph,

. . . like children's wishes
are filled with caves or winter
innocence
has acted as a filter,
selected only beauty from the mine.

But the discordant note of theme enters in the last photographic shot taken at "an acute high angle". The beauty of the mine and miners is now distorted,

Like Dante's vision of the nether hell
men struggle with the bright cold fires of salt
locked in the black inferno of the rock:
the filter here not innocence but guilt.

The opposition of innocence with guilt occurs through the juxtaposition of images of blackness and fire, salt with snow, rock with the struggle of the miners and ugliness with surface brilliance and beauty. Page's "pin men" miners express the same sense of quiet desperation with their

lot as her stenographers in whose eyes the "pin men of madness in marathon trim/race round the track of the stadium pupil".

In still another poem "Schizophrenic", Miss Page contraposes an innocent surface appearance with a violent explosive "nether hell" beneath. Overtones of The Sun and The Moon and Speyer's "Kleptomaniac", quoted in the novel, occur in "Schizophrenic". "Cakes like flowers" and "cups dreamy with cream" oppose the terrifying image of the giant struggling "to break the matte mask" of the girl's skin and be free and in control. The final stanza of the poem with its sharp images reveals the triumph of the horrifying portion of a self over the innocence nature of the individual. Opposition is the essence of the poem's creative tension.

All is often not what it appears to be in P. K. Page's poetry. The individual in "opportunist" appears aflame with drive and purpose:

Almost a fire himself on his flaming reel
he tunnelled the night and ate the sparks at a gulp;
arriving he entered the very heart of the blaze.

Then the clash with reality:
But he had never intended to put it out:
and quick as an actor in the wings he strode
onto the stage when the scenery called his clothes.

The dream is the active existence, reality the passive, and individuals like this opportunist are torn between the relative security of self-isolation and the vitality, but insecurity, of self-awareness. Page's basic presentation of conflict of solitude with multitude is seen again.

The "Only Child" is not all he appears to be either. Overprotected and restricted in his growth towards self-hood by a mother faintly reminiscent of "The Landlady", the boy, as man, appears to be all his mother had hoped for - "the noted naturalist--/her very affectionate and famous son". Is this image real or a dream; the picture of a "painted

land" or the "deep grass of the island"? Page deliberately confuses the reader to emphasize the terror and horror of the final view of the only child who caught the birds,

. . . and snapped and wrung their necks
 brittle as little sticks.
 Then through the bald, unfeathered air
 and coldly, as a man would walk
 against a metal backdrop, he
 bore down on her
 and placed them in her wide maternal lap
 and accurately said their names aloud:
 woodpecker, sparrow, meadowlark, nuthatch.

The "Only Child" conveys an intensity through inner conflict of a similar magnitude to that of E. A. Robinson's "Richard Cory". Both figures are like icebergs, only one-tenth of the reality of the self is publicly seen. A further parallel of this presentation of the latent terror of a pent-up nature lying under the surface can be seen in E. J. Pratt's "Prize Cat". At first seen as gentle, "Pure blood domestic, guaranteed/Soft-mannered, musical in purr," the house cat on closer observation harbors the traits of the untamed leopard inside. The poet writes that,

I saw the generations pass
 Along the reflex of a spring,
 A bird had rustled in the grass,
 The tab had caught it on the wing:

Pratt developed this theme and imagery in his work in much the same way as Page presented her conflict of opposites. Such poems as "Brébeuf" and "His Brethren", "From Stone to Steel" and "The Titanic" depict the thin tightrope that spans the gap between the cave and the city, between the jungle nature of man and the power of understanding and love, and Page's "Only Child" shows the ill effects of an individual who is restrained and kept from walking the tightrope and reaching the humanizing side.

The conflict of solitude with multitude takes on a varied form in "Puppets" and The Green Bird (1942), when laughter masks hidden tears.

The clown nature of the caricatured puppets is magnified to create comedy, yet the audience is watching but an inverted mirror image of themselves. reflected in microcosm. In The Green Bird, P. K. Page as spectator, stands at a distance from her pathetic subjects Mrs. Rowan, Miss Price and Ernest. She acknowledges her complicity in being 'led' into the surrealist world of these impaled, shuttered women. At the same time, the author is a subject in the story. Yet it is as if she has no control over nor desire to escape from such a situation. "'I'm going to call on Mrs. Rowan today and I hope you will come', I said, 'Yes'. The desire to be trapped by old Mrs. Rowan was stronger than any other feeling." At times it is as if Page were outside her physical self, looking back over her shoulder and being astonished at her own sentences and behavior. She plays Miss Price's game and she is like Mrs. Rowan while trapped in the tomb of the solid dark house.

The story's conversation creates a surface impression, disjointed and detached, but definitely a cover to the horror and mystery lying behind this world: for example, the following dialogue:

Ernest was carefully balancing his saucer on his knee, sitting very straight. There was no sound in the entire house.

"I hope you are feeling better, Miss Price," Ernest said. I saw the immense silent body heave again, this time with sobs. Dreadful silent sobs. And then it spoke for the first time. "They cut off both my legs three years ago. I'm nothing but a stump". And the sobbing grew deeper, longer.

I looked at Ernest. I heard my own voice saying, "Such a lovely place to live, this--so central. You can see everything from this room. It looks right out on the street. You can see everything."

This tea party atmosphere is synonymous with that of Lewis Carroll's Mad Hatter party or Queen of Hearts' croquet game. The world of The Green Bird, like much of Alice In Wonderland and Through The

Looking-Glass, is both surrealistic and psychedelic. John Sutherland in first noting a similarity between the work of Carroll and Page remarked that both worlds, which juxtapose the comic with the terrifying, fascinate by their apparent calm in the midst of upheaval and the unexpected. A vibration is felt in writing such as this when the outcome of events and images is uncertain. Page's story emerges like a 'theater of the absurd' play in its portrayal of a lack of communication and a shattering of images. Individuals thrust at one another with fragmented and absurd 'comments' in a frustrating manic attempt to be understood - the final impression is disjointed and deliberately incoherent - each figure is a miniature solitude, too brittle to break and be melted into a common form with other individuals.

Following a year's visit to the west coast of Canada, Miss Page published another short story, Weekend--West Coast that also illustrates this clashing of fragmented ideas. In the story, conflict of opposites is represented by the archetypal conflict of Paradise with Hades.

The short story is a portrait in detail of a decayed way of existence on Vancouver Island. The people are atrophied remnants of British immigrants who have remained insulated from the mainstream of Canada. Images of contagion are rife: "Another week here and I fear the whole place would shift and be viewed by that unseeing area of the eye. Contagion. But then, I am hysterical about contagion". Reality and illusion clash constantly in Miss Page's perception of the place and the people. Transported by a sparkling clean white ferry and its dazzling crew to an idyllic island setting "dry land among the dark mountains, the green sweet-smelling pastures and the large, heavily leafed trees", the poet's anticipation of good things to come from her visit is heightened.

Then she is hit by the dichotomy of what life is really like on this Paradise. The houses are "tottering under rusty corrugated iron-roofs", "the children talk as if they are grown ups, the grown ups as if they are mentally deficient". Sweet Alan, the local builder spends his time making brown sugar whisky in pumpkins buried deep in manure; the Chinese cook crawls over the food in an effort to reach his room behind and through the refrigerator!

As observer, the author sees beyond the apparent. She notices "The girls who run the hotel . . . there in their pink and blue sheers, long ear-rings and rosebuds in their hair . . . and putting away beer like old hands. Already you can see the shape they will become. There's a kind of soggy look about them". Tragedy dissolves into comedy over the failure of the "sexometer"; tranquility in the hotel room vanishes with the thud of the colonel's shoe heaved at the wall. Ghostly tales of horror about Mr. K., told round the kitchen campfire blend fantasy with fear. Does it much matter if such stories prove true or not? All the observer wants is to escape by bus and ferry from "The dark souls about on this island . . . they exude the smell of corruption." For to remain on the island would be to surrender to the disease of isolation and self-pity, and this Page refuses to do. The conflict is resolved by her exodus.

P. K. Page's recurring image patterns continue the conflict of opposites, of solitude and multitude. The principal ones she employs are associated with water, with snow and ice, with caves, mines and vaults, with eyes or with the juxtaposition of black on white.

The image of a water self is central in much of Miss Page's work. Many of her subjects exist in a state of submerged ignorance or innocence

below the surface of the sea. There are the lovers in "Photograph" and the immersed 'I' in "Element" who is afraid in the light and longs to "sink in darkness freed and whole again/as fish returned by dream into the stream". Page's "Sailor" sees the undersea as "the south devoid of heat--/ exotic, without scent, a clean country/demanding calling him wherever he went". Her "Sleeper" "drowns without a sound/ . . . complete in sleep, discards his arm and legs/ . . . takes the whole night in his lungs and head./ A hydrocephalic idiot . . ." All are 'retarded' individuals in some way, not whole in the sense of self-aware adults in the real world above the sea's surface. To stay submerged may be a most pleasant and soothing situation, but it is an ignorant one for the individual, one in which the senses are stimulated but the mind is in a limbo state. In innocence and youth, the "porpoise-like" "Young Girls" deep in their daze, dawdle and roll; "as if in the sea." At first, when flung up on the land they are uncertain and "they goggle, flounder, flap". However, the terrestrial environment proves to be most appropriate and "earth becomes home-- their natural element".

In a discussion of the relationship between poetry and dream, Maud Bodkin points to a characteristic of much dream imagery, a quality that distinguishes Page's imagery. In dreams, the dreamer experiences a feeling of going deep into water until it becomes warmer and more relaxing, and expression that can be interpreted to indicate the desire of the individual to return to the 'maternal depths' - to the womb, to a warm shelter protected from turmoil above in outer experience. Bodkin notes that in much poetry "the image of the sea seems to be fused with that of the mother".¹⁹ She goes further to explain this "element of sinking down toward quiescence, as in the womb of the mother" to be the first stage in

the total Rebirth pattern, its complementary stage being a return from that state, changed and renewed.²⁰ Freud's interpretation of the death instinct, or Nirvana principle, corresponds also to this initial 'sinking or drowning' image pattern, and it is at this point that P. K. Page has adopted the Freudian idea to her own philosophy.

The "Stenographers" are fighting to drown and the "Sleeper" makes no attempt to save himself from a watery world of dreams. Life under Page's sea is safe, soft, beautiful and ignorant as only childhood can be. The "Boy with a Sea Dream" with

. . . all the deep
clear bottle green of his ocean thought
where like a sleep
strange men drown drowsily
spiralling down the sea's steep underlip
their lazy eyes
closed as if listening to arpeggios

is the adolescent version of the "Sailor". Deep in the sea they both float in an exotic dream world of pleasant sensations and no harsh realities; however, this is a world of childlike emotions and fancies void of any self-realization. Page portrays the change from the innocence of childhood to the self-knowledge of adulthood as a journey under the sea to an emergence on the land, the upward thrust of the Rebirth cycle. The "Young Girls" are, at most, only "partially amphibious" and eventually:

. . . the shore line wavers less
and caught and swung on the bright hooks of their sex
earth becomes home--their natural element.

