

琉球大学学術リポジトリ

Robert Goddardにおけるイギリス的響き

メタデータ	言語: 出版者: 琉球大学教育学部 公開日: 2007-07-18 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: Taira, Katsuaki, 平良, 勝明 メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12000/1045

Britishism in Robert Goddard

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Robert Goddard is a popular mystery writer active in Britain. His works manifest what I deem a distinct British flavor that I decided it worth to investigate and analyze the ingredients that make his writing so distinct. Although some critics seized his stories and castigated them as too facile and low brow and thus not worth being taken seriously. But what keeps the wheels of literature running is the popular support and acceptance an author receives in his lifetime. In that light his distinct style comes to assume a significance that cannot be that readily dismissed as some critics are prone to. anyone who read his works without any prejudgment will admit the inherent charm that draws him into the peculiar world that evolves right before his eyes. Although the reader does not become conscious of the elements that draw him so inexorably as he brow through the smooth, silky surface the author covers his writing with, once he stops and contemplates on the inner workings of the author Goddard he is sure to obtain that momentary enlightenment which mysteriously leads him on to the soul that lies hidden in the inner sanctum of the fictional space the author seemingly so effortlessly constructs. It is my objective in this essay to seek and adumbrate this core of Goddard unique output and lay it bare before the audience who had the privilege of experiencing the special world the author seamlessly develops within the hand of the reading audience. I might have already taxed the reader's, that is the reader of this essay, patience. Then without any more delay I will undertake the task I have promised I will.

Since seeing the authorial strategy at work is to read and ponder the inner working of any particular passage written by the author, I will quote a random one that nevertheless manifests the elements I referred to. That is, the elements that make Goddard works uniquely his. Then please look at the following excerpt.

Childhood memories fit their own, intricate pattern. They cannot be made to conform to the version of our past we try to impose upon them. Thus I could say that Lord and Lady Powerstock and the home they gave me at Meongate more than compensated for being an orphan, that a silver spoon easily took the place of my mother's smile. I could say it—but every recollection of my early years would deny it.

Meongate must once have been the crowded, bustling house of cheerful family, as the Hallowses must once have been that family. Every favour of nature in its setting where the Hampshire downs met the pastures of the Meon valley, every effort of man in its spacious rooms and landscaped park, had been bestowed on the home of one small child.

Yet it was not enough. When I was growing up at Meongate in the early 1920s, most of its grandeur had long since departed. Many of the rooms were shut up and disused, much of the park turned over to farmland. And all the laughing, happy people I imagined filling its empty rooms and treading its neglected lawns had vanished into a past beyond my reach. (*In Pale Battalions*, p. 21)

I agree that it is a rather lengthy excerpt. But in order to grasp the pattern that runs through the entire passage I needed to quote the series of paragraphs that start off the mysterious story Goddard develops. How many readers I wonder will fail to note the inherent tone that is reminiscent of the dark, gloomy one that pervades *Jane Eyre* or *Wuthering Heights* by the Bronte sisters? The mystery, or at least the hint of it, thrown in the initial sentence inevitably draws the reader into the dank, chromatic world that evolves. What the reader finds inexplicably baffling and at the same time fascinating is the enigma the author constantly pushes before the reader's consciousness. The neat pattern Goddard conceptually forms by the aphoristically well-balanced series of sentences lets the reader focus on the hidden dimension the story promises. Despite the potential resistance the reader puts up to the idea introduced so nonchalantly by the author, the consciousness engaged in the act of reading soon relaxes its defense and accepts the implicit argument the author makes. Goddard, or rather the narrator maintains that "Childhood memories fit their own, intricate pattern." What does the author mean? may be the fleeting skepticism with which the average reader greets the premise the author makes. But it soon gives way to the seemingly profound truism the author presumptively drops hurriedly as he goes onto the follow-up to the general assumption on which the major pillar of the fictional edifice as if depends. The pervasive mist descends on the readerly consciousness as well when the reader begins to struggle with the enigma. Then the truism introduced so confidently by the narrator seems to be flatly denied by the same narrator as he seizes upon the positive effect of his personal displacement. It is a strange juxtaposition. the reader puzzles over the apparent contradiction. Everything looks wrapped in so much dark mystery. Is the apparent contradiction another piece of a series of enigma then? Then the odd verbal tense jumps to the reader's view. What does the past tense indicate? Is it some cue for the reader to take and ponder and act

upon? It turns out, as the reader hurries on in the passage (which does not take more than a fraction of second), the same structure is repeated until the end of the paragraph. Suddenly the last appendix, as if added as an afterthought, abruptly meets the reader's eyes and the interpretation the reader was willing to commit himself to is turned over and another possibility enters his readerly consciousness. The tense did signify something after all. It was something like subjunctive and the cue for the reader to reach the end of the paragraph and turn back for re-cognizing the implications in a different light. The authorial strategy works well here. After all the flip-flop of the reader's interpretation occurs only after the readerly consciousness grasp the initial part, which means most of the passage, and only when the last few words make their present assert then the reader takes in the layered nuances the author embeds in the passage. What is amazing is that the rate at which the inner momentum carries the reader onward. The punctuated significatory nodes do not stop the readerly consciousness to register the chasm that inevitably is on the inscribed surface. But on the readerly level as he traces the flow of the story, the hiatus is effectively smoothed over by the tone that hearkens back to such classical authors' like Jane Austen and as I mentioned the Bronte's. The introspective confessional tone combined with the proper name attached to a particular locality, possibly an estate comparable to the ones often mentioned in the above author's works, exudes the ambiance that is uniquely British in its sober portentousness. Besides the place name, the titular prefix and the introduction of orphan increase the somber overtone in their association with the Victorian novels. Needless to say, the echo felt throughout the passage is intentionally incorporated by the author. Goddard is in fact aiming to broaden the scope of the story, which is usually categorized as a who-dunnit, by splicing the historical layers of the established novels into his own.

But back to the reversal of semantic accumulation that catches the readers' attention in the initial part of the paragraph. As the reversal happens the reader is naturally forced to hurry onto the next segment to see how the flow of the story directed. Is it going to be as unexpectedly as the paragraph he has just covered? The next one will be as predictable as he has accustomed himself to comprehending in his history of experiencing fiction? No one knows until he plunges into the evolving story Goddard develops. Then duly the reader moves on and takes in what strikes his readerly consciousness. The ensuing part then turns out to be neither expected nor unexpected. The paragraph follows upon the previous one on the semantic level but the reader immediately perceives that the author now tries to inundate the readerly consciousness with the ingredient that can be for convenience be termed literary ethos.

Notice the manner in which the each sentence builds up momentum. For example, the look at the second one in the present paragraph. The parallelly structured clauses preceding the verb carries the readerly consciousness with them and before the reader becomes aware of what is happening he is effectively embedded in the world which is predominantly murky and at the same time profound as in the worlds that develop in typical Victorian novels. The process exhibited here then is a continuation of what is adumbrated by the preceding paragraph. In that sense it is expected. But note how the stylistic throwback to the Victorian novels thrusts its idiosyncratic pattern upon the reader's eyes by the repeated use of the deliberately similar overlapping structure. Even a hint of the author's meticulous attempt to create the simulacrum of the Victorianism and its somber gravity suggests, at least to the astute readers of British novels, the possibility that the author is after some effect that supercedes the mere realization of the echo of the Brontean world. But this rather expected line of development threatens to deconstruct itself by the rather facile repetition of the proper names, which I mentioned echo of the residential names that appear in many of Victorian novels. Why, the reader ponders, does the author brings the names across to the readerly consciousness so obtrusively? What is the purpose of the overlapping sentence structure? These questions pop up as the reader browses over the inscribed surface of the novel he is holding in his hands. But despite the suspicion the reader entertains concerning the maneuver the author is engaged in, he maintains an objective stance. Rather, he is asked to by the author, in order to appreciate the story that has just begun. As seamlessly as the suspicious seeds have been planted by the author's hands in the readerly consciousness, the traditional strain is imperceptibly picked up and continued in the final paragraph in the quoted passage. The somber mood is the one that suits the author to develop the story filled with mystery. Nothing evokes the Victorian somberness than the lost glory that is almost beyond reach. And here, the ulterior motive of the author the reader has suspected existed throughout the story seems to suddenly jump out of the passage and stare him in the eyes. It is the past and the irretrievability of it that has somehow intricately spliced into the tale Goddard is about to tell. The gloom that hangs over the story may just be a cover that hides the core of the mystery from the eyes of the audience. But that possibility is only hinted at and not ascertained. After all the tale has just begun. The paragraph in question ends with the lugubrious tone which the reader is left to ponder upon to pick up the threads that have come unraveled in such a short lapse of time.

Yet amid the uncertainties that grow out of the dark gloom arises the

certainty the narrator is ready to impart to the reader. Besides the irretrievability of time he feels that the whole atmosphere surrounding the memories of Meongate is ineluctably tied to death.

I grew up with the knowledge that my parents were both dead, my father killed on the Somme, my mother carried off by pneumonia a few days after my birth. It was not kept from me. Indeed, I was constantly reminded of it, constantly confronted with the implication that I must in some way bear the blame of the shadow of grief, or of something worse, that hung over their memory. That shadow, cast by the unknown, lay at the heart of the cold, dark certainty that also grew within me: I was not wanted at Meongate, not welcomed there, not loved. (*In Pale Battalion*, p. 21-22)

But with the dark certainty comes back the ubiquitous Victorian gloom. It turns out that the narrator's unhappy childhood is attributable to his orphaned status. With both his mother and father dead, he had no choice but expose himself to the familiar tyranny of the next of kin and his spouse. Goddard will not give the reader a breathing space from the gloom with which he tints the story from the beginning. As the mystery tries to unfold, it shimmers only through the cover. The reader is never allowed the translucent insight into the fictional space that is bounded by differentiated space and time. But before becoming too abstruse I think it is meet to look more closely into the linguistic workings of the story. Note how the words are employed to evoke the historical layers. The narrator refers to the death of his mother by pneumonia as being "carried off by pneumonia." The image that manifestly identifies the state of someone being felled by an incurable disease with the Grim Reaper putting a stop to that person's life reminds the reader of the level of language the author employs. It is definitely not of the contemporary. As the word Somme evokes the carnage the readerly consciousness is dragged back in time as the archaic use of the word I just referred to simultaneously broaden the scope of the fictional world the reader is being involved in. With one misstep such a strategy would falter and cause a hilarious laugh among the reading audience. But Goddard controls the language in such a way that the consistent gloom seamlessly entraps the readerly consciousness and the readerly consciousness remains on the same level as it has been on. The expression in short is definitely poetic. The sentence does something other than it reveals superficially. Since the poetic expression evokes an active agent by its transmogrifying effect on the person implicated in the deathly transition, the subject-object dichotomy calls to the reader's mind the possible transgression the mystery might entail once the murky air clears to the extent at which the reader can take a peek into its core. But considering the thickness of the fog that surrounds the

