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LOOKING AT EDITH  
THE “BELLE DAME SANS MERCI” OF HENRY GREEN’S *LOVING*

*Loving* is a supremely satisfying work. It is both the most purely comic of all Henry Green’s great novels and at the same time a full, rounded achievement: where so many works of humour remain one-plane amusements—flat and without depth—*Loving* is a true novel and a comic masterpiece.

It may, perhaps, present one difficulty for the critical reader. Green has a high reputation as an original stylist—he has been termed a “writer’s writer” [Delaney]—and indeed his nine novels are all immediately identifiable by his highly idiosyncratic use of language. How is it, then, that in *Loving* our last view of the main female character, the beautiful under-housemaid Edith, is this: “what with the peacocks bowing at her purple skirts, the white doves nodding on her shoulders round her brilliant cheeks and her great eyes that blinked tears of happiness, it made a picture” [203]?<sup>1</sup>

The passage jars, it accords ill with Green’s usually sophisticated control of tone. It does, however, have the virtue of drawing attention to the act of looking, for if we return to the picture of Edith, and place it back in its context, a new point emerges. The passage is led up to by the following sentences:

She began to feed the peacocks. They came forward until they had her surrounded. Then a company of doves flew down on the seat to be fed. They settled all over her. And their fluttering disturbed Raunce who reopened his eyes. What he saw then he watched so that it could be guessed that he was in pain with his great delight. [203.]

The elements of the description—the girl, the peacocks and the doves—are set in place in short neutral-toned simple sentences by the omniscient narrator. Then attention is thrown back to Raunce, the acting butler who is in love with Edith, and, typically, the third-person narrator uses a doubting phrase—“it could be guessed”—to introduce the effect on Raunce of what he sees. In this way the third-person narrator has, as it were, bowed himself out, left the “seeing” to the eye of Raunce, indicated to the reader that what follows is given into the responsibility of the personage. This is Edith seen by Raunce.<sup>2</sup> It is a

1. All references are to the Picador edition entitled *Loving, Living, Party-Going*.

2. The reader should be struck by the repetition of two elements that suggest Raunce: the reference to “a picture,” and to “great” eyes, for these echo earlier expressions attributed to him.

vision attributed to the character Raunce, but it also forms one of a series of visions that stud the text, the most striking of which are given directly by the narrator, although at the same time a mediation through a character is suggested without being elaborated.

Raunce's vision of Edith, quoted above, almost closes the novel: it occurs only six lines before the end, which thus finishes on what we might term the "servant" note in this view—subjective and objective—of the two main characters. Here, the novel seems to say, is what "loving" does for them. What "loving" does in the absolute is shown in the series of narrator-presented visions. Two main ones are particularly interesting from the point of view of "the eye that sees": the first presents the transmuting power of love *per se*, with the vision of the lampman, Paddy, as a king, seen by the two main girl characters, the under-housemaids Kate and Edith, and the second renders the transmutation of time into eternity, as the same Kate and Edith are seen dancing by Charley Raunce. Edith is the common element, first observer, then observed; but for the reader, Edith is THE character "seen" and "heard" as a peacock: an Argos-observer with eyes everywhere.<sup>3</sup> These suggestions and visions transform Edith from "the Valentine-card picture" [Melchiori 202] into a mythological figure emblematic of beauty and love, a peacock girl, a bewitching "Belle Dame sans Merci."

*Loving* is made up of three basic elements: dialogue, descriptions, often grotesque, and these few but impressive visions. The importance of the characters' speech is indicated from the very first lines where, round the dying butler "from time to time the other servants separately or in chorus gave expression to proper sentiments and then went on with what they had been doing" [18]. The servants, then, have two roles: to get on with their work, which, as this is a novel, means "to get on with the action, the plot," and to "express proper sentiments"—that is, to comment upon the action, which is just what Charley Raunce does silently through the third-person narration at the end of the book. After the opening precision as to the role of the servants, there comes the setting which insists on the idea of total revelation and on the importance of sight: "The pointed windows. . . were naked glass with no blinds or curtains. For this was in Eire where there is no blackout" [18]. The insinuation is that we, the readers, will look in at the characters, at the house, with no romantic aura around: nothing will be blacked-out.

The setting is the most obvious place to find appeals to the eye; indeed, it seems that nearly all the descriptions are visual ones. They are confined to the Big House and demesne in which the action takes place. But description

3. Or perhaps a Circe and a peacock at one and the same time. There are many baroque elements in Green's work.

is not usually here for its own sake, and it is far from overall or complete. There is no Balzacian type attempt to create a whole, to introduce the reader into a stand-up world which would be at one and the same time believable and meaningful. Partial descriptions appear when needed, and often seem to be there purely for the reader's delight, though sometimes they may also speak covertly to the reader. For instance, the floor of the passage separating the main part of the house from the servants' quarters is covered with key-patterned linoleum: one of the details which makes obvious suggestions. Similarly there are at least three scenes in which the servants eat together in their hall, and it is difficult not to read meaning into the few details given in the description of this hall—the "red eye of a deer's stuffed head" [149], the "red mahogany sideboard that was decorated with a swan at either end to support the top on each long curved neck" [26]. The elements of setting shown are grotesque, exaggerated and bizarre: going down the Grand Staircase, Edith "steadied herself by holding the black hand of a life-sized negro boy of cast iron in a great red turban and in gold-painted clothes" [106].