The transition from ignorance to awareness is a difficult one, but a necessity if the girls are to evolve into their full potential as human beings and not become those "half-created" men of certain of Page's work. Water imagery is presented in other symbolic ways as well. One poem, "No

Flowers" with overtones of the dichotomy between social classes, presents a vision of the underwater world as the 'Great Leveller' of all social inequality.

No hand made shoes can reincarnate Peter
and Elizabeth Arden cannot withstand salt water.
Your face under the wave will be
pitiful as the little lackey's
and the initialled suitcase you pack and save
will only precipitate the gall green grave.

All the trappings of class distinction and wealth according to the poet can be washed away when the ship sinks. Water is the cleansing power that wipes away artificial distinctions between individuals in this gentle and fanciful diatribe directed at the bored leisure class who "have always cruised on the luxury liner". Page's philosophy of social equality could become entwined with her capricious elaboration of imagery and the water symbolism in the poem is drawn to an extravagant conceit in the last stanza where,

Octopus arms will hold you and sea snails
will stud the carefully massaged lobes of your ears;
the wide blade of the water will pare the hips
down to a size sixteen--the coveted size;
and starfish, swept by the wakes of other ships,
will cast their angular shapes across your eyes.

The image of the sea is of a constructive social force in this poem. But in "Portrait of Marina", Page emphasized the more destructive nature of water. To the constrained heroine spinster, the ocean of her childhood was not a thing of beauty, but,

. . . Father's Fearful Sea
harsh with sea serpents
winds and drowning men.
For her it held no spiral of a shell
for her descent to dreams,
it held no bells.
And where it moved in shallows it was more
imminently a danger, more alive
than where it lay off shore full fathom five.

Marina, as much a victim of her parental upbringing as the "Only Child", is in a sense 'retarded' and ignorant. The isolation of her life brought on by the fear of authority exerted by her father is reflected in the sea imagery.

But where the wave breaks, where it rises green
 turns into gelatine, becomes a glass
 simply for seeing stones through, runs across
 the coloured shells and pebbles of the shore
 and makes an aspic of them
 then sucks back
 in foam and undertow--
 this aspect of the sea
 Marina never knew.

The contrast and conflict of father and child, of authority and submission, of suppression and freedom within an individual, are revealed through the two images of the ocean. The beauty of the sea is unknown to the "half-created" Marina, another individual unable to traverse the path from solitude to multitude.

If water imagery is perhaps most prevalent in P. K. Page's writing, visions of winter and dreams of snow and ice are only slightly less common.

Canada, 'Our Lady of the Snows', has inspired its writers to draw on snow for much of their creative imagery. Frederick Philip Grove's Snow stressed the need for individuals not to forget the power and indifference of their physical surroundings to avoid complacency in a country enveloped by the strength of its natural forces. Morley Callaghan with his Montreal settings for his novels, Phyllis Webb in "Fantasia on Christian's Diary", Patrick Anderson's "Sestina in Time of Winter", Layton's "First Snow: Lake Achigan", Anne Hebert with "Neige", Purdy's "Scarcities", the list is endless - all focus on white snow imagery for dramatic and symbolic meaning.

Miss Page is part of this tradition. In one of her most beautiful poems, "Stories of Snow", she creates a vision of whiteness, a Canadian winter legend that presents the snowy scene as symbolic of a static and deliberate state of innocence only found in the imagination. There is a softness and roundness to the poem, as if one were walking on eider-down.

And there the story shifts from head to head,
 of how, in Holland, from their feather beds
 hunters arise and part the flakes and go
 forth to the frozen lakes in search of swans--
 the snow light falling white along their guns
 their breath in plumes.

.
 And of the swan in death these dreamers tell
 of its last flight and how it falls, a plummet,
 pierced by the freezing bullet
 and how three feathers, loosened by the shot,
 descend like snow upon it.
 While hunters plunge their fingers in its down
 deep as a drift, and dive their hands
 up to the neck of the wrist
 in that warm metamorphosis of snow
 as gentle as the sort that woodsmen know
 who, lost in the white circle, fall at last
 and dream their way to death.

The 'filter of innocence', the whiteness of the snow, blots out all colour from the poem which then becomes a study of white images on white. A feeling of fantasia emerges as organic and inorganic objects dissolve and reform; ice boats are swift gulls, flowers grow from hunter's chins, and "Those in the vegetable rain retain/an area behind their sprouting eyes . . . which hold their snow storms circular, complete . . ." Snow becomes feathers, hunters are like birds: snow, swan and hunter are one in the whiteness of the landscape and in the dream sequence of the story of the kill. There are passages in the poem that echo the tone of Henrik Ibsen's play The Wild Duck with its elusive search in the white perspective for love, peace, beauty - to travel "to an area behind the eyes/

where silent, unrefractive whiteness lies", a snow world that can exist only in story, a dream to those "in countries where great flowers bar the roads/with reds and blues which seal the route to snow--". The play by Ibsen and the poem by Page, both native in setting to snow countries, reveal a quest for self-hood, through imagery of snow as a 'filter of innocence' obliterating the darkness of personal guilt.

Page's "Snowman" is also a representation of innocence, "white double O, white nothing, nothing . . . Everyman . . . he is still no man" in the same way that Marina was 'no woman'. Innocence is the substance of a hollow man, a mute figure, devoid of love and strong emotions, an isolated self "in a landscape without love".

Black on white, or white on black - the colour dichotomy established so early in Page's writing - is part of the poet's snow images. Miss Page, at one time a script writer for the National Film Board of Canada, predates a recent Film Board surrealistic production that closely parallels her snow dreams. Angel, a study of love on a white/black background uses snow symbolically as a 'filter of innocence' and also as a representation of the impermanence of sustained emotions. The dream sequence of a snow romp by a butterfly-girl, a boy and a dog, is haunted by the whispered refrain "I can't stay, I can't stay", for the message is that shared love is but a fleeting experience. The atmosphere created in the film Angel, with its deliberate distortion of focus and its fragmented sequence of frames, is strongly reminiscent of Page's poetic dreams of winter.

Closely allied with the frozen world as a retreat or refuge from awareness are the recurring images of caves, mines or vaults. The archetypal conflict of Heaven and Hell, of Paradise and Hades is seen through

the imagery of surface gardens and cavernous "nether Hells" in Page's work. Even the sunless sea can be viewed as a form of darkness beneath the images of nature's beauty above. Self-isolation and solitude are readily identified by the obscure "caverns of the mind" with "intricate and winding chambers" that "thought can with difficulty visit".²¹ Page's individuals conform, in part, to the dictum 'If rejected, retreat' - into ice, under water, into caves. There one must only see the reflection of reality, the photographic negative, Plato's shadow.

The woman in the "Bed-Sitting Room" is like an impaled moth "pinned to a board in the floor". Her "leaning tower of self" is a four-walled 'cave world' with a faceless window. Her isolation is stifling. "The Inarticulate" typists and the young "Stenographers" are locked in the teeming vaults of modern society with little drive left in them to attempt an escape. "The Condemned" lovers can only find love within the prison of their own making; freedom destroys their emotion. The strikers in "Bank Strike: Quebec--1942" come from the "cellar of certainty" to defeat, in their clash with the outer mainstream of entrenched urban society. In "Remember the Wood" the reader is cautioned to retreat into a natural "vault" deep in the forest if uncongenial reality presses. And in the short story, The Green Bird, Page enters a veritable tomb when she cannot "resist the desire to be led through shutters and impaled on strange living room chairs". She imagines disease as "white and dim . . . crowding out the light" in this version of Hell with its grinning gatekeeper and convoluted inhabitants. Solitude is thus associated with confinement of some form and multitude with the converse, freedom in the open.

As Page observes her earliest subjects, she presents them mostly

as victims of self-isolation, unable to bridge the gap of separateness with the rest of humanity. Some, however, do survive the journey towards self-awareness and they are of interest for their uniqueness in Page's work. Her "Young Girls" are left on dry land after their metamorphosis from a semi-amphibious stage. In Page's "Some There Are Fearless", there is a reverberation of the lines of the preface to Irving Layton's Red Carpet for the Sun:

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

Page fervently writes, like Layton, of those,

While dreaming wishful dreams that will be real,
some there are fearless, touching a distant thing--
the ferreting sun, the enveloping shade, the attainable
spring
and the wonderful soil nameless, beneath their feet.

In her attempt at solution to social problems the poet develops natural images of sun, soil, season, shade as symbolic of man's goals in life. The passage from solitude to multitude is from darkness into light and from winter into spring and from submersion to emersion. Layton's fire-dancers are activists involved with life and living, and Page's fearless individuals are similar in that they share a common bond with all humanity in their pursuit of life. They are self-aware. For example,

By the sun, by the sudden flurry
of birds in a flock,
Oh, by love's ghost
and the imagined guest--
all these
shattering, shaking the girl
in her maidenhood,
she knows
him and his green song smooth as a stone
and the word
quick with the sap and the bud and the moving bird.

Like Leda of the myth, Page's "Virgin" is shaken into a moment of this

awareness through sexual experience and thus she loses her restrictive innocence along with her ignorance of love. She becomes one of Page's few successful individuals to break the bonds of solitude.

A further example of the presentation of the communal state in the conflict of opposites may be seen in the title poem of P. K. Page's first complete volume of poetry, "As Ten As Twenty", also entitled "Love Poem":

For we can live now, love:
a million in us breathe,
moving as we would move
and qualifying death.

in lands our own and theirs
with simple hands as these
a walk as like as hers
and words as like as his.

They in us, free our love,
make archways of our mouths
tear off the patent gloves
and atrophy our myths.

As ten, as twenty, now,
we break from single thought
and rid of being two,
receive them and walk out.

Here the poet spins an involved metaphysical conceit of the multiplication factor of life through the power of shared love, not isolated self-pity. One unites with one, and then two divide, and the ramifications are all of humanity. This poem is Page's embodiment of the value of the communal aspect of life.

For a moment, there is a community of feeling experienced in still another of Page's stories, Under Cover of Night, the cryptic and almost comic account of a 'love story' between man and cow. To communicate commands to the beast, a rather nervous animal, the man first tries force, then cajoling. Forced to accompany one another along a country

lane at night, the man and the cow assume roles of strolling companions. The man formally introduces himself, pays the 'lady' compliments and at the moment of crisis, the appearance of a fast moving car, reacts with the gallantry of a lover and pushes the cow to safety in a ditch, unfortunately on top of himself. After a brief moment of rest, the cow struggles to her feet, but the man knocked dizzy reacts in anger at the cow and again kicks her. The thin thread of understanding is lost: off goes the cow and after her the man, confused by his reactions and actions. He did achieve some form of shared feeling if only momentary!

This bond of communication takes a different form in The Woman. A traveller injured in a war ventures into a strange village in the country in search of a moment of peace away from the turmoil of war and urban life and is taken in by a very withdrawn woman. An overly sensitive observer, he is obsessed with trying to know all he can about people, why they are as they are. Through alternating moments of dream and waking, he passes a fitful night reliving his past in the country room of his childhood. Suddenly in his dreams, panic grips him as he sees both his self and its inverted reflection and in terror he screams:

And then, very wonderfully, came an answering scream: high shrill, female. As if he had called to a mate and she had replied with immediate urgency. The sound reached him and fulfilled him and he fell asleep then as easily and completely as if he had had a woman.