premiered mystery with, the next line is too bathetic. Notice the direct tone the short (uncharacteristically so in the context) revelatory sentence exhibits. Although I characterized the line as bathetic, it is filled with signficatory depth as the emotional candor unexpectedly surfaces in the hiatus in the passage filled with disguisingly long sentences. The cumulative historical overtone then clashes directly with the short line and the result is that the two levels of descriptive maneuver directs the reader's attention to the very faultline the rhythm of the passage tries to smooth over. Then it is the supersession of the linguistic mechanism over the semantic efflorescence that is derived from the juxtaposition of embedded elements that are part of the cultural experience. Because of the baring of emotions enabled by the deft authorial strategy the narrator's sentiment appears to come directly from the face of the inscribed page. But the historical profundity intercedes as quickly as it receded. The reader is again mired in the dank gloom, the kind Jane experienced in that dreadful red room. The self-reflexive style dominates the linguistic scene again and convoluted semantic contents chokes the candidness out of the narrator, who was just about to confess to his true and simple innerscape. That was not meant to be. At least not for the moment. A good mystery writer like Goddard cannot afford to give away the secrets hidden behind the mist so easily. The reader has to be patient and appreciate the complications that hopefully lead to the core of the mystery. The narrator/author resorts to indirection as a means to deepening the mystery. The narrator casts doubt on his judgment and increases the uncertainty he hinted to the reader. The reader does not comprehend the reason why the narrator is so undecided on his knowledge over his own life. Helplessly, and without much choice on his part, the reader proceeds and gropes in the gloom to find out the definite truth concerning the mystery that is already trying to get even murkier. Before the narrator plunges the reader helplessly into the depth of murky, inchoate mire of confusion, there arises some certainty again from the self doubt of the narrator. The mental trajectory that appears from the short passage then is not a clueless, directionless one. It is an arc that brings the reader somewhere, in this case more like to the point he reached before where the readerly consciousness registered a streak of light shining in the murk of mystery. But how depressing is the mystery. The slow, ponderous style only leads to the revelation that the narrator possesses the certainty that he is partially to blame for what caused the gloom to fall over the estate of Meongate. Then as soon as the manifested certainty arises, the unknowability reasserts itself hurriedly to blot out the modicum of certainty the narrator felt he could safely partake of with the reader. The shadow which pervades the initial passages will not let up. But the shadow cannot

pervade the fictional space and black out every detail that is thrown in the space either to lead or mislead the readerly consciousness. Helplessly the reader gathers only what is offered to him through the dim film that seems to cover the story. Then the passage ends, leaving a hint which is as depressing as the rejection the narrator admits to having faced at the hands of his grandfather. The thinly wrapped bitter sentiment comes out from the inscribed surface of the story through the candid style the author adopts in this particular segment of the passage.

The last impression the author/narrator manages to convey to the reader effects a good transition to a more gloom-sodden passage. The thick fog that wraps up the whole atmosphere may exhibit some breaks but it is after all ubiquitous. The overall tone that dominates the story, at least in this initial part, is the kind that establishes the story's ties with the classical novels that have established their status as typically British. The dank, rumbling, and confessional tone that contributes to the gloom most readers must have experienced in the worlds developed by Bronte's and Eliot repeats itself in Goddard's novels. I will quote the following excerpt which is a sequel to the previous passage, as it appears in *Pale Battalions*.

It might have been different had my grandfather not been the grave, withdrawn, perpetually melancholic man that he was. I, who never knew him when he was young, cannot imagine him as anything other than the wheelchair-bound occupant of his ground-floor rooms, deprived by his own morbidity, as much as by the lingering effects of a stroke, of all warmth and fondness. When Nanny Hiles took me, as she regularly did, to kiss him goodnight, all I wanted to do was escape from the cold, fleeting touch of his flesh. When, playing on the lawn, I would look up and see him watching me from his window, all I wanted to do was run away from the mournful, questing sadness in his eyes. Later, I came to sense that he was waiting, waiting for me to be old enough to understand him, waiting in the hope that he would live to see that day. (p. 22)

As my preamble predicted, the initiated tone is again introspective, marked by the gloom which looms over the psychological landscape of the narrator's childhood. The elements incorporated in the passage once again directs the reader's attention to the fact that how the author is consciously building the story upon the models of the established writers I mentioned. The narrator immediately brings out the grandfather, who was by no means understanding of him in any manifested way. All the memories associated with the older figure are somehow linked to this one feeling of repulsion. The narrator confesses that he did not know why the touch associated with the older kin was so repugnant and grotesque. But through the murk of the

intervening years, those feelings immediately rush through his mind as soon as the narrator brings his mental eyes on those years that transpired at Meongate. What qualities more represent the gloom that hangs over the entire scene than gravity and melancholy, particular of a person who to a child's eyes seem infinitely grotesque for all the years their bodies reflect? The author deepens this sense of grotesqueness by fitting the old man in a wheelchair. Then, by combining the inexperienced perspective of a child and dehumanized condition of the older man the author effects a depressingly dark gloom that is enough to drag even the ontologically advantaged readers into the fictional space. The imagery becomes even more ghoulish as the author adds the element of morbidity. The story definitely turns Gothic at this point. Then in this context the touch by the older man is none other than the touch of a monster, perhaps tantamount to that of Frankenstein. To complete the picture of a Victorian melancholic tableau, a nanny is introduced. Although the mention of a nanny is momentary, it is enough to evoke the whole historical layeredness as the word falls in the line that is crammed with a ghoulish old man and suggestions of morbidity and even a dank cellar. The resonance of the horror movies is clearly felt as the hero notes he is being watched from the chink between the curtains. If I still continue the movie metaphor, the angle of the camera swings indoors and shows the narrator playing in the murky outside, casting a furtive look back at the eyes peering through the window. It is a perfect setup for some tremendously horrific event to occur. But the author for the moment does not allow the reader that supreme delight of being plunged into the ghoulish scene by asserting that the old man, it according to the narrator occurs to him later in life, was simply waiting. Waiting for him to reach the age when the narrator could understand what the older man had really in mind. That is clearly a fall in tension but as a strategy of an author keeping the reader tantalized for the ultimate moment the operation adopted by Goddard here works rather well. After all the story has just begun. Revealing too much at the moment is to spoil the exquisite fruit that needs to be kept in the dark room for its true appreciation. But the narrator does not leave the reader at ease as he finishes off the paragraph with a tension-easing confession. A dark note persists and it will never be clarified until he very end. That is the charm and the skill of Goddard which attracts the readers around the world. That dark pulsating mystery never ceases to cast a sheath of brooding tension over the readerly consciousness before the plot becomes even more complicated until the point of saturation. The slow, deliberate tempo Goddard executes the story in is indeed a feature of what I call his Britishism.

Instead of clinging to one tale out of so many Goddard has published so far, I

think it is time to look at another, which one reader commented as filled with a prose that "generates an unusual depth of excitement and sympathy" (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0...qid=904713450>). The story is about a man who suddenly discovers a lost son he suspected never existed. The complications that arise from the sudden discovery draws the protagonist, along with the reader, deeper and deeper into the mystery. Without much more ado, let me introduce you to the passage that appears in the initial part of the story.

Thirty-four years, three months and several days later, Harry Barnett's thoughts found nothing to tempt him as he trudged south along Scrubs Lane into a stiff autumnal breeze soured by traffic fumes and an ammoniated cocktail of industrial pollution. A top up was definitely not in order. Glancing from the crest of the railway bridge out across the pale expanse of Kensal Green Cemetery, its sepulchered ranks an even colder shade of grey than the grimly London sky, Harry would have agreed that just about the last thing his life needed at the moment was an extra dose of any one of its dismal ingredients. (*Out of the Sun*, p. 8)

At a glance, you notice the poetic quality that is woven into the story. It is a quality that is also inherent in the previous story. but in this case, the literary quality itself becomes an ingredient to smooth the way over for the reader going over the story for the first time. As the reader as I referred to above mentioned, the smoothness of the style Goddard adopts imparts the impression as if the reader is browsing through a silky atmosphere. The gushing of the poeticism out of the depth of the passage is enough to remind the reader that he indeed is facilitated by the velvety voice that runs through the exquisite tale the narrator gushes out. Indeed the passage indicates that the voice that emerges the story seems to reach out to the reader so spontaneously that there is no resisting the impetus that tries to carry the readerly consciousness with the flow of the story. the excerpt starts with the passage of time. Time then becomes another integral part of the tale that is again nostalgically misty and oftentimes lugubrious. The definiteness of the time signature in this case brings the reader's attention to the fact that as with other Goddard's tales the past and all the temporal dimensions that are implicated in it has something to do with the development of the plot. But the obstinacy with which the narrator defines the timeframe foretells the magnitude of the signification the temporal dimensions hold in this particular tale. At least that is the train of imagination the reader is implicitly encouraged to take by the author. Then the reader duly latches onto the cue. After all there is nothing is gained by resisting the authorial intention when certain tack is so manifestly indicated. The reader awaits a sudden dramatic development of a deadly complication. But that

is not meant to be. First he has to undertake a journey of a sort. But what a pleasurable one. That is, as long as the reader is willing to let himself go and take in the sheer verbal beauty that permeates the story. Note the smooth juxtaposition of subtly nuanced adjectives. They appear as if they had fallen into the slots they occupy by the inherent significations they are imperceptibly made to incorporate. The overall effect of the combination of those adjectives is a sheer pleasure delivered to the readerly consciousness. It is indeed difficult to release the delectable pleasure that lingers in the readerly consciousness as it skims over the series of words beginning with "a stiff autumnal breeze," followed by "soured by traffic fumes" and "an ammoniated cocktail of industrial pollution." The images each of these evokes is inflected by all the accumulated layers of experience the reader carries with him as he runs his eyes over the passage. But the common response the author understandably expects from the readers is duly corroborated as the readerly consciousness decodes and reproduces the signifiatory complex the words I mentioned contain. On close analysis the disparate strains the words contain in them seem to generate the effect the reader finds both surprising and pleasing. For one, the stiffness of the autumnal wind presents the reader with the stark cold he immediately remembers as having actually experienced. But at the same time, as his eyes run over the following words, the heterogeneous significations released by such words as "soured by traffic fumes" and "an ammoniated cocktail of industrial pollution" explode in his face. At that moment, the mixture of sensorily nuanced elements stimulate the readerly consciousness and let him absorb the gamut of responses which the author intended the reader to undergo. The author deserves an accolade for the mechanism he embeds in this particular juncture. Who can miss the attraction and repulsion each word manifests toward each other? And when the readerly consciousness is interposed in the middle of that reaction the resulting effect is none other than the ultimate pleasure any reading audience seeks in taking up a novel of any reputation. The smooth velvety sensory pleasure is, however, brutally interrupted by the reality that breaks out of the drab scene that develops before the narrator's eyes. But in this instance, the reality which interposes is both continuous and discontinuous with the signifiatory undertow perceived in the previous lines. In the previous sentences, reality obtruded out of the cacophonous combination of the series of words juxtaposed one after another but which withdrew beneath the smooth, velvety tone that eventually pulled the disparate elements together and constituted the seamless whole. But in the present case, the jagged reality presents itself before the readerly consciousness so strongly that it is difficult for the integrating tone to completely cover up the hiatuses

hat inevitably appear. At this moment the reader necessarily seizes upon the most conspicuous cues that surface on the inscribed surface of the novel. Before the reader leaves the paragraph behind then the predominant image that pursues his consciousness to the next one then establishes itself as a gray, sepulchral gloom that is portrayed as hanging over the scene before the narrator.