Some seem introduced for the mere fun of it: for instance, the paraphernalia encumbering the drawing room of "the most celebrated eighteenth century folly in Eire that had still to be burned down" [182]<sup>4</sup> plays no role in the action and seems to have no communicating function but to be there purely for its outrageous absurdity. On the other hand, some visual details can raise a laugh on a second level for the hidden pun they contain. The most obvious example is Violet's bed,<sup>5</sup> shaped like a boat with oars sticking out at the foot. Does this conjugal bed represent the son of the house and his wife embarked on their conjugal voyage? If so, it can be but a short trip, for there are just oars, not a mast and sail, elements which could so easily have been incorporated into a four-poster bed. But here comes the hidden pun: with the husband away at the war, someone else has stuck their (phallic) oar in—Violet is discovered in this bed with one of the neighbouring gentry. Discovered by Edith, the observer.

The setting is splendidly extravagant. Mixed with the comically grotesque descriptions given with enormous gusto, there are images of startling precision and beauty, appealing typically to the eye: the puddles as the children and maids run through them: "Running they flashed along like in the reflection of a river on a grey day, and smashed through white puddles which spurted" [107]; the sea breaking on the shore: "great rollers diminished to fans of milk new from the udder upon pressed sand" [122].

4. *Loving* is partly a parody of the Big House novel à la Elizabeth Bowen.

5. Violet is the daughter-in-law of the mistress of the house.

From the beginning the eye of the reader is solicited: what is seen is noteworthy. Then the eye is directed, as verbs of perception accumulate: the characters look, eye, peer, watch, squint, glare, peek, wink, leer and spy, etc. Often they are seen in the act of seeing: spying is an important occupation, knowledge is power. The reader “sees” such and such a character seeing, and at times a third element is introduced and the reader “sees” a character spying on another character or group of characters: like a cat watching mice, we are explicitly told on one occasion [65]. Moreover the character spying may resort to looking through some sort of confined space, through a peep hole, in this way framing what is seen, just as the novel is the frame for the reader, who contemplates the action and characters, directed by the narrator lending his “eye.” This is all the more striking as the point of view remains exterior: the narration does not proceed through the eye of the character, but, by the references to spying, watching, eyeing, peering and so on, the reader is led to “see” what is described by the written word.

In the description of the characters, attention is continually drawn to the eyes. Even where little or no physical description appears, the eyes are generally noticed. The chief example here is Edith, as will be seen later, but Charley Raunce is also characterized by his eyes which are of different colours, and whereas Edith’s eyes suggest beauty and mystery, men’s eyes, detached, can be used to convey the grotesque: there are numerous references to Charley “squinting” [43, 62, 79, 199], and Paddy the lampman becomes monstrous when he watches Kate’s movements: “He followed with his eyes and did not turn his head. . . one pupil was swivelled almost back of the nose he had on him whilst the other was nearly behind a temple” [88]. Or a character is seen to act, with an insistence on detached gestures, seen purely, so to speak, detached from the person performing them: here is Charley Raunce in the presence of his employer: [The mistress of the house] “glared at the last button but one of his waistcoat. He had been standing with arms loose at his sides and now a hand came uncertainly to find if he was done up and having found dropped back” [22]. Albert the pantry boy is given one repeated gesture: he licks the palm of his hand and smarms down his yellow hair. In both these examples the notation is simple, sharp and precise. Use is also made of visual imagery: when Charley Raunce enters a room “he slipped inside like an eel into its drainpipe” [24].

In the narrative structure, there are many group scenes—notably the scenes of meals in the servants’ hall. Interspersed with these are the scenes involving two or sometimes three characters—the mistress of the house interviewing the drunken cook; Edith talking to her love, the acting butler Charley; Edith and Kate, the two under-housemaids, chatting. A character is virtually