The barrier of solitude built up by the two individuals is broken here by the screams, variations on the theme of empathy used earlier by Page in The Sun and The Moon. If one can realize the existence of another's solitary existence and in doing so, establish a link of communication of any form between himself and the other person, then a community of experience and feeling is formed which strengthens all involved and enables them to

see and understand themselves more clearly and to sense their own uniqueness and worth.

One other example of individuals who span the conflict of opposites can be seen in The Rat Hunt. In this short story the isolation of the apartment dwellers dissolves with their realization of the common human bonds they all share. It is ironic that the rat hunt itself provides the immediate focus for the individuals:

An enormous silence lapped, almost as if it were the hot air, on the watchers in the windows. They were now no longer isolated people but partisans, inactive only if necessary. Silence covered them all and held them. Nothing but the sound of the stick hitting the wood and the high terrible squeaking of the trapped rat broke on empty ear drums.

Yet, it is not of such importance what draws these people in to a circle of shared feelings, so much as, once drawn, they shed their insular fears. Incidental comments give them the opportunity to reveal personality - they dislike rats; like cleanliness and believe it is "next to Godliness"; are Russian and Hungarian and Scottish - yet they find they are only people with similar ideas. Page employs a form of pathetic fallacy to describe the growing bond of understanding among the four characters in her story. "It was soft and warm and very friendly now. These four grew expansive with the falling night--grouped and close". As long as the magic ring is not broken, loneliness and isolation will be banished. Page's poem "Fall Thoughts", which only appeared in The Canadian Forum (1943) repeats this image:

Now let Fall make the horizon narrow
reduce the earth's circumference to an accepted thing--
easy chairs drawn close and set within a ring
where the thin pointed flame shoots like an upward arrow.

This group of individuals in a ring form a vital human chain of defence, a community of souls banded together through shared experiences to ward

off the attack of encroaching dark solitude. The basic conflict of self-isolation and with involvement with others takes many forms in P. K. Page's writing, but some aspect of the opposition is always to be found either in her image patterns, thematic strains, or personal perception of individual subjects. The negative and positive positions of both conflicting states are set forth - early poems emphasizing the strength of the pull towards confinement within the self. The resulting tension of this conflict of opposites is evident in the manner in which Page perceived her subjects and her society, and occasionally in some works the more constructive communal position emerges as dominant and the poet reveals glimpses of full and active individuals freed from solitude, engrossed in multitude. The free man is contrasted with the restrained individual and the conflict of solitude and multitude becomes the opposition of restraint with freedom.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 2

¹Information in a public lecture by Irving Layton at York University, Toronto, Dec. 6, 1969.

²Northrop Frye, "Conclusion", Literary History of Canada, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto, 1965), p.830.

³R. E. Rashley, Poetry in Canada, (Toronto, 1958), p.139.

⁴Layton address, York University.

⁵Frye, op. cit., p.830.

⁶Neufville Shaw, "The Poetry of P. K. Page", Educational Record (Quebec), LXIV, (July-Sept., 1948), 155.

⁷John Sutherland, "The Poetry of P. K. Page", Northern Review, I, (1947), 14.

⁸Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, (New York, 1958), p.157.

⁹Bodkin, op. cit., p.286. Underlining is my own.

¹⁰P. K. Page, "Questions and Images", Can. Lit., XLIV, (Summer 1969), 20.

¹¹Sounds of Silence - song words and music by Paul Simon and Arthur Garfunkel.

¹²Archibald MacLeish, Poetry and Experience, (Baltimore, 1960), pp.85-86.

¹³MacLeish, op. cit., p.78.

¹⁴Sutherland, op. cit., p.23

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶A. J. M. Smith, "New Canadian Poetry", The Canadian Forum, XXVII, (Feb., 1947), 250.

¹⁷A. J. M. Smith, Oxford Book of Canadian Verse, (Toronto, 1960), xiviii.

¹⁸Smith, Canadian Forum, pp.250-251

¹⁹Bodkin, op. cit., p.63.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Attributed to P. Shelley in Bodkin, op. cit., p.124, footnote 3.

CHAPTER 3

CONFLICT OF RESTRAINT AND FREEDOM

P. K. Page expands her primary conflict of opposites, the dichotomy between the isolation of the self and the desire for a communal sharing of emotions, in much the same way as a baroque vista unfolds. From the kernel focal point of solitude at issue with multitude, the poet enlarges her perspective to include a view of the conflict of the external forces of restraint on an individual with the inner desire of that individual for personal freedom and self-fulfillment.

Isolation of self and vulnerability of innocence are linked in that both are states of unawareness. The search for self-knowledge, beauty and love, is part of the drive towards greater personal freedom and away from coercive forces. Miss Page shows a particular interest in children and childhood and this conflict of restraint with freedom is much in evidence when she contrasts the force of parental authority with the assailable childhood state of innocence and malleability. The beauty and freedom of the child clash with the horror of overly protective parents or the blind desire for suzerainty exacted by the adult on the child. In poems and stories, Page reintroduces the same imagery conflicts that can be seen in those poems concerned with the opposition of solitude

with multitude - black/white dichotomy; cave and mine visions; snow dreams; the alternation of depths and surface levels.

In her latest book of published poetry, Cry Ararat!, the poet groups several works under the category "In Times Such as These" and in these poems, as in certain of her short stories, Miss Page's social consciousness is active. Individuals and classes are victimized by indifferent authority, by social barriers, or by war. The muted conflict of bourgeoisie with proletariat elite is felt in certain poems. Page juxtaposes the state of isolation of mind and lack of world concern for others that existed prior to the world wars with a new growth towards a global community of interest that sprang up as war forced people to learn more directly of the problems and nature of foreign nations.

A form of contrast even exists in Page's work brought about by a confrontation of the influence of Marx and of Freud on the poet. The Marxian idea of love of humanity dissolves into a Freudian interpretation of communal existence as an escape from the fears of solitude. Some of P. K. Page's critics such as Wynne Francis have held a filter of Marx's thought over her art: others like David Hayne have avoided mention of the nature of her social philosophy: still others like John Sutherland acknowledge the influence of Marx and Freud on certain of Page's writings. In Sutherland's review of Miss Page's work in Northern Review, 1947, he wrote that "Miss Page's thinking is thus Freudian rather than Marxist in origin . . . [Conflict] . . . leads her to a specialized view of the world and accounts in part for her poetic vitality".¹ He was then to caution in a letter published the same year in Canadian Forum that one "cannot discuss P. K. Page with respect to social ideas alone, but one can't ignore these ideas entirely without basic falsi-

fication".² R. E. Rashley, in Poetry in Canada, is perhaps the most perceptive when he observes in Page's prose and poetry that the poetic tension originates not purely from the poet's ideas of politics or economic progress. To Rashley, "The social formula only happened to coincide with a personal problem that demanded solution".³ The "personal problem that demanded solution" manifests itself in the selections by Page that present a conflict of restraint with freedom for children. In the concluding chapter of Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, Maud Bodkin, in reviewing the results of her studies of imaginative experience communicated through poetry believes the most important finding of her work to be:

. . . an awareness of the individual as having his reality in relation to a larger life, communicated to him under different conditions, in varying degree . . . The powerful and continuing influence upon an individual's sensibility of the early relation to his parents is a factor we have found objectified again and again within poetic imagery . . . Always we found in the experience, together with the binding influence of the parent-image, a movement toward freedom and fulfillment.⁴

Four poems by Page clearly focus on this conflict of opposites: "Only Child", "Paranoid", "Portrait of Marina" and "His Dream". In each poem the child's emotional growth is stunted by the parent's enforced will and the end result is an ignorant isolated adult incapable of functioning as a total member of his community.

The "Only Child" is torn between the desire for protection and security embodied in his mother and the fear brought about by her over-protection of him and her stifling of his wish to be free to live and think in "his private world":

The early conflict made him pale
and when he woke from those long weeping slumbers
she was there
and the air about them--hers and his--
sometimes a comfort to him, like a quilt but more
often than not a fear.

The boy views nature in his own way, on his own terms, not his mother's. But she is unable to comprehend the uniqueness of her son's own identity and retards his emotional maturation:

Birds were his element like air and not
her words for them--making them statues
setting them apart
nor were they lots of little facts and details like a book.
When she said "Look!"
he let his eyeballs harden
and when two came and rested in the garden
he felt their softness, gentle, near his heart.

His appreciation of the nature of his environment is more intuitive than his mother's. Yet the power of the adult with her perception of reality triumphs over the innocence of the child. The boy's struggles to resist and yet to conform to his mother's "future photograph" of him dissipate. Perhaps out of need for praise or affection he "freezes" into her desired mould. The resulting horror of this life is revealed at the end of the poem. Restraint has subdued the growth of the individual towards awareness and inner freedom.

Similarly the boy in "His Dream" is vulnerable to the power of the adult who "names the world". In his "dream", he, the child, is the controller and originator:

. . . objects waited
patiently for the colours he should name.

And it was like a game
with each thing there
dependent on his notice.
He was charmed
that all were eager for his coloured stare.
But for the woman he was unprepared.

Like the "Only Child", this boy struggles to resist the dominance of the adult, "He argued and protested, raised his voice, stamped his foot upon the purple grass". But to no avail, as again Page shows the loss of beauty and child-like innocence exacted by the state of adulthood.

Although each object assumes the colour "it had needed" a tone of sadness remains in the loss.

Marina is another 'victim' of parental domination, tormented by the harshness of her father's manner towards her:

The salt upon the panes, the grains of sand
that crunched beneath her heel
her father's voice, "Marina!"--all these broke
her trembling edifice. The needle shook
her ice between her fingers.
In her head
too many mirrors dizzied her and broke.

The poet's use of mirror and ice imagery reinforce the 'brittle' quality of the daughter. "Warped/without a smack of salt", Aunt Marina is only a glass shell of what she might have been and the presentation of lost or stunted potential is symbolized by the wild destructive nature of the sea.

Like Marina, the "Paranoid" also has suffered the change from warm vibrant flesh into inanimate cold stone. What might have been for this individual clashes with what has been. The poem begins with an image of the child as a thunder-god, overly protected and indulged by parental love, which to Page is a form of adult dominance over innocence as well; "flowers were his path . . . his mother was all love . . . In adolescence . . . he was perfect; still godlike and like a god/cast the world out". But this individual "loved himself too much" even as a child and the irreparable damage was done too early to be reversed: he becomes self-isolated and untouchable, a moon planet whirling like light in the vast reaches of space. Not only is the beauty of his childhood lost, but also any hope for the self-awareness of adulthood. Childhood in this poem is portrayed as warm, alive, filled with love and flowers. Adolescence evolves for this individual into a dark and silent 'chapel' empty of other human activity. Then, the poet brings in the adult stage in the

image of cold vast empty space where the now-isolated self has become a dead stone moon orbiting in ever-increasing spheres of 'reflecting light'. This dead image represents the 'victory' of the force of solitude over the natural human instinct and wish for communication and shared love that did exist, even for this individual, when he was a child. To progress from childhood is to move from the light of the sun into the darkness of reflected moonlight in this poem by Page.