Let me excerpt another passage that exemplifies the fluent style Goddard is known for. The following is from another of his successful book, entitled *Closed Circle*. Chance had been our ally too often. We had grown complacent, over-confident of its loyalty. And so the moment when it first chose to betray us was also the moment when we were least likely to suspect that it might.

Max and I were leaning against the railings on the empty starboard promenade of the lounge deck, smoking cigarettes and gazing ahead at the widening river as the liner eased away from the shore. On the port side a crush of passengers were still waving goodbye to the friends and family they were leaving behind in Quebec, but of wistful farewells we had no need. In Max's hand, folded open at an inside page, rested two-day-old copy of the *Wall Street Journal*, and in the emboldened headline of one of the columns blared silently the reason why we had eyes only for the seaway. **BABCOCK FRAUD CASE TO GO TO TRIAL IN FALL.** I watched Max scan the words once more and clench his jaw muscles in frustration or shame or relief or whatever he truly felt. Then he took a long pull on his cigarette and said, 'well, that tears it, doesn't it?' (p. 7)

I understand that it is a rather long excerpt. But in order to see the poet strands the author weaves into the story, it is a fitting example. The scene is onboard a ship that is leaving for the other side of the Atlantic. The two men, who for the fraud they committed have no choice but abscond from the shores they have familiarized themselves for the past years. But as they contemplate they yearn for the successes they had in the past and the repeat of them. As the ship smoothly moves away from the wharf in Quebec many layers of signification are revealed, allowing the insight into the portion of their life almost immediately to the reader as he encounters the men for the first time. It is like the familiarity between the two parties is so complete that the reader, as he eavesdrops on them, feels he has known the life stories of the two for a long time. But that is not to say the secret the two men contain within themselves are transparently revealed. The mystery rather remains intact. What unfolds from the encounter from the two parties takes place on a level that the reader is given only so much liberty to see through the characters to an extent that he is prepared to set sail on a joinery of weathering a complicating mystery the two characters becomes involved

in. But so much for the generalization about what transpires beneath the surface that is apparent to the reader's eyes as he skims through the book just opened. Let us go back to look at the verbal quality that makes the writing uniquely Goddard's.

Note the poetically smooth thrust with which the author carries the story along. Just as the ship smoothly sails away from the shore, "eased away from the shore" in the author's exact wording, the momentum moves the reader along with its continuous propulsive motion. The nonchalant attitude the two assume is conveyed by the continuous verbal flow effected by the clause added to the main one with a bare separation of a comma. The direction is established as the reader runs his eyes over the line while the perpetual rhythmic motion lulls his readerly consciousness along with the contrite, yet much relaxed characters. They are away from danger and into the bosom of safety on the other side of the Atlantic. The sea breeze gently caresses the characters' bodies as the lulling motion sways both the two and the reader as he takes in the verbal contents culled from the inscribed body of writing. Actually it is not merely the kinetic impression that is conveyed through the juxtaposition of words the author displays. As the river widens the perspective changes. The ship is certainly in motion. But when the perspective changes the readerly consciousness visualizes the picture in such vivid detail that the story suddenly manifests a dimension that the reader did not suspect existed before he began tackling the mystery. The dimension that is often evoked in Conrad's stories. The dimension that arises because of the river's association with the primal images. As Conrad was fond of saying, the rivers were the channels through which civilizations traveled up and downstream and changes were brought about to a region. The same applies to the inner and outer landscapes. The reference to a huge river, through which the two characters are moving away from one region into the sphere of another, materializes in the reader's mind the primal resonance the river produces and introduces the civilizational nuances into the story. That in fact becomes a fitting image later on, as the plot turns out to involve a global intrigue, which nearly succeeded in blotting out the civilization as we know it. Then in the murky farewell scene briefly etched into the readerly consciousness the author manages to adumbrate the crucial significations that later become clarified before the reader's eyes. In the meantime, the ship advances ever toward the land where the deadly secret manifests in its complicated entirety. No one can predict exactly what will happen both to the characters and to the story as a whole as the mystery unfolds. But suddenly a clue is dropped before the reader's eyes. The page that jumps out of the fictional space seizes the reader's attention and forces him to grapple with the information the newspaper contains.

The reader then is encouraged to follow the example of the two characters in their quest for the truth. But the difference is that the reader is merely contemplating from an ontological vantage point while the two characters are directly involved in the scandal which the newspaper so glaringly announces. The author takes advantage of the ontological discrepancy between the two parties and so nonchalantly drags the reader into the affair that has just begun to be implicated in the murky story now underway. The readerly consciousness in that sense is similarly on its way to a new sphere to seek the answers that shed light on the mystery that is introduced by the author, just as the two characters onboard are on their way to the old world where they are sure to start a new life. But what they think will happen is not the way the story takes the reader to ultimately. The mystery becomes ever convoluted and the widening circles of intrigue only mystifies the reader as the story progresses. The river in backward glance then becomes a vastly deep crevice which there is no way to climb out of without significant cost on the part of the escapee, let him be a character involved in the story or the reader who has consented to devote his time to the story as long as the fiction lasts. Either case, the every cue that emerges from the story assumes a bit of a lead which the reader takes up and follows until it lands him on a ground from which he can safely judge the directional tactics he should adopt. The first clue the reader is encouraged to take up immediately follows upon the general ambiance created by the widening river. As soon as Max, one of the characters, absorbs the news headlined as "BABCOCK FRAUD CASE TO GO TO TRIAL IN FALL" he exhibits a violent reaction. How is the reader to respond to that? The answer to that is not far to seek. The narrator observes Max's reaction in its naked detail. He reports that Max stiffens his jaws for a number of possible reasons. The narrator suggests either in "frustration or shame or relief" with a lingering hint at the truthfulness the report contains. The passage ends with a definite echo of Britishism as the upset man utters, "well, that tears it, doesn't it?" With the utterance of the words, the initial introductory arc is completed. The mystery is adumbrated and complicated at the same time. The reader has to wait until the author makes another move to tell in which direction the readerly consciousness should advance to catch the drift of the story better.

One of the many virtues of the author is smoothly run the story without unduly burdening the readers with information the story contains. As the ship moves eastward, the two characters start exhibiting what they are good at. They are expeditiously engaged in their occupation and accordingly engaging the reader's attention. The story develops dramatically as soon as the readerly consciousness is

barely soaked in the sea air.

Of Miss Cahnwood, aunt or niece, I saw no sign. They either dined later than us or in their suite. Perhaps the diamond-hearted Diana had decided to make her social debut when she could be assured of being the centre of attention. Or perhaps she did not care for the seating lottery of the restaurant, a prejudice I was inclined to share even though I could not afford to indulge it.

Yet my hopes of seeing her before the party and so taking the measure of our task were not to be dashed. All next day, the *Empress of Britain* cruised serenely out across the Gulf of St Lawrence, white-hulled and resplendent beneath a cloudless sky. And out into the air came its passengers, to sit beneath plaid rugs and play at quoits, to walk off breakfast and squint at the horizon, or, in some cases, to observe without being observed.

For this purpose, Max and I spent much of the day wandering the ship, steamer-capped and muffled, apparently idle but actually intent upon our particular occupation. It was while nearing the stern end of the sports deck promenade shortly before noon that I noticed below us on the lounge deck, waddling out to sniff the ozone, none other than Miss Vita Charnwood, unmistakable in brogues and tweed. But, on this occasion, she was not alone. Beside her, walking with considerably more grace was a slim young woman in fur-trimmed coat and cloche hat. (*Closed Circle*, pp. 18-19)

The two men turn out to be engaged in a work to way lay a woman. They after all could not wait until the ship reached the other shore of the Atlantic. So much better for the reader. He does not have to suffer the humdrum events that might have intervened during the passage. but as the story takes a peculiar turn, the characters amply establish themselves as not complete sincere characters. They are ethically compromised at the least. That possibility in fact becomes corroborated by the initial leak the flapping newspaper article stared at the reader's eyes. The target this time, as it turns out, involves a woman. She is needless to say uncommonly rich. That is not all. To make the matter more pleasing to the reader, she is surrounded by a mist which no one has ever completely penetrated. The two are on their daily round to set up an "accidental" encounter with the person at the core of the minor mystery unfolding onboard the *Empress of Britain*. With an enough preamble, the narrator immediately takes the reader into the exterior characteristics of the woman at issue. Or, more accurately, even the woman who accompanies the woman, who is the core of the mystery. So, the mystery is surrounded by layers of elements that the reader is challenged to configure to his satisfaction. The mystery after all is not to be solved so

readily. The author acts, that is, in a manner to complicate the story and befuddle the reader first to make the final revelation all the more surprising and delectable for the reader to digest. Then how does the woman in the foreground behave onboard the *Empress of Britain*? That at least for the moment is the focus of the narrator's attention.

Amid the multiple of external impressions the narrator portrays as surrounding the woman, one quality seems to come out most prominently. She has an ego that is hard to find even onboard a ship where anyone less known would completely merge with the rest of the passengers. Not the woman being tracked by the scheming eyes of the two main characters. They meticulously take mental note of every single move of the woman as she moved leisurely back and forth onboard the ship. She is not particularly noteworthy for that matter. But to the trained eyes of the two, she has already become an object worth pursuing for the ultimate prize she promises. About the ego that ineluctably emerges from the person of the woman the two characters have their eyes fixed on, she appears to have arranged her seating position in a way she and her companion make the most conspicuous impression on the people how have floated through the exclusive society of which the women are part. Diana/Vita in any event needs the attention and has to be the center of it. In the process, she comes to occupy the center stage in the reader's consciousness as well. Her image by now is clearly etched on the reader's mind. She has amply adumbrated the what sort of characters the readers are to deal with as the story progresses. But before the characters make the landfall, the reader as well as the people directly involved in the mystery have to take in the significations each character implies. Needless to say that process entails much imagining and presupposing on the part of the reader. But directions are further concretized as the narrator introduces the reader into the broader aspects of the characters who will play eminent roles in the story. However many inconveniences intervene before the characters are brought to the broad daylight. The conspicuously dressed and behaved women are not immune to those inconveniences. The two protagonist/rogues wait patiently. The women, they presume are definitely worth the wait. When the women finally come out of their secluded cabin one more layer that surrounds the core of the mystery is rendered somehow penetrable. The narrator reports that the person they waited for are sure to be found there taking a stroll but more surprisingly the woman they never suspected they would see makes her first appearance. This is the moment both the reader and the characters in the story are well-prepared to encounter. But when the actual moment arrives both are taken aback by the elements she personifies. It is according

to the good literary tradition. Many word-of-mouth expectations of what is to come. The endless wait for the thing to appear on the center stage then the inevitable suspense before finally the much talked about figure appears. All the hoorays and applause follow, although it is true that oftentimes the audience's expectations are not often satisfied. In that case, everyone who has a vested interest in the play hopes that the audience would not spared the bad news about the play to others. But back to the mystery at hand by Robert Goddard. The woman succeeds in materializing the wishful expectations the narrator placed on her. Note the sigh of yearning as the two watch the woman strut onboard. The young woman gives the air of a goddess with all the attention fixed on her and exuding the impression that all of them are of hers by birthright. No wonder that one of the two rogues, Max, is destined to become "too much in love with the lady to let her fearsome father...buy him off," as they have originally agreed (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0...qid=904713450>).