"Parachutist", a poem that has only appeared in Canadian Poetry (1948), seemingly reverses the light-darkness pattern of "Paranoid" as it too presents the loss of childhood. To the child of six years all is "darkness solid" in his imposed state of unawareness; he must climb "the ebony ramp of the evening stairs" without much strength. At ten, light and darkness are mixed and the shadows they cast still hold "obstacles forever undisclosed". When this boy breaks from his childhood cavern into the light of self-knowledge it is only to discover that adulthood is now the "dark" hidden form, a "rock that hides in its geography". His childhood now appears more beautiful as white, and he is lost without words in a limbo where "man becomes child, suspended by a cloud". The conflict between the opposing forces of restraint and freedom operating on and within the individual vacillates back and forth in the poem through the poet's interplay of black-white and darkness-light imagery.

Childhood as light and white and innocence and beauty is also to be found in another selection by Page, "Alice". The adult Alice in the children's story-poem, deliberately enforces her will by hunting down and crushing the soft white rabbit, formerly "her childhood wonder": awareness of the irrevocable loss of this prized treasure makes Alice afraid:

Oh adult Alice
 mined with memory
 your garden's altered, Mary Quite Contrary
 prods cockle shells in every flower bed
 and where you wandered coolly on the grass
 a ghostly rabbit reigns supreme instead.

She has killed the beauty of past innocence and in doing so has changed the present. The loss of childhood's freedom and innocence is presented in the poem as a dishevelled upset and deadening personal experience that, like the ghostly rabbit, will return again and again to haunt the adult Alice.

The loss of childhood is described as a "caul" left "in some abandoned place,/unremembered by fingers or the incredibly bright/stones, which for a time, replace . . . The children's eyes" in Page's poem "Children". This work first entitled "Little Girls" draws a parallel between the children and the things of nature and motion. As if in dreams the children float in innocence:

They merge in a singular way with their own thoughts,
 Drawing an arabesque with a spoon or fork
 Casually on the air behind their shoulders,

 Legs in the dance group as though on strings
 Pulled by their indifferent wanton hands.

Though lacking the control of their selves, these children present a fanciful image of grace and beauty. But the conflict does exist and the aging process is unrelenting. The change into adulthood makes these delicate creatures hard and acute in their drive "to become whole, fit themselves to the thing/They see outside them". Page acknowledges how changed they will be, but emphasizes the fullness of character that self-awareness brings with it.

Patrick Anderson responded to this poem in the following issue of Preview (1945) with "Children (For P. K. P.)", his version of the

dream period of childhood and of adult perception of this distorted time:

These to whom everything happens but history
Continually was with cold water of their eyes
The world, selecting its pebbles
And glass, which lie under them best.

Forwarded to the future across this time
Though they be lost or spoiled before they ever reach
That destination, they still parcel secrets
And angular like presents caught in mid-transit
They scatter Christmas and tinsel between our hands.

The dream of child time is more real than the apparent reality of the adult world in the poem. But Anderson, like Page shows the bitter deception of maturation where there is no chance for retreat into the ignorance of childhood, and innocence and beauty are gone.

A further poetic delineation of this 'sea-change' from the innocence of the child to the awareness of the adult occurs in P. K. Page's five line poem "On Educating the Natives":

They who can from palm leaves and from grasses
Weave baskets of so intricate a beauty
and simply as a girl combing her hair,
are taught in a square room by a square woman
to cross-stitch on checked gingham.

This tightly constructed image reveals again the conflict of restraint with freedom in the individual as the poet shows how the imposition of the adult's 'burden' of bringing 'knowledge' to the child-like native destroys the inherent beauty of the simplicity of innocence they naturally possessed.

There are many victims of this conflict in Page's writing as these selected poems reveal. In her interpretive article "Questions and Images", Miss Page perceives the struggle of such victims when she explains the nature of some of her painting:

The golden--yes, there it was again--web spun by the spider
among the leaves of the century plant? Surely the very purpose
of a web demands invisibility? Yet this was a lure, a glistening

small sun, jewelled already with opalescent victims. Victims of what?

The importance of a marmoset in a rage, pitting itself against me, its fingers like the stems of violets, unable to break the skin of my hand. How quickly one learns about scale with a marmoset for companion. Man in a rage with his gods, or equally superficially, pleased with them.⁵

The relationship of this comment to the conflict of opposites observed in her writing is that here the poet presents her own belief in a form of universal pattern of resolved stresses operating on all levels and scales of existence. Man, in his own eyes, assumes magnificent proportions - his short-range life view reveals himself to himself as aware, significant, free and unique. But Page's picture of the relativity of scale of marmoset pitted against man discloses the absurdity of man's self-view when set alongside a greater more objective and long-range perspective of human existence. The nature of human vacillation between sublimity and absurdity, between a belief in free will or predestination, and between the desire for individual freedom and the opposition of the restraining forces of man's environment is telescoped into this vivid image. Man and marmoset, though ignorant of the odds, struggle violently to gain a sense of personal freedom. Perhaps, as some of Page's poems show, if the true nature of their opponent were to be known they would abandon all hope and revert to stone-cold passivity.

The opposition of forces continues in her work. In "The Glass Air", the poet now pits innocence against brutality as she did in "Alice" and the "Only Child". Confusion results as to whether the children in the poem or the gopher are the victims of the dream sequence. The poem concerns itself with that first moment of awareness that strikes upon the child's mind:

But the toy beast and the long rein and the paid
 out lengths
 of our youth snapped
 as the creature jibbed and bit

and the bright blood ran out, the bright blood
 trickled over,
 slowed, grew dark
 lay sticky on our skins

And we two, dots upon that endless plain
 Leviathan became
 and filled and broke
 the glass air like twin figures, vast, in stone.

These individuals, like the young "Parachutist", learn abruptly and violently that the acquisition of awareness exacts a heavy toll of beauty and innocence. The conflict of opposites is conveyed through the imagery that shifts from that of growth and vitality to stone and glass as child becomes adult.

In March of 1944, Miracles appeared in Preview as "(an extract from a story not yet finished in which an English-speaking husband and wife visit a French-Canadian village)". Page shows the conflict that exists in this hamlet between the innocent child-like nature of the local church parishioners and the power and 'knowledge' of the local curé who is believed capable of performing 'miracles'.

There are images of light and darkness; of the "giant illuminated cross" on the dark hillside; of tomb-like houses filled with ghostly pale, diseased people. Everything in this village setting is incandescent green and white:

The greenness grew deeper as we talked--came up and swamped us
 until it seemed as if we were under the sea.

.

The green light was deeper now, the children behind
 their mother seemed no longer strange, but terrible--tiny
 and fair and lifeless while Madame rocked unceasingly back
 and forth in her chair, and beside them on the hillside,
 the vegetation crept in closer and closer like a wave.

These simple people subsist in innocence and ignorance, tied to the magic power of the curé and the tradition of the church that Page sees as inhibiting any progress towards self-awareness for these victims. They will remain innocent as only retarded children can, and the horror of the observer, in this story the wife, or Page, results from her perception of this tragedy, of restraint imposed by authority on the child-like individual.

Northrop Frye, through mythopoeic eyes, described a wish in many people, a wish P. K. Page incorporates in her work, to return again to the supposedly happier time one spent as a child. He calls this urge when expressed in poetic mythology a "pastoral myth, the vision of a social ideal":

The pastoral myth in its most common form is associated with childhood, or with some earlier social condition-- . . . that can be identified with childhood. The nostalgia for a world of peace and protection with a spontaneous response to the nature around it, with a leisure and composure not to be found today, is particularly strong in Canada.

.

Close to the center of the pastoral myth is the sense of kinship with the animal and vegetable world.

.

. . . pastoral myths, even in their genuine forms, do not exist as places. They exist, rather in such things as the loving delicacy of perception. . .

.

The genuine myth (as opposed to nostalgic pastoral) would bring subject and object closer together by drawing the subject from a fantasy world.⁶

If one accepts this definition of a 'pastoral myth' then it can be applied to three of Page's poems, "Christmas Eve--Market Square", "Stories of Snow", and "Images of Angels", all of which carry the reader back to childhood as the poet weaves dreams of snow and innocence and beauty.

In "Christmas Eve--Market Square" the conflict of opposites is not present - the entire snowy landscape of the poem appears void of any

discord or tension and only the peace and harmony of a winter holiday scene prevails. There is an animal quality to the season where trees are furry monsters, who hold within themselves all the secrets, traditions and warmth of the festival:

The sellers, bunched and bundled,
hold their ears,
blow lazy boas as they call their wares,
and children out of legends pulling sleds,
propr tall trees straight in search of symmetry
and haul the spikey aromatic wonder
of tree through a snowy world.

Images of angels, feathers, soft snow, happy children, and "trees bursting into Christmas bloom in the warmth and light of homes" create the spell of the pastoral myth.

Visions of imaginary snow storms, swans, falling feathers and white sea gulls are used for a similar purpose in "Stories of Snow". In a "warm metamorphosis of snow" the poet carries her reader back to childhood like hunters "lost in the white circle" who fall to sleep, to dream and to death in the snow.

Then in "Images of Angels" Page, as observer, attempts to return with her reader to past innocence through the use of imagination in imagery. 'What are angels like? If you met one, what would you do?' But the clash of the rational adult mind personified by the financier, the scientist and the little notary, with the child's point of view re-introduces the opposition of freedom with restraint as a conflict of logic with intuition, and prohibits any full understanding of the innocence of imagination. Surely children "who imagine [angels] more simply,/see them more coloured and a deal more cosy" could be friends with an angel?

Perhaps once a dog could accept them wholly,

.
Or, take the nudes of Lawrence and impose
asexuality upon them; those
could meet with ease these gilded albinos.

Or a child, not knowing they were angels could
wander along an avenue hand in hand
with his new milk-white playmates,

But the influence of the 'father' mind restrains the child:

But say the angelic word
and this innocent
with his almost unicorn
would let it go
for even a child would know
that angels should be flying in the sky
and, feeling implicated in a lie,
his flesh would grow
cold
and snow
would cover the warm and sunny avenue.

Again the contrast in imagery to show the world as it is seen through the eyes of the child and through those of the adult is central to Page's poem "The Bands and the Beautiful Children". Such continuing emphasis on the theme of conflicting stresses reveals the duality of perception with which the poet observes most aspects of life around her. Nothing exists solely by and for itself. All ideas, all objects, all individuals are part of some universal design, a design of unresolved tensions and stresses which is of interest to Page because she observes in this conflict a sense of 'stability'. The conflict of such forces will continue to exist and it is man who must adapt and grow to accustom himself to this inevitable situation. Failure on his part, or on society's, may result in ruined human worth and potential, and this she portrays in much of her writing.

Full of reverberating sounds, the poem "The Bands and the Beautiful Children" begins by constructing a distant vision of light and

beauty, a building of sound:

Band makes a tunnel of the open street
at first hearing it;
seeing it, band becomes
high; brasses ascending on the strings of sun
build their own auditorium of light,
windows from cornets
and a dome of drums.

This vision is carried in the imagination of the "beautiful children/
white with running and innocence". Distance and innocence, however,
prove but a bitter distortion of reality which confronts the children as:

. . . band breaks and scatters,
crumbles about them and is made of men
tired and grumbling
on the straggling grass.