The ensuing development amply demonstrate how Max became hopelessly stricken by the mysterious charm of the woman the two characters set out to entrap. The manner in which the author takes the reader into the state of Max's mind in such a short space of time after the inception of the story is indeed admirable. But how convincing it is at the same time. The reader is completely drawn to the inner psychoscape of the character with the full suspension of disbelief. So much so that the strategy the author takes becomes totally invisible and the reader is left only with the truthfulness of the scene that develops before his eyes. Without further ado, let me quote the passage in question.

So Max headed for the nearest companion-way while I remained where I was. The Charnwoods were halfway round a circuit of the stern rail when he appeared below me. By following the same route in the opposite direction, he was able to engineer a good view of them, especially since they paused at one point to speak to somebody. At length, they passed out of my sight back into the lounges, leaving Max leaning against the rail. Waiting only to be sure I would not encounter them on my way, I went down to join him.

He had lit a cigarette by the time I reached him and seemed to be lost in thought, eyes fixed on the blue ensign fluttering above us in the breeze. 'Well?' I demanded, when it became obvious that he was about to volunteer nothing.

'Sorry,' he murmured, smiling faintly and looking at me like a man awaking from a dream. 'It's her all right. The photographs don't do her justice.'

'Quite a looker, then?'

'You could say so, yes.'

'But what would *you* say? All I could see was the brim of her hat.'

'Yes. I suppose it was.' His gaze drifted past me once more. 'As a matter of fact, old man, I'd say she was probably the most beautiful woman I've ever seen.' (*Closed Circle*, pp. 19-20)

this is admittedly a long quote. But in order to look into the workings of the authorial strategy and the process in which the characters transform themselves. Needless to say, the character in pursuit of the heiress of a millionaire becomes star-struck despite the careful plan he had laid out with his long time friend. That is not to detract from his personality. But rather it only proves that the instantaneous charm he feels immobilizing him is the kind that, as he himself admits in the passage, surpasses anything in the world. Then immediately after the two rogues begin stalking their prey in search of the great fortune they have unsuccessfully sought so far, roles are reversed and the predator becomes a prey and the prey a predator. Soon the woman who was supposed to be the innocence personified turns out to be a mind-numbing controller of at least one character of the story. but for the moment we had better stay with the passage. Let us look closely at the style the author adopts to convey the realistic tableau of the shifting relations among the characters onboard. The author remains characteristically reserved in describing the minds of the persons who populate the story. First using such mechanical word as engineer to convey the sense of their plan in progress, the author allows the other one of the duet, Guy Horton, to approach his partner. It is needless to say a maneuver both for the author and Guy to let Max partake of whatever information he has gathered about the woman at the center of the mystery that is evolving. But what a surprise, at least for Guy, to hear the sighs of a lovesick man. that is fine with the audience. But they need to hear at least what is happening in the fictional space the reader physically holds in his hands. Then inevitably Guy intervenes. That is to say, from the structural point of view, with the author as the inevitable manipulator of the characters onstage. Without the cooperation of the characters onstage through the intervention of the author, the reader might be stranded in the vacuum of meaningless enigma from page one to the end of the story. That is not the kind of operation a writer of Goddard's stature would indulge. He cherishes discreet presentation of the situation as it arises. But discretion and discrete presentation of a situation are two different things. The author as a presenter has to present a story to the reader. Without this intervention the story becomes hopelessly muddled in the process of reporting and receiving. So, Guy in a sense is ineluctably engaged in debriefing from Max.

Thankfully and also expectedly Guy's observation of Max is quite insightful.

Guy perceives Max lighting a cigarette with an ostentatious nonchalance, which the narrator makes sure that the reader reads much into as signifying much more than the mere random gesture indicates. What a plethora of implications are crammed into the simple gesture by Max. he has transformed. Psychologically, that is to say. The act of lighting a cigarette then is meant to hide on Max's part the awkward truth that has cruelly become apparent to himself in the past few minutes while he has followed the woman by himself with his eyes only. How romantic for a man inured to schemes and plots of all kinds suddenly to find himself tenderly awakened! But the mist that wafts from Max's cigarette cannot hide the awkward fact from the insightful eyes of Horton. Neither from the reader's eyes either. The astute rendition of the situational change by the author/narrator unmistakably conveys the psychological shift to the readerly consciousness without much effort made on the latter's part. All the reader has to do is to allow himself to be pulled willingly into the world constantly evolving before his eyes. A familiar giggle might flit across his face but he is too busy for a prolonged indulgence in that sentiment for the moment. He reads on to take in the vast mystery just unfolding. A mystery which takes such a meandering course that he has to keep his eyes wide open. Otherwise, he misses the fine nuances that dictate the every phase of the Goddard's fiction.

As Horton approaches his friend, he notices his partner is unexplainably deep in thought. A habit which is supposedly unusual for Max. why is he so meditative? What is the dreamy vacant look Max exhibits? And many other questions pop up in guy and the reader's minds. But all these suggestions are made in such a discreet manner that the reader has to let himself be carried freely in order to absorb the entirety of the layered meanings, although he does not necessarily have to make a full commitment to the readerly task as he begins reading the story. The two positions of the reader I mentioned may not be easy to be distinguished but the ultimately difference between the two would be the voluntary yielding of the readerly resistance a reader might feel toward any writing he has in his hands as he sits leisurely in a chair in his familiar environment. Without that voluntary yielding of whatever inhibition a reader carry with him in any literary appreciation, the least requirement for absorbing all the fine nuances of a novel cannot be achieved. While this process is definitely not unaccompanied by readers' volitional cooperation, the amount of that cooperation is minimum. After all the reader only needs to let himself plunge into the fictional world developed right before his eyes with the least inhibition of any kind he happens to possess. But that is not to say to forsake and abandon all the social and cultural detritus. On the contrary. The reader is encouraged to bring all those implications

with him as he faces a story of nay kind. After all he cannot exist in the vacuum and make full sense of any writing he take sup. A story's significations have to be generated at a point where the reader's personal experience and the story's relevance to the contemporary society intersect. In other words, literary appreciation is always a two way activity. But what I envisage the kind of activity required to appreciate novels like Goddard's is the one which insinuates into the reader's leisurely pleasure instinct and lets him lay his mind at rest and make him participate in the story with the unconscious connivance of his own volition. He in a way willingly surrenders a part of his readerly consciousness and lets the personalities of the characters invade it and take over, however briefly may it be. As the readerly process I described sets in the contents of the story permeates the reader's consciousness and the story effloresces on another signficatory level. Then let us go back to the scene in which the two friends meets in a rather awkward atmosphere onboard the Empress of Britain. Max turns out to be in such a deep reverie that he has to be reminded of the mission he has just undertaken. That is of course to the benefit of the audience. In the process Horton draws their minutest attention to the inner psychological state his partner is in as the manifested exterior moves inevitably impinges upon the inarticulate part of his being. Despite his unwillingness to come forward, with his eyes vacantly directed at the blue skies the ship is sailing under, the narrator elicits enough information for the reader to decipher what is happening in his mind. Then the interaction between the two old friends produces the inevitable revelation. Max admits in the end that he has been made a prisoner, of love that is. His remark is interesting in the sense that the course of his life that led up to the moment onboard the empress of Britain has been somehow ineluctable. Max and the young woman are meant to be united and the surveillance Max unknowingly had undertaken was after all meant to be. The foreordained encounter has of course produced the inevitable result. Max confesses that Diana's beauty is beyond anything in the world, or in his exact words, "The photographs don't do her justice." A description that rings somehow familiar from other romantic stories. But Max does not mind repeating the potentially trite simile. He is after all in a dream, or just awoken from it. Horton is not about to brutally drag him out of the reverie into the cold reality where they have been living for the past years. He gently eggs him on to the story of a sleeping beauty, whom he suddenly found flitting past him on board the Empress of Britain. But Horton does play the part that is reality impacted. His curt, ambivalent question comes out quite effectively, appearing at the juncture where the dreamy partner is still affected by the odoriferous beauty of the queen of his life. Horton asks, "Quite a looker, then?" Notice

the implicit humor that arises from the Britishism that is exhibited by the phrase. For an objective observer, who has all the advantages of being an ontologically distanced onlooker, the question appears stuffed with the parodic innuendo as he can easily perceive the ridiculous situation Max has put himself in by being infatuated by the woman he has never seen in person before. But that is only in passing, as the reader himself is inevitably dragged into the mystery that is spliced into the inexplicable romance that develops between the characters. As it happens, Max himself has to concede that he supplemented the part he could not see by his imagination. But that does not disprove the fact that the woman he followed was a common beauty. She was special. He is convinced of that. As the conversation progresses the two strains of voice become even more pronounced. One, represented by Max, rises from the depth of the murky reverie and the other, represented by Horton, reflects the reality he thought they had lived though. The one strain that is immersed in the sweet bower of love and the other jagged and sharp-edged with the sordid details of reality. As the one strain diverges wider from the other, as they must, their positions become more irreconcilable. Max drifts apart and when Guy possesses the irrefutable evidence of his partner's infatuation with the woman Max is too deeply involved in the trap set up by the insidious characters who plays major roles in the story. But who is ever to suspect that the women so innocently presented are directly implicated in the vast plot involving the entire world. That is the darkest of the secret the two, and eventually Horton, have to explore and deal with. The passage ends with the lingering look Max gives to no one in particular, and unbeknownst to him, to the audience who is following every move he has been making.

The hint of the mysterious/mythical complications is imaginatively pursued in the next paragraph. Horton the narrator picks up the threads that remained loose and sets out on a joinery of a sort to the darkest of the secret that lay in the heart of the parties to the intrigue. But before going into any detailed discussion I had better quote the passage in question. For your convenience, I try not to be lengthy this time.