The illusion is irreparable, and like "Alice" and the "Parachutist" and
the children in "The Glass Air", and so many other of Page's individuals,
these beautiful children are adrift in confusion and fear at the destruc-
tion of their vulnerable innocent perception:

And the children, lost, lost,
in an open space,
remember the certainty of the anchored home
and cry on the unknown edge of their own city
their lips stiff from an imaginary trumpet.

With the shattering of the images of light and beauty, all that remains
is cold, empty and unfeeling, and the children, now aware of the imperma-
nence of life and the facade of reality, are less vital - almost akin to
the cold planet-like self, the "Paranoid", of another of the poet's case
studies.

It is in "Fall Thoughts" that the poet had offered a positive
hope for individuals such as these lost children. To Page such hope lies
only through the sharing of individual solitudes. Only then can people
retain the 'magic circle' of love and security in the midst of vast
unknown forces that press in from the darkness beyond their small human

fires. Some can resist the encroaching force of solitude, others are unable and succumb to it. The Resignation with its wartime background presents a lost adolescent, alone, afraid and 'aware'. James, the young print shop worker, like "The Boy with a Sea Dream", lives in the world of his imagination. His is a world 'peopled' with aeroplanes soaring and diving low over water:

In the print room, his nails brown from the developer, his face pear-shaped, pear-coloured, bearing the great bone of nose he had not yet grown to, the kid watched the water dropping into the tank. He turned the tap only a little, seeing aeroplanes flying out of its nozzle and nose diving into the sea.

He is confronted in his dreaming by the sharp reality of his practical boss who keeps him at the job at hand, and by the office workers who, in their ignorance of his innocence, are a trap to the boy when he fails the pilot's examination:

"Have you heard yet, kid?" They were at him again. Chattering round him, coloured, bright, laughing, waiting. He was trapped . . . the dragnet of their eyes outspread as he passed.

He is Alice's white rabbit, "out of place/a mark for dogs and foreign in her garden";

He looked like a rabbit, his face sweeping away to his ears . . . [At the physical examination] The rabbit's ribs were thumped; the bent chest measured; his heart exploding like shells all over his flesh, was listened to through a long tube;

As his dream of flying in the war shatters in the clear air of reality, the young man is dazed and bursts out to his co-workers that he's accepted for ground crew training, agreeing to sign a resignation:

He was somebody else. His voice went up and down . . . They shoved the letter at him, gave him a pen and he signed, his writing tight and small again with the jerking nervous loops . . . and he walked off like one of those wooden figures with the swinging legs that move forward when started down a slope.

Now even the security of the boy's printing job has vanished along

with his innocent dream of flying above his early problems. He will be forced to go back to his 'cave' in a butcher's shop, a job from which he previously shrank. The 'stone' image of his adult self-knowledge is contained in the final lines of the story:

But the kid wasn't thinking of planes at all. He was thinking of lamb's kidneys in their blankets of suet inside carcasses, the blood on butcher's hands and the coldness of meat.

Like so many of the individuals Page creates, such as the typists in "Stenographers" and "Offices", the dreamers, even the lovers in "Adolescence", this boy tries to escape into dreams to end the conflict of the encroaching horrors of reality beating against his struggle to be free. The conflict for these characters is one of the inborn need of the human to find a personal freedom and thus self-fulfillment when confronted by the rather indifferent force exerted by other individuals or by one's cultural and social environment. A study of Miss Page's prose and poetry provides evidence that the poet's presentation of an active social consciousness is only a continuance of the dichotomy of freedom and restraint operating on and within individuals.

The Cry Ararat! poems grouped under the heading of "In Times Like These", along with others of Page's so-called 'social poems', generally reinforce the conflict of man joined with nature in opposition to the tyrannic power of a society that breeds war, poverty, injustice and class divisions. The drive towards personal freedom is coupled with that towards a vision of world peace and justice for all.

Frye writes that:

The depression introduced a dialectic into Canadian social thought which profoundly affected its literature. In Mr. Watt's striking phrase, 'the Depression was like an intense magnetic field that deflected the courses of all the poets who went

through it . . . ' It is not surprising, given this background that the belief in the inspiration of literature by social significance continued to be an active force long after it had ceased to be attached to any specifically Marxist or other political programmes. It is still strong in the Preview group in the forties.⁷

Frye notes that the early work of Page and others associated with Preview grew out of the Auden-Isherwood and Spender era in British poetic development, but feels that Miss Page "listened more to Freud than to Marx".⁸ In an article collected by George Woodcock in A Choice of Critics, Wynne Francis states that of the two rival Montreal poetry groups, both politically conscious, the,

Preview poets were more doctrinaire and more markedly committed to the left in varying degrees. Strong sympathies were felt with the continental communism of the Auden-Spender-MacNeice variety.⁹

The social dynamism of the times generated energy for the Preview group. Miss Page in a recorded conversation with Dorothy Livesay speaks of the political climate:

I remember on one occasion a room was taken at the Ritz, for Preview and First Statement to argue out something . . . whether it was nationalism or internationalism, or what it was, I know it was a very emotion-fraught evening.¹⁰

Editor-in-chief Patrick Anderson, described by a critic as "proletarian by choice, Canadian by desire and poet aflame with purpose"¹¹ was the catalyst amongst his Preview colleagues. Fred Cogswell directly attributes Page's experiments in a more baroque manner to her association with Anderson.¹²

The 1942 first issue of the publication set forth the poetic manifesto for this venture whose members hoped to achieve a synthesis "between the lyric and didactic elements in modern verse, a combination of vivid, arresting imagery and the capacity to 'sing' with social content and criticism". They went on to explain that:

We have lived long enough in Montreal to realise the frustrating and inhibiting effects of isolation. All anti-fascists, we feel that the existence of a war between democratic culture and the paralyzing forces of dictatorship only intensifies the writer's obligation to work.

(Preview I, March 1942)

P. K. Page's involvement and sympathy with this group can be seen in her feeling concerning the nature of poetry in Canada published in the October 1942 issue of Preview.

Today the poet is no longer silent. He has yet to come to grips with himself and stop crying "Help" from the prairies and woods and mountains. If instead he will hitch-hike to the towns and identify himself with his own people, forget for awhile the country of his own head, he may find his age and consequently his belief.

Her advice seems to run contrary to the suggestion she makes in the poem "Cullen". Cullen observed the quality of life for individuals in the city and took to the country unable to make such advice work. For all the show of 1930's Marxist thought, P. K. Page exhibits an 'open-mindedness' in her social arguments. In "Some There are Fearless" the desire emerges that all social groups share "the wonderful soil". Page's social viewpoint is relative to her sympathy with her subjects: just as she sympathized with the stenographers' search for love, she yet remained detached from a similar search in "Summer Resort". In "No Flowers" class division dissolves in brine. In "Election Day" the "rather gentle overlords/propped by their dames and almost twins in tweeds", of Tory Westmount may only "sleep" momentarily. There is a hint of change even in the wealthy isolated community. But in Page's "Personal Landscape" there is room for all points of view in this "lung-born land":

Not only the poor soil only, the
outworn prairie,
but the green upspringing,
the lark-land,
the promontory.

There is an ambivalence in the poet's attitude to class divisions, in unresolved tension. Sutherland writes of it in this way:

. . . her feeling for the 'wonderful soil' of the future lacks the energy of her attack on all classes indiscriminately, and generally consists of a tag line or stanza at the end of the poem. In spite of the venom of her so-called social poems, she finds the Marxist thinking too harsh, and prefers a love which shall hold the 'poor soil' and the 'rich uplands' -- proletariat and bourgeoisie--in a single embrace.¹³

The conflicts of solitude and multitude, of restraint on freedom, are enlarged on by the opposition of isolationism and universality in the social poems. The pull to overcome constraints of separateness and to be part of a larger world community of experience is still P. K. Page's central theme.

In her writing of social consciousness, idealism confronts realism: youth and vulnerable old age are caught in war time; narrow insular existences must break down or withdraw further when faced with the destruction of class and national barriers; workers trapped in the 'vault' of a technological society are urged to struggle for greater humanity, equality and dignity of labour.

Northrop Frye observes that a form of "social Freudianism", a "democratic counterpart to Marxism" is part of the development of culture in North America following the depression and the beginnings of war.¹⁴ This repression of an individual's or a society's attempts to gain freedom is tied in with the conflicts presented by Page.

Her story Leisure Class has the fantasy of the British horror film If - 'if only we could kill all our oppressors dead!' The three ghost-like misfits are rejected by the hotel guests. Only the child, in her innocence, shows any concern:

People stopped on the way to the desk, stared at the three

men, shook their heads, shrugged their shoulders. A small child . . . ran from her mother's side and looked at the man nursing his foot. She dipped like a miniature ballerina over the shoe, pale and fair by the black-suited man, interested as he in the sole of his foot. Her mother . . . found the child gone . . . ran to her, slapped her narrow wrist and pulled her away.

Class prejudice is replaced by age prejudice; the child has not been instructed to hate or reject those of unlike circumstances in this story. Again the conflict is expressed through light and dark imagery as in so many of Page's poems to highlight the poet's dual perception of her subjects and their attitudes.

Preview February 1943 was dedicated "to the Red Army whose recent heroic successes have done so much for the cause of human freedom and culture everywhere". In it, P. K. Page, a secretary at the time, contributed a lengthy article describing stenographers and their attitudes about the times, the war and themselves. The rigid authority, yet indifference, of their bosses and the petty routine of the jobs combined to make their lives a "nether hell". She writes of these girls that:

They think of the war effort in terms of personalities
they think of their personal freedom in the same terms--
both somehow arising from and connected with the boyfriend,
and both confusingly, seeming to pull in opposite directions.
Unfortunately there was no one to tell them that winning the
war and attaining personal freedom are one and the same thing.¹⁵

Following this article was a poem by F. R. Scott, "The Typists" which presented the poetic version of Page's thoughts:

They without message, having read
the running words, on their machines
know every letter as a stamp
cutting the stencils of their ears.
Deep in their hands, as pianists,
all longing gropes and moves, is trapped
behind the tensile gloves of skin.

Or blind, sit with their faces locked
away from work, their varied eyes

are stiff as everlasting flowers.
 While fingers on a different plane
 perform the automatic act
 and questions grope along the dark
 and twisting corridors of brain.

To both writers their subjects were victims almost of their own choosing, but still victims of their mechanical environments, and their writing carries the suggestion to the reader that some positive change must be introduced into these humdrum existences through strong social action by all responsible individuals. Louis Dudek's poem "Looking at Stenographers" is in the same vein as Page and Scott's work. In this selection Dudek describes the office workers as:

Product of their dactylo, they are like their stamped
 paper.
 They keep covered their eyes and brain,
 Tomorrow they will drink tea in another place
 Swallow their freedom whole; and they will chatter
 about their boys;
 But all week and all year
 They die in gossamer cages their frail minds can
 never break -
 That once might have broken steel and stone.¹⁶

His imagery runs closely parallel with Page's as he presents similar pictures of stultified, petrified human potential, human lives that if properly nurtured by love and shared experiences, would have been strong and active. Typists, bank strikers, salt miners, dreamers, children and youths are the victims of social repression in Page's work. The waste of potential is of great concern to her. The only hope for the future lies through the emergence from the isolation of the self into the awareness of the self and all must make the effort to attain some degree of self-knowledge. As she writes in "Journey",

You may be box-car baggage or begonia,
 porter with epaulettes and moon for navel;
 the way is water--colour to the station,
 the stop is limbo.