The curse of a classical education is that mythological parallels occur unbidden to the mind when dealing with everyday realities. As soon as Max had praised Diana Charnwood's beauty, the fate of Actaeon when he spied on another Diana insinuated itself into my thoughts. Yet the goddess, I reminded myself, had been bathing, the heiress merely promenading. And Max had always understood that the pursuit of wealth is more rewarding than the pursuit of beauty. I felt sure I could rely upon him not to forget this simple truth. (*Closed Circle*, p. 20)

But as the narrator has already demonstrated, he cannot help but be discreet about

explicating the situation. This time he starts off with his peroration on classical education. His own, that is. What is the relevance then? one wonders. The answer duly arrives as the narrator's mind connects the Diana on the empress of Britain and the Diana in the murky mythical world the ancient Greeks are fond of evoking. The two indeed correspond rather well. The one before the participating characters onboard is reputedly an exquisite beauty at least one of them dies to possess, and the other struck a peeper with her ineffable beauty. Then the two women are both capable of shooting the fateful arrows into the heart of the onlookers. But is that the only parallel that can be made between the two? If so, that is rather disappointing, especially with the comparison coming from the mouth of such a perceptive narrator as Horton. But for the moment he leaves the reader only with an inkling of an ominous undertone enough to send a reminder of a shiver through the spine of the reader. Before the narrator leaves off the comparison, however, he becomes a little chatty and lightens the tone that has been threatened to be darkened with the suggestion of the ominous prediction. He takes up the feature that distinguishes the two Diana's, for one thing. The narrator notes that while the one just promenaded onboard the ship the other actually bathed and allowed only a momentary observation by a peeing Tom. But there the similarity again emerges. The observation made by the two males are both momentary. And even on the part of the observers, one could be construed as a pure peeping tom, who could not resist the temptation to watch a goddess in the buff. But Max, the contemporary Actaeon, does, and should know better than pursue the woman for her own beauty. That is extraneous, Horton presumes. What is essential is that which makes the woman who she is. That is her material worth. How much assets she and can bring to the person who manages to captivate her. At least that is the train of thought Horton pursues. But how wrong he proves in a very brief passage of time. Note the irony that immediately arises from the remark the narrator makes in the last line of the quoted passage: "Max had always understood that the pursuit of wealth is more rewarding than the pursuit of beauty." The truth is so simple that no one in the right mind would swerve from it. So did Horton believe. How wrong he proves himself to be. The passage is interesting in that the gullibility of the character is materialized through the pleasure that accrue to the reader, who keeps an ontological distance from the characters who reside in the fictional space. The distance allows the reader to place the characters active in the story in a proper perspective and gives the reader the power to evaluate the situation in a manner not necessarily dictated by the parties directly involved in the evolving mystery. But at the same time, from the author's perspective, that is also a calculated role the reader's

are made to fulfil. So, in the ever expanding horizon of the reader-character relationship, the author always seems to have the final say over the way all the ingredients are digested by the consumers of his product. What is noteworthy in this and other instances of a good writer is that the author so obviously wielding such power does remain hidden from the stage of action as long as the seclusion serves his purpose. The reader then is successfully tricked into believing that he is the ultimate arbitrator of a story he holds in his hand. In the short passage I quoted then the process I described is manifestly apparent as the reader gloats over the gullibility of not only Horton but others inevitably bordered in by the fictional space. The readers laugh and enjoy at the cost of the characters. But they fortuitously forget that all of this is worked out by the crafty hands of the author.

Whatever the discrepancy is between the two version of an infatuated man, the similarity contained in both strikes the reader most. As Horton prepares to go out and face the enchanting woman, he is suddenly faced with the indubitable evidence of how far the passion of his partner has befuddled the judgement he should have properly maintained. Let us look at the ensuing passage to see how the minds of each characters work in the story as it opens up to the reader's consciousness.

There was no denying, however, that his tantalizing glimpse of what lay beneath the cloche hat had made him even more determined to exploit our opportunity. We had agreed to present ourselves at the Charnwood suite a quarter of an hour after the party was due to commence, in order to avert any suspicion of over-eagerness. But when I came to leave my cabin at ten past six, I found a note had been shipped beneath my door. It was from Max. (*Closed Circle*, p. 20)

Enslavement of the heart of his longtime friend is thus complete. The narrator/Horton, obviously did not suspect that such an experienced man like Max could fall for a woman so easily, however heavenly she might be. But that is what transpires. The letter has been slipped beneath the door of Horton's cabin and Horton is unpleasantly surprised with the unexpected turnabout of events concerning his friend. But on a second look, the passage again demonstrates the core of the mystery that has the tendency to suck even a supposedly most resistant element into its heart. What is then the core of darkness constituted of? Why does Max have to be enslaved by the charms of the woman the reader has barely begun forming in his mind? The author takes time and uses much circumspection to develop the story so that the reader is only gradually introduced into the core of the mystery. Actually Diana is only one character that makes up the mystery that so far has only been hinted at. In order to arrive at the inner sanctum then the reader has to follow the trails blazed by

the skilful narration of the author. With that purpose in mind the reader then is encouraged to latch onto the parallel the narrator makes between the two episodes I mentioned above. That is the episode from Greek myth and the one that has just transpired onboard the Empress of Britain. Max has to see what is forbidden, or rather what is not easy to see. To find what lies under the veil is one of the causes of the temptation Max has succumbed to. Just in the Greek myth Actaeon cannot resist the temptation to see the goddess having a leisurely bath in the woods, Max has to peer through the cloche hat that for the moment keeps the heavenly face hidden from his view. But then why does he comment on the beauty of the woman? If he has not seen the face yet, all he described to Horton was merely formed in his imagination. Is that possible? It turns out he has gone through the pictures of the woman when they had planned the plot to bilk millions out of Diana's father. Whatever the case may be, the overagitated imagination and state of Max's mind worry Horton. Every single move his partner makes is something that makes their original plan to go astray. Horton is now sure that his friend is now trying to take advantage of the meeting with the young woman at the party only to his own personal advantage. Their initial plan was to attract the woman so that they would convert the affection that might generate from the love into cash when the father of the woman intervenes and yields to their demand. That prospect is completely shattered. Horton, however, maintains calm and implicitly conveys to the reader his intention to find out the reason why his friend has been so helplessly captured emotionally.

What seems like a betrayal by Max of his old friend generates an unexpected emotion in Horton. They were supposedly partners in a plot to reap a fortune. But as the crevice develops with the appearance of the young woman and the ensuing emotional enslavement of Max, their partnership exhibits a cacophony that shows up in spite of the calm posture Horton assumes. At this stage, the insertion of the woman gives rise to a propulsive force to move story on a different level. So far the two protagonists/rogues have been treated as thick friends who concertedly meditated on making a fortune. But now that the crevice becomes apparent, each become the master of his own destiny. The reader however is implicitly given the direction by the author that the focus has shifted on the narrator/Horton to negotiate the much murky waters of the arduous journey of mystery solving as the fraction of the mystery is about to materialize in the person of Diana. Before the interaction takes place, let me quote another passage that demonstrates the definite breakage in the friendship as they have known it between the two partners.

I could not help smiling at his cunning. The embarrassment of introducing himself

was nothing compared with the disadvantage of arriving in my incontestably handsome shadow. But the night was scarcely born. I had no reason to expect I would continue to be outmanoeuvred. (*Closed Circle*, p. 21)

Horton cannot help showing his vanity as he tries to distinguish himself from his old pal, Max. Note how glaringly he exhibits what he deems is his definite physical beauty. Max, as he maintains, cannot shine even in his shadow. His features are so nondescript that what he fears is even the chance of being compared to Horton. Why otherwise did Max went ahead to the party to introduce himself to Diana while they had promised to go together to pursue the plot they had agreed upon to its successful end? Horton's mind works busily in this line. But as his previous reference to the Greek myth suggests he is aware of the irresistible charm with which the young woman had captivated the heart of Max. It is not really because of jealousy that Max potentially entertained as he acted not quite according to their plan. What is then the reader to read between the lines in this passage? The signficatory implications that are layered into this phase of the story is not that hard to comprehend. It is the refracted psychological move the author intends the reader to appreciate here. That is, as Horton pretends to calmly pondering the reasons for his friend's betrayal, he in fact manifests his own jealousy toward his friend. It does not occur to Horton, in fact, that Max is purely stricken, although rather mysteriously and abruptly for that matter, by the beauty of the young woman. Rather, Horton's mind works through a logical process that is affected by his own distorted view of the situation. This possibility of a calm narrator reporting what he thinks is the correct version of the situation while it may not be, certainly gives the reader a chance to interpret the ever evolving scenes on his own terms. After all what seems the case may not be so. Is this a weakness then of the narrator and the story as a whole? Hardly so. Rather the large gray area that arises from such unreliable reportage by the narrator, who is actually the only purveyor of information, either objective or subjective, is welcome to the readers who enjoy decoding the signficatory contents independently of the manipulative hands of the author or the narrator, for that matter. After all truths are relative. Those who give them "objectivity" are none other than the ultimate controller of their consciousnesses. In the murky, undefined they reside, they have to create meaning out of the void. Actually that is what the narrator demonstrate from now as he tries to trace the leads that inevitably become sucked into the closed circle of the mysterious darkness.

But as the reader inevitably traces the only clues given in the story, he encounters the many phases the narrator vicariously experiences for him. The

following is just the instantiation of the narrator unknowingly revealing his true sentiments while he pretends to hide them within him as he does his body among the crowd on the balcony.

It was there, where sea breezes offered relief from the noise and heat within, that Diana had taken up her station, surrounded by admirers both young and old. There they were, Max among them, shoulders squared to exclude newcomers, tense with the effort of capping each other's remarks, taut with ill-suppressed rivalry. The scene was not a new one. I had witnessed it before, at parties in New York graced by the presence of a Hollywood starlet. And I knew better than to join the ruck. To be late on such occasions is to be lost. Better to hover hopefully, perhaps even mysteriously. Which is what I endeavoured to do, retreating to the other end of the balcony, where I could sip my champagne and examine the object of so much attention. (p. 21-22)

It is hard to miss the zeal with which the narrator pursue his partner as he tries to find out the truth about the latest development concerning Max and the object of his admiration. The quiet manner in which Horton narrates the scene deceptively conveys the impression that he is merely on a mission that is absolutely official and perfunctory and in which he has no personal interest. Nothing is further from the truth. As the reader is enmeshed in the interpretive process that involves the three parties concerned, it is hard to ignore the function of the objective ratiocination the ontological objectivity endows the reader with. The fun of figuring out the reason why the narrator makes so much of the tardy arrival to the scene is then augmented as the three party relationship is once taken for granted. The narrator is never to be completely trusted. The reader has to but in and assume an active role as he engages in an act that used to be called reader response, or a process that was implicated in it. But we do not have to bring in an abstruse theory to ascertain the pull of forces that is calculated into the reading process of the story that is being developed right before the reader's eyes. The relationship between the three parties is the kind that spontaneously evolves and the reader needs to be carried along by the flow that arises from the plot as the author works out a complicated story that is yet a narrative crammed with assured pleasures for the readers. then back to the inner psychological state of the narrator as he explicates the vicissitudes of the exploratory journey that will eventually leads to the darkest of secret surrounding the Charnwoods. This particular scene suggests the detour the reader is required to take in order to arrive at a certain level of understanding concerning the characters involved in the story. that understanding is the kind that entails the psychological insight into one of the

protagonist manqué, and by the ramification from Max's involvement with the woman the Charnwoods the dark figures that turn out to have been pulling strings throughout the story. And what makes the story more interesting is that the reader has to be introduced to the character of Horton before he gains insight into his partner. In fact the elucidation of characters are executed by indirection. Nothing comes out point-blank. The reader has to use his imagination to attain the level of comprehension that is adequate to follow the story line. Then once again to the state of Horton's mind as he secretly follows his friend from the corner of his eyes. Conveniently enough, in so doing Horton allows the reader to eavesdrop on Max as he interacts with the mysterious woman, Diana. The reader's understanding at this stage is then equal to that of Horton's. But as the reader can simultaneously track down the way Horton's mind works he may be said to be in a better position to comprehend the overall state of affairs concerning all the characters that appear in the scene. Once again, why does Horton have to feel secretive about observing his partner? That brings the reader into the gray area where the murk of the deadliest mystery begins to engulf all that is engaged in the story. As the journey of the two rogues/protagonist have just started, the element of mystery is thrown before the eyes of the readers. Then, every move Horton makes deserves the minutest attention the reader can pay as he navigates through the murk that inevitably leads to the darkness invisible.