Poems like "Waking" with its "invalid" who lies "dreaming of love/and the crying cities of Europe" show Page's belief that war can provide a bitter path to awareness and understanding of one's self and of others. In an image of dawn, the subject of the poem opens his "bandaged eyes to the Shape of Asia". In "Poem", the poet contrasts the innocence of a monastery garden with the violence of a world at war when she writes:

Let us stand here close,
for death is common as grass beyond an ocean
and, with all Europe pricking, in our eyes,
suddenly remember Guernica
and be gone.

In the immediacy of the war situation the individual who is of necessity involved with his world must act. The moment of cloistered sanctuary is only that, a moment, and it cannot last if the desired social change for all is to come.

Miss Page is speaking of the youth of her own age in "Generation" and of the results of growing through adolescence in a war torn world. The tragedy of such a youth shows - "We were an ignored and undeclared ultimatum of solid children . . . on the wooded lands/our childhood games grew real: theepolice and robbers/held unsmiling faces against each other . . . knew love roll from a bolt".

But this war generation did grow into a global community of feeling as the war broadened youth's perspective, even if it did not alter their ingrown prejudices:

Now we touch continents
with our little fingers,
swim distant seas
and walk on foreign streets
wearing crash helmets
of permanent beliefs.

Youth in her work is shown to indirectly benefit from war, the "Old Man" only loses. Uprooted from his safe past in France, this

immigrant has been forced into a strange new country, one that in his eyes is a pale reflection of the Europe and the yesterday for which he longs:

Now in his green-legged trousers and here where
 he had never wished to be, in this new this north
 land with a foreign people he cannot know
 he walks the wild bewildering woods alone
 wearing a sweater
 found a decade ago
 high up among the gentians near the snow

 He hates this pallid place
 and dreams of a bright-green future in the past.

P. K. Page sets her primary value on freedom for the individual and universality in the conflict of restraint opposing freedom. The poems and prose selections inspired by a personal sense of social consciousness focus on the idea and dream that through a new trust and faith in humanity, individuals can break the bonds of isolation and find a higher quality of life. This presentation of the basic conflict of opposites is a further refinement of the contraposition of solitude with multitude, but the poet looks further and wider into society to focus on groups of individuals, and on nations of people, and on the human community in her perception of the universal drive of man to be free.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 3

- ¹ John Sutherland, op. cit., p.23.
- ² John Sutherland, letter to the editor in Canadian Forum (1947),
17.
- ³ R. E. Rashley, Poetry in Canada, p.136.
- ⁴ Bodkin, op. cit., pp.318-319.
- ⁵ P. K. Page, "Questions and Images", p.18.
- ⁶ Northrop Frye, Literary History of Canada, pp.840-842.
- ⁷ Frye, ibid., pp.833-834.
- ⁸ Frye, ibid., p.770.
- ⁹ Wynne Francis, "Montreal Poets of the Forties", Choice of Critics, ed. George Woodcock, (Toronto, 1966), p.42.
- ¹⁰ P. K. Page in a recorded conversation to Dorothy Livesay, Dec. 1968, printed in an article by C. X. Ringrose, "Patrick Anderson and the Critics", Can. Lit., XLIII, (1970), p.23.
- ¹¹ Francis, op. cit., p.39.
- ¹² Fred Cogswell in a letter to Miss Carol Jerusalem, Feb. 20,
1970.
- ¹³ Sutherland, op. cit., p.17.
- ¹⁴ Frye, op. cit., p.834.
- ¹⁵ Page, "The Stenographers", an article in Preview, Feb. 1943.
- ¹⁶ Louis Dudek, "Looking at Stenographers", Northern Review, (Feb.-Mar., 1946).

CHAPTER 4

THE IMAGISTIC CONFLICT OF STONE AND FLOWER

Intractable between them grows
a garden of barbed wire and roses.
Burning briars like flames devour
their too innocent attire.
Dare they meet, the blackened wire
tears the intervening air.

Trespassers have wandered through
texture of flesh and petals.
Dogs like arrows moved along
pathways that their noses knew.
While the two who laid it out
find the metal and the flower
fatal underfoot.

Black and white at midnight glows
this garden of barbed wire and roses.
Doused with darkness roses burn
cooly as a rainy moon;
beneath a rany moon or none
silver the sheath on barb and thorn.

Change the garden, scale and plan;
wall it, make it annual.
There the briary flower grew.
There the brambled wire ran.
While they sleep the garden grows,
deepest wish annuls the will:
perfect still the wire and rose.

P. K. Page selected as the title of her second collection of published poems, the core image of the above poem, the contrast of imagery of the metal and the flower. Throughout her work the strong clash of

animate with inanimate is felt - stone with roses, soil beneath birds, black opposed to white or green. A study of this imagistic tension does not reveal a 'one to one' relationship. Miss Page's metaphoric meaning of her recurring image patterns shifts from poem to story to novel.

Generally the imagery of organic natural growth is used symbolically for the powers of vitality, of the life force; and the power of inertia, of stagnation, of isolation is symbolized by the images of metal, stone or rock. This imagistic contraposition is thus related to the other conflicts of opposites in Page's writing. As with the conflicts of self-insulation opposed by the universality of experience and of love contrasted with the inability of individuals to feel or communicate love, and of restraint and tyranny repressing the desire for freedom, here again a submerged state of awareness like the 'frozen' self, the mine and snow images, is found in stone and cold metals. The self-aware state of experience is communicated by the poet's presentation of gardens, flowers, chlorophyll green growth and the sun's warmth and light. This metal-flower conflict evolves into archetypal antipathies of Paradise and Hades, of heaven and hell. "It is as though the poet's feeling divined the relation of the concepts of Heaven and Hell to the images of spring's beauty and of the darkness under the earth . . ."¹ The descent from sunlit gardens above to the dark caverns below takes the form of Freud's Nirvana principle or the first phase of the Rebirth cycle. And the renewal of vitality, the modulation from stone into flower, marks the ascent, or final stage, of Rebirth in the archetypal sense.

Maud Bodkin might well have been referring to Miss Page and not just to D. H. Lawrence when she observed that:

If flow and conflict of opposite feelings is the distinctive quality of Lawrence's imagined world, we should expect that those ever-recurring opposites which we have studied in static form under the name of Paradise-Hades, and in transition as the Rebirth archetype, will appear in his work with notable intensity. And so indeed they do.²

"Photos of a Salt Mine" uses the contrast of white and black images to suggest first the beauty of the salt cave with its angelic, feathery innocence and then, to show the horrible reality of the pit and of the miners "locked in the black inferno of the rock:". Page shows the upward thrust from "darkness solid" to the light of knowledge in "Parachutist". The paradox of this journey is reflected in the use of darkness for the ignorance and innocence of the child, light for the imagined - and yet the hardness of stone for the destination of adulthood. Then, in a reversal of symbols, the state of childhood is remembered in the adult mind as a "white" thing.

Once more in the poem "Mystics Like Miners", Miss Page in her imagination sees a relationship between those who mine deep in the earth and those who explore the depths of the mind. In contrast to "Photos of a Salt Mine", the darkness of this cavern seems to hold the truest form of reality and of wisdom. The surface is "innocent": upon ascension the mystics find:

. . . flowers too bright
 (what saint of painted gold and red,
 alive, could really wear those colours?)
 and sky so high, so baby blue
 a blue-eyed boy alone could bear it.

The organic in counterpoint to the inorganic images and black clashing with green and with white represent in P. K. Page's writing such conflicts as those between the aims of the spirit and the limitations of the boy, freedom and repression, innocence and knowledge, dream and reality, love and loneliness. At times a surrealist quality results

in the presentation of this opposition as the organic and the animate is modified by becoming inorganic and inanimate. Such a quality is also to be found in the wierd and fantastical intermingling of plant and animal worlds in the black-white drawings P. K. Page has turned to.

In an article describing the influence of experiences in Brazil and Mexico on her paintings, Page writes that:

Brazil was day, an awakening to myriad colour sounds and sensations. Marmosets in the flowering jungle; bands of multi-coloured birds moving among the branches of the Kapok tree outside the bedroom verandah, orchids in the Kapok tree, cucumbers in the Kapok tree, the whole tree bursting into cotton candy. Flamboyantes in flaming flower against the sky as one lay on one's back in the swimming pool. Doric palms waving green plumage, growing antlers and beads. Cerise dragon flies. Butterflies as large as a flying hand and blue bright blue.³

Such association of growth and colour with vitality enters the poem "Adolescence". The lovers are here entwined "in a green embrace" and "a silken rain fell through the spring upon them". In their dream world of love they float on air and water:

And white was mixed with all their colours
As if they drew it from the flowering trees.

Only the dissolution of their love leaves the green lovers "savage and swift as gulls . . . sharp as partly sculptured stone". A contrast between the live bird and the captured, embroidered image in a work of art uses the same imagery of colour and life juxtaposed with wire and metal. A poet, "from her metal eye", cannot catch the spirit of the live birds in a poem, she can only reproduce the embroidered reproduction in words:

And for a field of linnets
greening the thistle or
a snow of cockatoos
upon the mistletoe,
nor harlequin rosellas

or magpie domino,
 she, grown all string and wire,
 a twisted armature

would find them hot and light
 as from her metal eye
 she saw them in a flight
 feathered and fiery
 and feel her wire melt
 and that small string
 frizzle to nothing
 as they went pelting by.

Heat, light and colour express vitality; metal poses the contrast in perception, in this poem. Three more selections by Page also contain a variation of the imagistic conflict of stone and flower, or metal and the life force: "Reflection in a Train Window", "The Tall Suns" and "Piece for a Formal Garden".

Images of Christmas wreaths in homes, of the reflected glow of their warmth on eyes, hair and heart of the train traveller, blend and dissolve into a reflection of "brass and brick" and of frost on glass in the poem "Reflection in a Train Window". The poet's imagery symbolizes the clash between loneliness and the warmth of belonging for the individual. This contrast is further developed into the universal conflict of the inner self with its outward reflection or form. As in many of Page's poems, the basic dichotomy is glimpsed obliquely through mirrors, glass, silver objects such as ice, curtains or water and such is true of this particular selection.

Colour is more deliberately introduced by the poet. In "The Tall Suns", Miss Page employs a baroque manner with swirls of green, red, silver, black, brass, blood, sun, moon and star light.

This windy season
 blows your springtime in.
 Brings in a swirl of green
 your embroidered self:

tall suns and sunflowers
spin upon a string.

As with the woman in "Reflection in a Train Window", Page, in this page also titled "Green Little Corn" in The Metal and The Flower, reveals the surface and the depths of an individual personality through the contrast of imagery. The outer shell of the self is the "embroidered self" full of springtime. But the observer gradually notes that the surface view of this individual masks a dark inner personality:

You were a high queen
high-stepping, carrying
a stone mountain as if it were a cape.

And you spoke only of darkness
Out of your tomb with swans.
.
yet I could not believe
so dark a night was spawning
in a mouth red as a dog's yawn.

.

For all your brass
reflected the tall suns
of the season of green corn
and I saw above your battlement of stone
Orion--
glittering scabbard at his groin.

As the outer masks hide the cold and insular inner self, so the images of natural life and growth cover the stone core of the individual Page presents in the poem. Such a conflict of opposites is also present in "Piece for a Formal Garden", a poem in which again one sees Page's isolated self as "the stone cold profile . . . trembling like roses" in a wish to be "alive", to feel and to express emotions.

In the formal garden
as the dark falls
her paleness like a nightlight
glows over all.

She with profile only

face that cannot kiss
is a broken marble
in his embrace.

The underlying conceit in the poem results from the imposed interrelationship of the human with the stone statue. In this formal garden only the sculptured figure is "irregular", a broken marble ruin of a vital individual. A beauty does exist in her irregularity, in her "exquisite chipped elbow", and in her pale reflection which glows through the darkness of the garden setting. But the human statue is unable to shatter the stone casing in which she finds herself. The coldness of the marble clashes with the warmth of an embrace and kiss: the "stone cold profile" is left at the end of the poem "in the shaken silence . . . /trembling like roses". This statue is in one way an inversion of the high-stepping "queen" in "The Tall Suns" - exterior is stone, interior is flowers.

Death is stone, life, flowers in Page's "Mineral". To the living woman in this poem, her dead love is only "mineral" in her memory:

. . . In a game
she would declare him mineral without thinking;
mineral his going and his having gone
and on her desk, his photo--mineral.

No gentle mirage loves her as a dream
can love a person's head, no memory
comes warm and willing to her tears. She walks
nearly begonia between the walls,

Death in the poem is real and so is the "cold touch, sharp taste of stone" to the living "begonia" woman. This same image of life and death is present in "Paranoid" who as a child walked on flowered paths and basked in mother's love. Flowering youth and the early pleasures of the child were once the preserve of Page's individual in "Elegy" who,

. . . white and sewn with scarlet once,
walked giddy with gold

In both of these poems the human figures have retreated within themselves

and are engulfed in a darkness. The paranoid individual has become a cold stone celestial body whirling in a void. The elegized man has suffered a "black haemorrhage". For him, sunlight has become inky night, his vitality, a "green tree", has fossilized into coal. Stones, as "cockle shells", litter Alice's garden and the world-wise children of "The Glass Air" have become twin stone giants alone in a wasteland of lost innocence.

The descent from the sunlit garden to the cavern is complete in these selections. But Page, through her duality of perception, also represents a vision of rebirth in stone-flower imagery. From a "fossil frame" of frozen lungs and brain, old man winter thaws into "Spring":

and all that he had clutched, held tightly locked
behind that fossil frame
dissolves, flows free
in saffron covering the willow tree
and coloured rivers of the rockery
.
until he is the garden--heart, the sun
and all his body soil.

The moment of rebirth in this poem occurs when "something rare and perfect, yet unknown, stirs like a foetus just behind his eyes". In her own words Page expressed her wish to show that the rebirth phase of the cycle of life was evident in her work. She wrote in "Questions and Images" that she felt . . . "grateful for the shocks. The conditioning process which turns live tissue into fossil is arrested by the earthquake. Even buried strata may be exposed".⁴ Such a comment reinforces Miss Page's attitude to her subjects in her writing. She has presented conflict of opposites in themes and imagery. Yet her primary concern remains that the need for communal experience is greater than the negative desire for self-isolation from reality; that love is more sustaining than pity; that freedom is preferable to indifferent authority; that the

search for beauty and truth must overcome fear and horror in the lives of individuals. Her beliefs as poet are simple and rooted in the fundamental desires and values of all people. Her poems and prose have developed from the romantic 'I' of the subjective spectator who, as in The Sun and The Moon and some of her early poems of unhappy love, asserts the theme of separateness - an escape from the actual world of men into the overly protected world of nature. Rather than face the crisis of assimilation with others, Miss Page's subjects were like 'moons riding out a storm far above the wind-blown clouds.' Her ideas became more topical as her association with the Preview poets deepened. She has come full circle from dwelling on pathological states in individuals and the disruptive aspects of imagination to a more integrative, more expansive and less cryptic art form - to a more positive identification with others and thus a greater universality of outlook and appeal.⁵

In 1967, after thirteen years of poetic silence, Cry Ararat! was published. The collection included poems from the other published works of Page as well as new unpublished version from the poet's visits in Australia, Brazil and Mexico. Bounded by a black on white etching and its inversion on the back cover, the volume is a unified presentation of Page's poetic merit. It gives one an insight into still other conflicts of opposites in her work - that of the relationship between time and ritual and the Rebirth archetype, and that between the subjective perception of the involved poet and her desire to gain a greater objective distance from her work.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 4

¹Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, p.94.

²Ibid., p.286.

³P. K. Page, "Questions and Images", p.17.

⁴Ibid., p.21

⁵David M. Hayne, Review of Cry Ararat! in Letters in Canada:
UTQ, (1967), p.367.

CHAPTER 5

CONFLICT OF SUBJECTIVITY OF PERCEPTION WITH POETIC OBJECTIVITY

Whereas Miss Page, the poet, has built a solid literary reputation based on few and widely spaced collections and stories, P. K. Irwin, the painter, has experienced electric growth as an artist. Anne Francis in her article "P.K." in Canadian Art 1963 noted that "Her [Page] subjective eye is the same whether she expresses herself in words or in water colours, drawings, crayons, and etchings".¹ Again, a newspaper review of The Metal and The Flower remarked that the poet's pen ". . . is an engraving tool not a brush".² This interrelationship of art and literature in approach is reinforced by Miss Francis' quotation of Robert Weaver's remarks concerning Page's poetry, a remark she feels could equally apply to Page's art:

Her poetry has always had plenty of brilliance, it moves, it glitters, it spins itself out suddenly and nervously. She has been sensitive to the techniques and the ideas which have been disturbing modern poets in other countries. But her poetry has her own voice--intense, solitary, even sombre . . .³

In this same article there is a comment by a critic of the Mexican publication, Tiempo, about Page's paintings. This in turn could relate directly to her writing:

She has philosophical imagination and a meditative approach to her subject matter. Her colour is beautiful, sometimes brilliant, but never harsh. Her paintings are impregnated with an atmosphere that is feminine delicate and ethereal. Her crayons, inks, drawings, etchings, temperas and water colours reveal that she understands various techniques and cultivates them with understanding and she puts her seal of originality on each one. She is master of her craft.⁴

To one critic a reflection of "her own voice", to the other a "seal of originality", to both a uniqueness that distinguishes the approach and technique of the artist. P. K. Irwin was to explain her own perception of the interrelationship of the two media of her art:

Michaux's reply, when asked why he had stopped writing poetry, serves very well for me: "It becomes impossible to keep writing I I I all the time". This is one of a hundred possible reasons. As to why I began to draw-- there must be one hundred reasons for that too. I don't suppose I knew before I began that drawing is the perfect medium for metaphor. But it is. For my kind of a poet,⁵ my kind of drawing seems inevitable. It's the same pen.

and in another personal interview Page replied to the same question as to why she had stopped writing poetry with, "I didn't stop. It did. I could find no vocabulary for a baroque world".⁶

The story behind her beginnings as an artist parallels her development as a poet. It appears that while in Rio de Janeiro she resorted to "doodling" to compensate for a lack of proficiency in Portuguese in explaining a situation to a servant at the Canadian Embassy. This doodling sprouted, her husband felt the creative spark was in evidence and provided "a stack of beautiful, white drawing paper".⁷ Her first attempts set stark black heavy lines on white, a repetition of much of her earliest writing.

An overview of prints of some of her work in Tamarack Review 1960, Canadian Art 1963 and the pages of Cry Ararat! reveals the intricate fine detail of the etchings. Wild imaginings, like woods alive at

night, or gardens "barbed wire and roses" growing "Black and white at mid-night," are filled with strange supernatural creatures. Lurking behind plant like, their eyes alone penetrate the blinds as in Night Garden and In the Wake. Human forms are noticeably absent from the drawings-- the focus is on nature and on grotesque amorphous creatures like the one in And you, What do you Seek? that occupies the covers of Cry Ararat! Suns and moons fill the rather empty skies; dark cavernous retreats are portrayed in Labyrinth and Dark Keyhole. There is even the "Paranoid's" whirling Cosmos and a reproduction entitled The Glass-House that resembles the atmosphere of The Sun and The Moon. The creative tension resulting from the juxtaposition of opposing forces or strains of thought is as present in this art form as in her literary efforts.

The artist has progressed technically from felt pen to stilo and India ink then to soft pastel wax crayons. First came black-white inter-relationships, then colour entered her canvases. "I found I could do wonderful things by putting layers and layers of crayons, to get depth of colour, and then cutting into them with a sharp instrument".⁸ A further stylistic evolvement came in using egg tempera "because there is life in wood compared with the deadness of paper and canvas".⁹

Her poem "Bark Drawing" encompasses an Australian "landscape with serifs":

singularly sharp
each emu
Kangaroo and goanna
intaglio
on the bark
of this continent
look in its rivers
fish
swim by in skeleton
fine-boned as a comb

while pin-figured men
string thin
are dancing or hunting

Here the keen edge of the poet's stylo cuts into wood to expose in relief the fineness of skeletal figures in a poetic world. All are reed-thin, sharp and clear.

In another poem, "Cook's Mountains", Miss Page draws in words an image of the Glass House Mountains echoing her pictorial vista in the painting The Glass House. The mountains are "surrealist, conical" rising from the rain forest in the same manner as D. H. Lawrence symbolically employs the image of the mountain height towering above the plain. Bodkin finds special significance in Lawrence's work in the image of the mountain height, as conveying the contrast between the aims of the spirit and limitations of bodily life . . . always with the suggestion of interplay and conflict. The life of the body down in the hot plain or valley is challenged, even embittered, by the allurements or menace, in the mountain height.¹⁰

In Page's work, the mountains are above and apart from the two human observers below in Queensland. These mountains are,

Like mounds of mica
Live-shaped hothouses,
Mountains of mirror glimmering
they form
in diamond panes behind the tree ferns of
the dark imagination

The spell cast by the shimmering image of the mountains is shattered by the conflicting force of human imposition on the visual image:

The driver said,
"Those are the Glass House Mountains up ahead".
And instantly they altered to become
the sum of shape and name.
Two strangenesses united into one
more strange than either.

Neither of us now
remembers how they looked before they broke
the light to fragments as the driver spoke.

The egg tempera painting The Glass House presents a similar view of tension. An exotic jungle of sharp interwoven line-images suggests a dense forest undergrowth that peaks towards a celestial sky floating above the crowded earth, serene and uncluttered with only a new moon and a scattering of stars in it. The brittleness of the shapes in this etching seem to parallel the 'glass' atmosphere of her poem "Cook's Mountains".