As Horton watches he thinks Max is trying to exclude the unwanted attention of other parties to the woman Horton thinks Max has desperately fallen in love with. What does the gesture signify? What does it tell of Horton's state of mind? There are two points of views immediately thrust into the reader's attention. First, Max is possibly jealous about the woman he has won for the first time in his life. That is he has possibly not poured his emotions into a woman so seriously in his life. Whether Max is indeed so protective of his precious trophy is another matter. That brings the reader to the issue of what Horton thinks of the scene he thinks is dangerously evolving from their partnership. Is he afraid of the consequences of his partner's deep emotional involvement with the woman because such development would jeopardize the initial plan they had agreed on to pursue? Or is he afraid of the possible mutual attachment because Horton feels that his friend has robbed him of the opportunity to win a trophy that is as precious as both of them seem to agree on the value of? In other words, Horton is simply is jealous of the accomplishment of his partner, which he deems he has the more right of? As he hinted in the previous excerpt, he obviously considers himself at least physically pleasing to women than his friend, Max's apparent

deception by renegeing on their previous engagement to go to the party together to meet the Charnwoods is to be construed on the part of Horton as a maneuver to defeat him by ruse? All the emotional nuances comes out from the short scene in which Horton positions himself in the corner of the balcony crowded with the guests. To determine the nature of the ambivalent emotions Horton exhibits, the reader is encouraged to gather the lingering echo that arises from the first sentence in the passage. Horton quickly notices the center of people's attention, regardless of the accuracy of his remark, which may be dubious at best but the reader is again encouraged to read in the very vein Horton seems to most emphatically manifests in the passage. In fact Horton cannot help noticing the crowd, consisting of the young and the old, who inevitably gather around Diana. His eyes grasp the signficatory configuration that appear to have formed immediately at the site. Although it is obvious that the one who imparts that kind of Gestalt meaning to the whole scene is none other than Horton himself, the reader from his ontological vantage point can afford to allow the benefit of the doubt as his readerly consciousness grants his reality control a moment's reprieve. From one perspective then Max introduces and brings the reader to the center of everyone's attention. he becomes in that sense a catalyst to penetrating the first layer of the murk that eventually leads to the core of the mystery. At another level, Max indubitably falls for the legendary woman and initiates the emotional tug of war between the two partners. The second view further opens up the readerly possibilities as Horton brings in nuanced interpretations on his friend's presumed cowardly maneuver. Seeing that Horton's move could possibly entail so many interpretations the reader is well advised to sit aside to observe the characters as they act out the roles each has to fulfil in the course of the complicated story presented before the reader's eyes. As Horton suggests, the reader had better "hover hopefully, perhaps even mysteriously" while the story runs its course.

The condition of being lost in the dark, however, does not last very long. The narrator immediately sets the perspective the reader should assume concerning the relationship between the him and other parties involved in the dram now developing before the reader's eyes. Although what happens after the preceding passage is more than enough prepared by the astute author, let me quote and analyze the details that appear in the passage that ensues.

She was beautiful. There was no pretending otherwise. Her dark brown hair was drawn back in a chignon, leaving her face clear and open. Normally, however pleasing a face may be, there is some flaw, some thinness of lip or fullness of jaw, to preclude the suggestion of perfection. But not in this case. The eyes as they

sparkled in the sunlight, the mouth as it opened in an easy smile, the neck as it stretched in languid gesture: all conspired to stray beyond the limits of visual appeal into the realm of immediate fascination. (*Closed Circle*, p. 22)

At the sight of the ethereal beauty Horton has to confess to his true feeling. Diana of this world is as beautiful as the Diana in the myth. In fact the two become inseparably coalesced and one becomes indistinguishable for the other. That is as expected. Throughout the story, since the young woman was introduced, Horton ceaselessly hints at the possible entwining of the two episodes involving Dianas. The reader is struck by the candid tone arising from such a circumspect narrator as Horton. The perspective the reader is encouraged to take is thus determined for the time being. It is best to follow the course of the psychological move of our narrator without much misgivings as to the sincerity or the accuracy of his judgment. Note how sensuously the tone resonates throughout the passage. Horton is in the grips of the charm without a doubt. His eyes focus on the color of Diana's hair. The fetishistic tendency takes the reader to the texture of her skin, as Horton's attention shifts to the shape and color of her skin as it rounds to the statuesque form of her head. The taut skin suggested by the chignon formed at the top of her head possibly suggests the sensuous beauty of our Diana onboard the *Empress of Britain*. Then Horton comments on the impeccable pulchritude of our heroin as she comes out vividly before the reader's imagination. In the process of refuting any counterarguments as to the nature of her beauty, Horton draws the reader's attention to Diana's shapely lips and for that matter to other parts of her body. Although the author does not go as far as crudely arousing the readers with the suggestion of Diana's voluptuous sensuality it is not impossible to make the imaginative leap to imagine what our Diana might be like in the state of the mythical Diana's as she was observed by Actaeon. So, the parallelism is again confirmed between the two. She is in the words of Christopher Marlowe comparable to the woman "who launched a thousand ships" in the name of her beauty. Horton is completely taken prisoner of love by the enchanting young woman. The hyperbole, rather sounding like a cliché, is effective to evoke the parallel. The rhetorical exuberance also enables the transition from the mundane reality to the murky mythical state, to which Horton constantly alludes indirectly. From the narrator's point of view, crowding the sentences with voluptuous allusions is a means to carry the reader with the passionate momentum and let him forget the ontological interference that tends to disrupt the dreamlike state once released from the charm of the narrative in which he is completely being drowned for the moment at the least. Note how decadently beautiful our heroin is portrayed in the latter part of the passage.

The reader is well advised to latch onto the languid neck, smiling face and enchanting demeanor. The description is definitely pre-Raphaelite. But as the beauty of Diana' is paradoxically the more rarefied in her voluptuous manifestation, the more mundane possibilities intrudes into the reader's consciousness. The reader suddenly finds himself being inundated by cliches that sound like indeed not of this world. Something too far distanced from himself. More like far-fetched. They are mere exaggerations that sunder the seamlessess of poetic reverie and shatter the dreamesque state into the fragmented reality, which inevitably consists of complex strands of duplicities, at least in Goddard's work. Nothing after all is what it seems. As the narrator admits her beauty is the kind that conspires "to stray beyond the limits of visual appeal into the realm of immediate fascination." No judgment can be trusted that falls into that kind of state.

Since I have been following the strategy the author/narrator uses in *Closed Circle* for a prolonged time, let me move to another work by the same author for a change. After all Goddard has written a considerable number of works. It is fair to pick up and talk about some other work he has produced. I have decided to choose the following passage to focus on the mystifying quality the author exhibits in his work. As a mystery writer his skills in wrapping the scenes up in a murk that is hard to penetrate is nothing unexpected. But the way Goddard executes the techniques the reader associates with mystery stories is so consummate that he needs to be treated minutely in this regard. The following passage I hope will adequately demonstrate the degree of mastery the reader finds in the author's work. But before I proceed I will quote the passage in question.

What I said next wasn't provoked so much by irritation at the opacity of her reasoning as by fear of what she might be beginning to discern: that she and I had both seen—or been shown—some part of the truth about the events of that day. But we hadn't understood, hadn't recognized it for what it was; and we still didn't. 'Can we really change anything, do you think?' Louise had asked me. 'Can any of us ever stop being what we are and become something else?' (*Borrowed Time*, p. 97)

The reader becomes sucked into the murk that prevails throughout the passage without being aware of what is happening to his readerly consciousness. It is true that the quote is abruptly severed from the main body of the story and interpolated into the essay without much preamble. But the essence that the author intends to convey to the reader is still there and remains intact. So, in that sense the spirit of the narrative comes alive from the excerpted passage as wholly as if the reader had encountered the passage in the middle of the story. Then, about the murk. The

reader may be puzzled, as he reads on, why the narrator seems so confused about the story he himself is a participant. What is the point of being a subject who is so completely befuddled about how to proceed to understand the moment in the past that is definitely gone forever. Or is it? Considering the recurrence of the short minutes Robin, the protagonist/narrator had been with the woman, could the reader safely conclude that the time has gone forever beyond the reach of recuperation, as it were? Or by recollecting the moment of the encounter somehow the truth that has remained so elusive until now can dawn on Robin uninvited? All these similarly remain obscure, as the reader traces the psychological trajectory of the narrator. What is interesting about the process of recollection Robin is engaged in is that the opacity that prevails as he tries to regain the essence of the moment of the encounter is redoubled as the woman, the source of the mystery Robin tries to solve, is herself made uncertain by the presence of the veil that forever hangs before her. After all she has supposedly physically disappeared from the face of the earth. If the consciousness into which Robin tries to penetrate was the source of the mystery about which she herself seemed to have been completely lost, then how the party, who at most had remained a mere observer, could accomplish the feat of demystifying the entity that incorporates the whole mystery for the moment? Is it really possible to solve that kind of mystery? Or does the reader have a very good reason to be as mystified as the narrator seems to let on? Whichever the case, the reader as usual has no choice but follow the trajectory of the narrative guide as it meanders through the murk that hangs over the story. As the reader leaves off the passage, only the mysterious rigmarole lingers in the gloom that engulfs the narrative space. Who could predict what the puzzle really signifies? Even at the end of the story it proves more elusive than ever, unless the reader is willing to accept an interpretation which is as mundane as the materiality of the words the story is constituted of. But as a reader it may be wiser to proceed as mystified as the narrator is to salvage the maximum significance from the layers of the mystery that is ever evolving.

As for the narrator he is more than willing to play the role of a mystified onlooker. The words uttered by the murdered woman lingers unelucidated as Robin mulls over the would-have-beens and could-have-beens.

'Yes,' I'd replied. '*Surely. If we want to.*' And then I'd watched her walk away to her transformation. From life to death. From enigma to conundrum. 'If you're right, Rowena, what good would my protection have been?'

She smiled. And looked away at last. 'No good at all,' she murmured. 'None whatsoever.'

I caught the disappointment turning to anger in Sarah's face. This wasn't what she'd hoped I'd achieve. This wasn't what she'd expected of me. 'Your mother's death wasn't inevitable,' I went on. 'But it wasn't preventable either. Surely you can see that.' (*Borrowed Time*, p. 97)

The loose ends are further loosened, as it were, and they hang invitingly dangled before the reader's eyes, daring him to solve the mystery if he can. The moment when robin's befuddlement comes out more sharply is when he talks to the deceased woman's daughter. She wants to know the state her mother's mind when she supposedly had the last live encounter with any person. The daughter implicitly hopes for some kind of brighter interpretation of the woman's psychological state. Is Robin capable of that? As the interview proceeds it turns out to be a self exploration into his own understand as Robin constantly refers his mind to the distant yet near moment when he unknowingly had a crucial conversation with a woman he was going to meet for the first time and last. The enigmatic sentences recurs. He combs through them to find the clues to help him find solutions to the riddle contained in them. But the more deeply he reads into the words the woman uttered the more uncertain he becomes as to the intention of the woman at that elusive moment. In a way Robin is compelled to wander in an exitless space within which is contained no possibilities of solving the profound yet possibly banal answer to the whole mystery. Interesting enough, however, as robin's mind hovers over the sentences, the reader is dragged along the path of the befuddled consciousness of our narrator and in time the ungraspable riddle seems to generate the nuances which even further complicate the riddle initiated by the woman. It is kind of a sourceless rumor that gathers credibility as it spreads wider and wider among the people who have initially have no direct contact with the source. In other words the sentences become to assume a life of their own and gradually permeate the fictional space that contains the characters that interactively churn out the ramifications and derivatives of the mystery that may or may not have possessed any signification whatsoever. Being embroiled in such a vast enigma with almost superhumanly profound complications, the narrator is well advised to recoil to the defensive mode. He admits to the daughter that he was merely being a passive agent of the uncontrollable fate that completely ruled the moment when the critical encounter took place. The resignation Robin tries to expresses, however, does not even convince himself. He then projects his thoughts to the possibilities that he might simply have been able to change the course of events that ensued. That expectation is also the sentiment shared by the daughter. She hopes that the narrator somehow transforms the moment of his encounter with her departed mother into something that

might not have been. That is, turning the moment into something most likely other than what it might have been. Since the narrator himself is not completely averse to that possibility, he is willing to accommodate her wishes and attempts to transmogrify the moment in the rosiest color possible. But the enigma each time rebuffs his attempt. The insolvability of the riddle in this sense is well suited to the context as it never yields the one definable interpretation to the mystery. No matter how the reader as well as the narrator tries to change the context and shift the nuances possibly contained in the sentences uttered by the parting woman, they remain resistant and leaves the challengers frustrated. So, in the end the conversation between the two ends where they started it. Nothing new arises. But does the reader remain exactly the same as before the dialogue started? In other words, is he the same readerly consciousness as he was before he encountered the hopeful attempt by the two mysteriously drawn characters? The answer is obvious and yet has to wait for its final confirmation until the story has run its course and all the complications have been resolved.

Robin duly reflects on what has transpired between him and the deceased woman's family. The interaction and reaction on both parties become a source of much contemplation to solve the mystery that is ever covering the scene and keeping the reader from penetrating the outermost layer. As I have suggested it is best for the reader to follow the mental trajectory of the protagonist in order to reach the final destination, which at this state is not even adumbrated. What else can he do? Then back to the soliloquy that is not a real soliloquy in that the thought process of Robin is not supposed to be overheard by any third party. But the fact remains that it is somehow eaves dropped on by the reader. That is the auxiliary process in which the mystery is gradually occulted and the darkest secret gradually adumbrated in the end. Then read the following excerpt to follow my argument.

I took care to ensure I was the first to leave The Hurdles that evening. I had no wish to confront Sarah with my failure to dent Rowena's delusions. Not least because I wasn't sure they were delusions. And that, I knew, was the last thing Sarah wanted to hear. Just as it was the last thing I wanted to admit. 'Perhaps it was too soon,' Sir Keith said by way of consolation as he saw me off in the darkness of the driveway. 'Perhaps we can try again when she's more receptive.' I muttered some vague words of concurrence and shook his hand in farewell, not daring to tell him what I'd realized at Frensham. Rowena's problem wasn't an inability to face the truth. It was a refusal not to. (*Borrowed Time*, p. 98)

What strikes the reader in the passage is the implicit optimism all members of the

deceased woman's family express, except possibly the girl who is most depressed over her mother's death. Sarah, for instance, shared her father's opinion that her sister will eventually get over the shock of her mother's unexpected and abrupt death. Robin ponders over the sources of the attitude of the two members of the tragedy-stricken family. Needless to say his mental search for the reason and cause of the optimism takes the reader along with him. Then it becomes the quest of the reader/narrator's to locate the source of the unexplainable optimism and the ineffable desperation Rowena is going through. What distinguishes the two parties of the family members? Is the new bifurcation rife with signification that somehow leads to the core of the mystery both the readers and the narrator are engaged in from the inception of the story? That is, as soon as the story initiated the element that is hard to grasp without resorting to the level that inevitably entails uneasily answered questions. The fault line that manifests through the narrator's encounter with Sarah contributes to another strand of complication the reader has to confront with. Another relative uncertainty manifested by the narrator, which further unfixes the perspective the reader has assumed vis-a-vis the story and the characters in it, originates from the narrator himself. He is indeed an inveterate relativist when it comes to determining the positions of the characters in relation to each other, even only within the ontologically homogeneous world of fiction at hand. Where then does the reader have to moor his own to ascertain the roles each seems to be claiming in the narrative space? That becomes a very difficult task, indeed, as the only direct participant in the episode that is unraveling turns out to be completely uncertain. For one moment he perceives a modicum of supernatural truth to the remarks expressed by Rowena. But as soon as he turns to himself and considers his responsibility for the family of the deceased woman he flip-flops and cast a skeptical view on the depressed girl. That is not helpful at all. Why all this oscillation by Robin? Is there another signification that is encoded into the figure of Robin? Or is simply the delaying tactic on the part of the author? The reader is again left at the mercy of the narrative insight manifested by Robin. Because Robin is the most explicit consciousness available as the story slowly develops before the reader's eyes. Needless to say, the reader can employ his own imagination and interlace his conjectures with Robin's insights into the situations and characters. But any conjecture by the third party is likely to fly wide of the mark, especially when the narrator repeats the erratic pattern that escapes any kind of predictions. But the reader is not prohibited to make conjectures. He does so on his own risk. Then if I run that risk, what do I perceive beneath the uncertainty that Robin constantly seems to befuddles the reader with?

When robin turns back on himself and casts doubt on his certainty about Rowena's delusional tendency, he suggests if the doubt about Rowena's mental health is even shared by her family members. Where then does certainty lie? Is the certainty talked of indeed definable as it is constantly relativized? Then Robin hints at the aversions everyone concerned holds concerning the issue of pinpointing the definability of things that float among the characters as if they needed to be maintained as such in order for the fictional space to exist. Is everyone indeed averse to locating the truth? That threatens to push the story over the cliff, as it were, and down into the inchoate anarchy. Where everything is defined by its undefinability. If that is the course the story is to take then the reader is left in a helpless situation. The mystery that promised to be rife with a plethora of intriguing loose clues might become a helplessly directionless tale with no end to the dark gloom that warps up the fictional space from the beginning. In this context, Sir Keith's interpretation of Rowena's pathological depression provides a fresh air to the readerly consciousness now beginning to be mired in the hopeless spiral of disinterpretation. He simply puts that it is the kind time will adequately take care of. In other words, he simply attributes the pathological condition of his daughter to her immaturity and childish emotional self-indulgence. But Sir Keith's healthy and at the same time mundane interpretation is immediately made uncertain by Robin's certainty about the wrongness of Sir Keith's insight into the etiology of his daughter's condition.

Later however, the mystery concerning the cause of the mother's death becomes further complicated. All the incidents involved in the unexplainable turn of event at the critical juncture when robin met the woman are further obfuscated by the secrecy the family of the woman seems to harbor. That possibility is devastating to the reader trying to figure out the strand that leads through to the definite truth about the whole episode. How does the reader go about picking up the right leads and reach the final destination? Indeed the story becomes even more deconstructed as the narrator reports his conversation with Sarah, one of the daughters of the deceased woman.

Rowena's name cropped up before the canapés, Sarah having no truck with prevarication. 'Daddy thinks it was a mistake to spring you on her. After she's thought about what you said, maybe she'll see things differently.'

'I wouldn't bank on it.'

'We have to. If she says any of those bizarre things in court, God knows what the consequences may be.'

'Does she have to be called?'

'It's not our decision. But, without her, the prosecution can't be as specific as they'd like to be about Mummy's movements and intentions. I'd be reluctant to dispense with her testimony if I were them. Apart from anything else, it would look so odd.'
(*Borrowed Time*, p. 98)

The secrecy that surrounds the whole episodes seems to arise from the conspiracy of the family who are intent on keeping something from the ears of the others, including the narrator. Why did Sir Keith think the narrator would have moving influence on his daughter even to the degree to change her mind? Or for that matter, why did he want his daughter to change her mind first of all? What is the motivation? All sorts of questions crop up in the reader's mind as he reads on. What is troubling to the reader's interpretation of the whole scene is that these suggested hidden motivations refract the way the truth, whatever truth there is at the moment, and shatters it into so many fragments that it becomes very difficult to lock on any one strand of possibilities. Which, needless to say, greatly hampers the readerly consciousness from deciphering the true intentions of each character. But from another perspective, the deliberate ambiguity by the author renders the story more susceptible to offbeat interpretations. And eventually this interpretive anarchy transforms the readerly expectations so dramatically that the reader is made completely receptive to the information supplied by the narrator. But that is not to say he totally relinquishes his ontological advantage and becomes one with any of the characters who appears in the story. He rather remains the one with all the possibilities of comprehending the situational nuances but happens to withhold, at least temporarily, his judgment until all the conflicting information is sorted out. So, there is an essential difference between the two parties who are the participants in the story. What distinguishes the two after all is that no matter how infinitely closely the reader is engaged in his act of absorbing the narrative contents, that is actively engaged in the story that is taking place, he cannot cross over the ontological barrier that stands between him and the rest in the story. The obfuscation in this sense becomes a pleasure for the reader. After all, his befuddlement over the situation with multidirectional leads arises from his willing surrender of his judgment and prejudices while the confusion, whether conscious or unconscious on the part of the participants in the episode, results from their genuine inability to judge the situation correctly. But what puts both the characters and the reader together in the same camp is that both are involved in the process of attaining the accurate assessment of the state of affairs that exists in the fictional space. As if to lead the reader in one assured direction, Sarah urges the narrator/protagonist to help obtain the fact that would arise from the testimony of her

sister. With this remark the significance of Rowena's bizarre behavior is dramatically increased. The focus of the reader shifts and readerly consciousness immediately latches on the meanings that might be in the person of the depressed person. But the narrator is not certain what signification is contained in the collusion both of the two members of the deceased woman's family try it pull the narrator into. As the protagonist pretends to be ignorant of what is purported by the suggested collusion, he naively points out the possible futility of persuading Rowena to divulge the deadly secret, whatever that is. The irony is that Robin may be truly unaware of what Sarah is referring to. In fact there is a chance that Robin remains a dull witted gatherer of information who cannot penetrate the thin veil of secrecy with which sir Keith via Sarah wraps up every single item that is presented, or rather suggested, to the reader. If that is the case then, the episode is a thinly garbled invitation for the reader to take part more actively and interpret the story on his own, rather than through the intervention of the narrator, who after all may be so unreliable that his presence may as well be for the single purpose of being overcome and superceded. In this light, the implicit allusion to the scandalous secret involving Sir Keith's wife by Sara becomes a challenge to the reader to make himself a full participant in an ever murkier story produced by a confident author.