Again the artist is at work in "After Rain", The Night Garden in words. Page in the poetic garden observes that,

The snails have made a garden of green lace:
broderie anglaise from the cabbages,
chantilly from the choux-fleurs, tiny veils--

garden abstracted, geometry awash--
an unknown theorem argued in green ink,
dropped in the bath,
Euclid in glorious chlorophyll, half drunk.

The Night Garden, an illustration from Cry Ararat!, recreates in black and white a similar eeriness and delicate wet tracery of her poetic representation. Wild free hand flowers sprout in profusion in this night garden as if through the influence of moonlight alone.

The interrelationship of imagery and theme of the two media is further observed in Page's painting, again found in Cry Ararat!, entitled In the Wake. On a dark background, white tracings swirl in great waves, like the objects in Page's poem, "Blowing".

Everything blows upon this hillside:
.....
old shells of ground birds--
these their first bones cast--
are tossed by wind.

On bottlebrush and thistle

wool blows
 spun
 thin
 and glistening in the sun

And blow the mushrooms
 grown
 light as featherweight
 that sprang up overnight
 outcropping firm and white
 now blown like thistledown.

Birthbone and flesh become
 light.

The parallel is strong between the artistic and the poetic development of Page.

Then in 1967, with the publication of Cry Ararat!, P. K. Page introduced her new poems - works that reflect personal experiences and impressions she gleaned while abroad in Australia, Brazil and Mexico. The book, with its blend of old and new selections, further reveals the poet's presentation of the conflict of opposites in theme and imagery that she has concerned herself with since her earliest writings.

The imprint of Mexico on her imagination was of "images of darkness . . . [hovering] in the Mexican sunlight . . . Death and the old gods . . . Temples to the Sun. Temples to the Moon . . . Objects dissolved into their symbols . . . In the rain forest stood the bone-white ruins of buildings---tangible remains of a whole mythology."¹¹

For Page, the presence of man's rituals, his ordered patterns of motion and behaviour, provided the "time eternal" element of the conflict in her writing, that force which could overcome the temporal "time passing" aspect of human existence where death remains a finality.

She wrote of Mexican villages that:

. . . seemed unchanged since the beginning of time. The
 same adobe huts, the same fields of maize, the same ancient

language of clicking consonants, and surely the same gods.
 Gods hungry for human blood. (Too much Lowry and Lawrence?)
 The plazas of Catholic churches were stages for the old
 rituals of costumed dances, stamped out to the music of
 conch shell and drum.

In Oaxaca the women of Yalalag wear triple crosses
 which led Cortes' priests to the mistaken belief that Chris-
 tian missionaries had preceded them. Oaxacans perhaps
 understand the symbolism of the cross: time passing, time
 eternal---"the intersection of this world with eternity".¹²

The relationship of time, death and eternity is shown in the poem
 "Dark Kingdom". The "I" of the poem, is a microcosmic world, a temporal
 object in comparison with the vastness and permanence of the "giddyding
 zodiac":

Pinned to a turning sphere
 I know not up nor down.
 I dizzy as I stare.

Wheeling round a point
 that drives me through and through
 the very stars grow faint.

Such blacknesses abound
 I know not in nor out.
 O Shadow, take my hand.

Death comes to this individual "I" - "though I drown". The enlarging
 swoops in vast space present a vivid image of encroaching death: yet
 there is still a continuance of life, the "crowned Hermaphrodite", the
 union of male and female in one form.

In "T-Bar", a cyclic pattern of "time passing" revolves in oppo-
 sition to the linear dissection of the cycle by the limitations of human
 life. The "ritual" in this poem is the procession of paired skiers
 ascending the mountainside on the T-bar cable. Page calls them "wards
 of eternity" who,

. . . mount the easy vertical ascent,
 pass through successive arches, bride and groom,
 as through successive naves, are newly wed
 participants in some recurring dream.

So do they move forever. Clocks are broken.
 In zones of silence they grow tall and slow,
 inanimate dreamers, mild and gentle-spoken,
 blood brothers of the haemophilic snow
 until the summit breaks and they awaken
 imagos from the structure of the tow.

"Time temporal" is the sudden release of the skiers at the top. The pair
 is jerked apart, torn from their dream "chrysalis",

Uncertain, lost, upon a wintry height
 there two not separate yet no longer one.

Dream clashes with reality, sleep with motion, innocence with pain, ignor-
 ance with awareness, captivity with freedom and eternity with limitation.

"But clocks begin to peck and sing . . ."

Though the individual pattern changes as the skiers are released, the
 rhythm of the descent and ascent of the T-bars is constant:

. . . obdurate and slow
 the spastic T-bars pivot and descend.

The circle is not broken, the whole is not fragmented by its parts, and
 motion is contrasted with stillness.

Miss Page perceived this tension of ritual with time when she
 recounted:

Coming as I do from a random or whim-oriented culture, this
 recurrence and interrelating of symbols into an ordered and
 significant pattern---prevalent too in the folk arts of
 pottery and weaving---was curiously illuminating. One did
 not feel restricted by the enclosed form of the 'design';
 rather, one was liberated into something life-giving and
 larger. I could now begin to understand how "the little
 world is created according to the prototype of the great
 world . . . Poetry was more than ever now in the perceiving."¹³

A pattern of Rebirth, related to man's rituals, has symbolic mean-
 ing in certain of Page's work. She speaks of a personal rebirth in her
 art - that just as Brazil was "day", and Mexico "night", her return to
 Canada should be the "start of a new day".¹⁴ Bodkin's interpretation of
 the cycle of Rebirth as it is often found in literature is ". . . full of

the rhythm of the rebirth of organic life--of the falling back into darkness and stupor, and through some mystery of dissolution, wakening to a life new tender and vulnerable, 'as a flower then unsheaths itself'.¹⁵ "Waking" and "Spring" evidence this renewal through their imagery.

Also, in the story The Woman, a traveller retreats into the country sanctuary of his hotel room, "a small place where there were fewer people to stare". His deformed "favoured" arm throbs with pain during a night of dream and confusion, shattered by a form of communication with the woman, a piercing scream. "Not until the sun burst full upon his face did he waken. And he wakened full of the woman, wanting to see her". Through a shared empathy, the traveller is rejuvenated by his stay at the little hotel and leaves, fulfilled. Weekend--West Coast also concludes with a sense of rebirth for the island observers. The journey is one from the vitality of life on the mainland, across to the island 'Hades' - a deceptive facade harbouring decay and degeneration - back out of this contagion to the mainland after a 'rebirth' of awareness of the true nature of the people on this island.

But it is in Page's title poem "Cry Ararat!" that the most striking image of Rebirth occurs. The opening lines present a series of imagistic paradoxes:

In the dream the mountain near
but without sound.
A dream through binoculars
seen sharp and clear:
the leaves moving, turning
in a far wind
no ear can hear.

Only in the dream is one fully 'alive':

Then will each leaf and flower
each bird and animal
become as perfect as

the thing its name evoked

.....

... and Flowers more real than flowers
grew vivid and immense;

.....

So flies and blows the dream
embracing like a sea
all that in it swims
when dreaming, you desire
and ask for nothing more
than stillness to receive
the I-am animal,
the We-are leaf and flower,
the distant mountain near.

So flies and blows the dream that haunts us when
we wake
to the unreality of bright day:

Like the poem "Mystics", the daylight is too harsh, too unreal and it is
the dream world that beckons.

Page imagines that power and freedom reside in the dream. The bird,
or dreamer, finds "air a perfect fit",

But this my grief
that with the next tentative lift
of my indescribable wings
the ceiling looms
heavy as a tomb.

To be awake is to be as if dead, for one fears not being able to dream
again:

The vision of the flight it imitates
burns brightly in my head as if a star
rushed down to touch me where I stub against
What must forever be my underground.

The poet in her wisdom, counsels that if these are our fears, we must
overcome them and "Cry Ararat!". One must remove the "filter of subject-
ivity" placed over reality and realize the potential in being aware, of
being awake, to notice "the wild flowers blowing where we pass,/this
flora-fauna flotsam, pick and touch,/require the focus of the total I".

It is as if the dove's olive twig, like the 'golden bough' of

mythology has the power to lead the fearful dreamers from their dream caves up into the beauty of the surface world. "Ararat" becomes a symbol of the power of regeneration and of the unity of all life.

A single leaf can block a mountainside;
all Ararat be conjured by a leaf.

Page appears to be saying that one can see the whole in its parts if one will only look closely. The problem of vision is one of focus - to progress from the opaque distortion of seeing through water, to the translucent image one glimpses through frosted glass, to direct perception through air.

The closing couplet reflects P. K. Page's belief, evident in the totality of her literature, that Ararat, the hope and new beginning for man, can be found in the individual life, as in the single leaf. The essence of its truth must be distilled. The poet often felt confronted with the question, "Which is the mask and which the self?" Her struggle with the distortion of subjective perception is a constant one, an attempt to see beyond and beneath the surface of her subject into the clear objectivity of being. The creation of unique and startling conceits has not deflected her from this main purpose.

In a newspaper review of Page's poetry, Earle Birney wrote that "her poetry has an X-ray trick of penetrating beyond the surfaces of both substance and of manner into the matrix of her theme".¹⁶ Whether it can truthfully be called "a trick" is very doubtful. However, Page in "Questions and Images" reveals her aim when she writes:

"See how he who thinks himself one is not one, but seems to have
as many personalities as he has moods".

Understand that thou thyself art even another little world,
and hast within thee sun and and the moon, and also the stars
... ."

I began to suspect, in what would once have been near-heresy, that drawing and writing were not only ends in themselves, as I had previously thought, but possibly the means to an end which I could barely imagine-- a method, perhaps, of tracing the 'small design'.¹⁷

The conflict of opposites for P. K. Page has ranged from isolation opposed to solitude, to restraint imposed on freedom, to the imagistic clash of stone with flower, of inertia with vitality, to ritual surmounting time, to rebirth conquering death and to subjectivity being displaced by objective perception.

"For the time being my primary concern is to remove the filters"¹⁸

The conflicts of opposites are all one and the same - a clash between the individual's desire for truth, for beauty, for freedom and for love, and those forces within and without that would prevent him attaining his goal. A struggle for personal freedom - part of P. K. Page's own poetic development. Her goal is to see things for what they are. To uncover clear pictures undistorted by filters of romance, filters of innocence or guilt, filters of social rightness - to go "through to the area behind the eyes/where silent unrefractive whiteness lies".

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 5

¹Anne Francis, /pseud./, "P.K." in Canadian Art, XX, (Jan.-Feb., 1963), 42.

²Anonymous review of The Metal and The Flower, Hamilton Spectator, Dec. 11, 1954.

³Robert Weaver, quoted in Anne Francis' article, p.42.

⁴Francis, op. cit., p.42

⁵P. K. Irwin, quoted in Tamarack Review, (Spring, 1960), p.49.

⁶Francis, op. cit., p.44.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p.45.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Bodkin, op. cit., p.285.

¹¹Page, "Questions and Images", p.19

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., pp.19-20.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Bodkin, op. cit., p.286.

¹⁶Earle Birney in a review of As Ten As Twenty in Globe and Mail, Nov. 8, 1950.

¹⁷Page, op. cit., p.20

¹⁸Ibid.

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