The challenge however becomes only more and more difficult to meet for the reader. As it turns out even the smallest clues that could possibly help the reader penetrate the thinnest layer of the very complicated mystery is full of twists and turns and hard to follow through. Let me quote the ensuing conversation between the two characters I have already discussed rather extensively.

'Your father mentioned a note your mother left for him in Biarritz. Wouldn't that be sufficient to—'

'Unfortunately, he threw it away before he'd heard about Mummy.'

'Then...what about the friend she was supposed to be staying with that night?'

'Sophie Marsden? No good either, I'm afraid. Mummy never contacted her. She must have been planning to surprise her with the picture.'

'I see.' Actually, I saw more than I liked. There was a disturbing vagueness about Louise Paxton's actions on 17 July. In the hands of a competent barrister, it could be made to amount to legitimate doubt. 'So...only Rowena...'

'Can testify to Mummy's exact plans on the day in question. Precisely.' (p. 98-99)

The reader conveniently hears about the letter the deceased woman had left for her husband. But to make the matter more complicated, Dr. Keith, whether intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of it. The reader is immediately plunged into the abyss

of despair only after his hopes of attaining at least a modicum of truth were raised high. Is nothing left of the evidence that would have helped to sort out the mystery involving the deceased woman? After so many disappointments, the reader should naturally be skeptical. He is again thrown into the sphere filled with characters who grope for the merest hint of the facts, those piecemeal, fragmented evidence that could at least lift him out of the directionless murk where he merely wallows without being able to decide how to set the course of his existential path. But for the moment the reader is well advised to trace the trajectories of the dramatis personae delineated by the author. Goddard has in a sense successfully rendered all the participants at the mercy of his narrative strategy. Even the ontologically advantaged reader is at a loss how to deal with the situational dynamics that is generated by the interactions between the characters and their response to the situational logic that arises from the whole scene. Let us follow the plot and receive the information without any prejudgment.

Unfortunately for the reader another lead in the person of the supposed friend of the deceased woman who might have been the object of Sarah's mother, turns out to be not the object of Louise's quixotic journey on that fateful day. That is like a death blow to the reader who has been willing to discard any prejudgment just to be able to find a needle of insignificant evidence in the mountain of ambiguous misleads. But a simple question flashes through the reader's mind. Why is Sarah so confident about the fact that Sophie was not the purpose for whom Louise set on a journey on that day? All these questions bubble up as the reader reads through the present passage. Does the fact that Sarah seems so confident about the nonpresence of Sophie, or more accurately non-involvement of the woman supposedly Lady Paxton's closest friend, at the time of her death, then where did the daughter obtain such information? How can she come to that kind of conclusion with such assurance? Sarah just thickens the layer of mystery that hangs over the story. But even in her confidence Sara subtly exhibits her vulnerability as the key to the real motivation and surrounding lay of events can accurately be explained only by her sister. But is her sister in a condition to oblige her and her father? That is truly a different matter. But as her vulnerability becomes more apparent the reader begins to wonder why the sudden interpolation of the name of Sophi Marsden occurs in this particular moment. She is definitely not an integral element at this juncture. What is the justification for this move on the part of Sara? In other words, what signficatory layer does the move add to the whole texture of the story? Or is it simply another red herring to throw the reader off the genuine track to the truth? Whatever it is, the author has accumulated one more name to the list of possible suspects and/or their accomplices. What is

interesting from the perspective of the whole story is that Sophie lingers until the very end to tinge the story with a ramifying mystery that may or may not be related to the mystery surrounding Lady Paxton's death. For that reason, her introduction at this juncture in the story, however circumstantial it may be, does accomplish an end to broaden the scope of the story as a whole. So, in this passage, the author adds more layers of mystery by mooring Sarah to the camp of those who have more comprehension of the darkest core surrounding the mystery as opposed to those who are merely in the periphery of the circle that contains the core. The division becomes an enticement for the reader to pursue the mystery with more urgency and attain the final destination promised by the author. The narrator then is made an auxiliary to take the readers along with him to that destination, however meandering the path to it may be. But for the moment let us concentrate on the manner in which the author facilitates the conversation to move on smoothly. If you take even a cursory look at the transitions between the two interlocutors as each sentence is passed on from one person to the other, the signification is found to be carried over from one sentence to the other almost seamlessly. It is as if the meanings are constituted by the two interlocutors as if the two of them have to be present to complete the meanings that arise in the space between the two. In other words, the signification comes out of the dialogue because that in itself is the essential element of the passage. The two interlocutors are as it were a mere implement to let the information reach the readers. Being a mere instrument, they are in their turn not quite indispensable for the author to convey the signification contained in the passage. The two characters are just that. They are merely functionary and instrumental. If you read the passage again, the seamlessness of the transitions between the two would now appear as arising from the essential integrity of the information that is contained in the passage. From the technical point of view, however, the reader will inevitably be impressed by the skills with which the author accomplishes that feat. That is, to create the appearance of a seamless transition from one remark to another while in fact the whole passage represents one integral pool of information. So, in that sense, the author is in fact doing exactly the opposite of what the cursory reading seems to indicate to the reader. That is, he is skillfully camouflaging the dissections that he himself created in the first place and passes them off as if they were the hiatuses that had originally existed but he deftly surfaced over. The truth is the opposite. But how perfectly persuasive the author is. The reader is left content with the cleverness with which the author carries off the feat. That in itself may be worth considerable admiration. The result is that all that the reader sees is the transitionless transition, or vice versa.

As the reader follows the trajectory of their conversation, it becomes all the more evident that Sir Keith and his family is most likely harboring a dreadful secret. To Robin's suggestion that he could testify in lieu of the reluctant daughter, Sarah immediately reminds him of his status. He is after all an outsider, who should have nothing to do with the affair of Paxton's death first of all. Although the remark is well-garbled in an unoffending language the intent of the sister is obvious. Those who are already on in the truth could afford to deal with the case. No matter how well-intended Robin's volunteering may be, offer cannot be accepted by the clan. Well, before I go further with this I had better quote the passage in question.

Sarah didn't trouble to hide the concern in her voice. 'And it's vital Rowena should testify—if Naylor's line of defence is to be nipped in the bud.'

'But I can go some way to doing that myself.'

'I know. And I'm grateful. But we don't want to have to rely on the evidence of a stranger, do we?' She caught my eye and blushed. 'I'm sorry. I didn't mean— Well, you were a stranger to Mummy, weren't you?'

'Yes,' I said thoughtfully, my mind casting back to the glaring brightness—the dazzling unknowingness—of that day on Hergest Ridge. (*Borrowed Time*, p. 99)

Although I dared to have said Sarah's intention was well-garbled, it may not be so skillfully camouflaged. In fact it is described as coming out clearly in her voice. That only proves the strong emotions attached to the issue by the Sir Keith family. No matter how hard the narrator tries, that sentiment cannot be easily shared after all. Then the reader learns the family is in some sort of confrontational relationship with one Naylor. Are the family in a weaker position vis-à-vis the man or are they simply forced to refute an unfounded accusation directed against them by the man? That at this point is hard to tell. But what comes out clearly from the remark made by Sarah is the intensity with which she, and as an implication her father, feels about the consequences of the battle with the man in question. She bared her sentiment even before what she calls a stranger. The state that will arise from their involvement with the man is the least they desire under the circumstances. That is something they want to avoid at any cost. But are they willing to resort to help from a third party? The answer to that is obviously in the negative. That brings the reader back to the surprise the narrator expressed at the manifestation of the bare sentiment by Sarah. The psychological barrier suddenly thrust before the narrator is the kind that further deepens the mystery surrounding the woman's death. As the narrator tries to figure out the reasons for Lady Paxton's murder, the evidence that could help him adumbrate the factual state at the crucial moment recedes even further into the murk of the past.

It is as if the rings surrounding the core of the mystery ever increase in number as the inquiring intelligence tires to penetrate even the outermost layer. The process demonstrated here is similar in kind to the one detected in the previous passage. as the party with the crucial knowledge of the mystery tries to draw a third party into the closed circle the former at the same time applies the opposite force to repel the party just drawn into the circle. This simultaneous workings of the two polar forces is indeed one of the characteristics of the way the secrecy is rendered to reach the intelligence of the characters who try to attain the final destination. It is a ceaseless contrapuntal move the reader inevitably finds himself involved in as he reads along to attain the same goal as the narrator and other characters who are engaged in the enterprise full-tilt. There is nothing that drives an wedge between the two forces so decisively that they are split permanently for the reader to take a peek leisurely so that the core of the mystery is somehow roughly configured. That privilege is excluded from anyone who are seriously involved in the task of reading the story until the very end. As the narrator is nearly blinded by the glaring unknowingness that descended on him at that fateful moment, the reader is led to every conceivable direction to reach the end of his journey.

I can go on forever at this rate. but I think I had better put an end to my rambling before I exhaust your patience. But before I do that, let me go back what I started with. that is, what constitutes his Britishism? That question turned out to be more complex than I initially assumed. But I dare give my understanding. As it is amply evident by now, he is a master of psychological portrayal of characters. But that is not simile exhibiting the inner psychological moves of the people who inhabit his fictional space. If so, he would not be such a remarkable writer as I think he is. Goddard translates the inner workings of characters in such a way that they appear as if they are all veiled in some dark secret which the reader is not allowed to easily penetrate. The mystery thus arisen only increases as the characters interact. When the reader thinks he has come to certain level of understanding, that assumption is brutally demolished by other mushrooming possibilities which the evolution of story often gives rise to. But the narrator and the opposite forces force the reader to lurch forward in his venture to attain the final truth. Which happens to be the journey he takes along with the narrator, as the latter too plods along in the murk other characters in the know inexorably drags him into. The result is that the actions and reactions create one vertiginous vortex that sucks in all the parties concerned in the activity that is taking place in the space that is located somewhere between the three parties I have indicated. It is this subtlety with which Goddard moves the story along

without blatantly exhibiting the direction in which the story is propelled. It is this craftiness with which the author involves all the parties in the story that is divulging which I would like to call his Britishism. I know I am rather being evasive and vague when I define the term. But that is merely mirroring the modus in which the author operates his story by way of manifesting his Britishism, which although manifests itself most characteristically in being most unobtrusive and surreptitious. What a better way there is then to trace the presence of his Britishism than by merely following the trajectories of the author's work, as I indeed did in this essay.

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Robert Goddard におけるイギリス的響き

Robert Goddard を読んでだれもが気が付くことは彼の「英国性」であろう。しかし漠然とは感じる事ができてもその理由を具体的に述べよ、と言われると躊躇する読者も少なくあるまい。それは彼の作品がそれほどまでに読者の解釈を拒むものというよりも逆にそのあまりにも英国的な雰囲気満ちた作風の故、ほとんどの読者が作品の全体の流れに身を任せるあまり構成要素の緻密な Synergy の存在を忘れるからである。そこでこの論文では Robert Goddard の最も特徴的なスタイルと私が考えている Understatement に着目して彼の作品の分析、そしてそこから現われてくる彼の「英国性」についての分析を試みてみた。ただ単に文章における Understatement だけではなく小説全体の Ambience から起因すると思われる彼独特の Understatement / 「英国性」の分析も試みてみた。