never seen alone.<sup>6</sup> This tunes in with the fact that *Loving* is to a great extent a dialogue novel: characters are represented and the plot is advanced by talk between two or more personages. The narrator is always external: we are never told how a character feels or thinks, yet we know exactly: his feelings and thoughts and fears are all expressed, usually through his speech, sometimes by gesture or through imagery—Charley slipping into his room “like an eel into its drainpipe” is a striking image that comments economically on the personage. The dog, looking the wrong way and eagerly advancing a few paces in the wrong direction when a bone is thrown for him [35], epitomizes the political and social stance of his mistress—anachronistic members of a once dominating class in a changing world. The narrator gives brief indications of facial expression or tone of voice: she “tee hee’d” [36], or of attitude: “bolder by his tot now the glass he held was empty” [21]. Descriptions of the characters are spare and usually only one feature is given, of the face or head. The housekeeper has a face “pale and blotchy as a shrimp before boiling” [28]. When the mistress of the house puts her “rather astounding head with its blue-washed silver hair” out of the window, she looks “as though she were a parrot embarrassed at finding itself not tied to a perch” [170]. Edith’s beauty is suggested rather than described, especially through associations with nature: “In that light from the window overgrown with ivy her detached skin shone like the flower of white lilac under leaves” [32], followed a few lines further on by: “The sky drew a line of white round her mass of dark hair falling to shoulders which paled to blue lilac” [33]. To sum up, everything and everyone, setting and personages, are seen from the exterior; never do we have a glimpse of head or heart direct, but the reader understands perfectly—through what he “sees,” through what he “hears.”

The theme of the novel is given by the title—*Loving*. Edith and Charley fall in love and the progress of their courting is the main plot. Around this main plot circle sub-plots concerning “loving”: Kate is having an affair with Paddy; Violet is having an adulterous affair; one of the little girls is in love with a refugee boy; Albert the pantry boy is in love with Edith. And so on. Love separates the characters too: Edith and Kate no longer have their long giggling confabulations for their separate lovings have come between them; Edith and Charley plan for their marriage but differ as to ways and means—that is, as to the amount of petty pilfering that can be done, the point at which fiddling the books (allowed) becomes stealing (too dangerous). The plot, with

6. Charley, alone, writes to his mother—a form of dialogue—then falls asleep; Edith remembers a moment when she was alone, searching for Violet’s drawers, missing after she had accompanied her lover on a visit to the archaeological diggings.

its incidents, revolves round these desires and longings. Loving is the main interest of almost all the characters.

The plot and sub-plots proceed by means of incidents more or less parodying a detective story: one could talk about “the mystery of the missing waterglass,” “the enigma of the stolen sapphire ring,” “the man from the IRA.” The pace is rapid, and the achievement of Henry Green lies in combining this rapid and extremely funny comedy of incidents and dialogue with the creation of characters who all “come alive,” who all seem to know feelings and emotions, so that although the novel is a comedy of the formation of couples, it is also more than this, for it touches on the emotion and the nature of love itself. This is achieved by what I have termed the “visions,” the two main ones of which are the transfiguration of Paddy the lampman and the dancing of Kate and Edith.

The transfiguration of Paddy [55-57] reveals meaning both through an examination of *who* sees and through an analysis of *what* (or *who*) is seen:

Mrs. Welch [the cook] moved over to perforated iron which formed a wall of the larder, advanced one eye to a hole and grimly watched. . . . What she saw afar was Kate and Edith with their backs to her in purple uniforms and caps the colour of a priest’s cassock. They seemed to be waiting. . .

As at the end of the book when he introduces the “Valentine-card” picture, so here the narrator again, by this doubting phrase “seemed to be”, which is a refusal to assume entire responsibility for the scene, is in the process of stepping down and handing over the scene to a character. Then suddenly this viewpoint is broken, the cook is excluded from the vision: “Mrs. Welch after seeming to linger over the great shaft of golden sun which lighted these girls through parted cloud let a great gust of sigh and turned away”.

The importance of what is to come is revealed to the reader by this slow approach to the transfiguration scene: the cook sees “the great shafts of golden sun” (which will be the agent of transfiguration), but then she is removed from the narration—the gold is not understood or assimilated and she is made to turn away, because the love she feels in the novel is maternal love for her refugee nephew and she has no access to the sexual love that transfigures, and that makes up the action of the novel. Kate and Edith are linked to the cook by the repetition of an image: the cook calls the girls “the pair of two-legged mice, the thieves” and the girls’ dialogue starts: “What if there’s a mouse?”<sup>7</sup> The third-person narrator takes over and the two girls, Kate and Edith, become chief actors and chief observers—together with an attentive

7. The scene takes place just after the midday meal: in the morning Edith fainted when she saw a live mouse caught in a clockwork trap.

bird: "Why see who's brought 'erself to have a peek at him,' Kate said of a moulting peacock which head sideways was gazing up with one black-rimmed eye."

The observing role of Kate and Edith is insisted upon several times: "Edith bent to look," "What they saw," "Oh Kate isn't he a sight," "we can't stand looking," but the two girls are not the only observers: in the next room, beyond a glass partition, the peacocks one after another come up to look at Paddy the lampman asleep in his lair. The peacocks, too, are "touched," changed by the vision that they observe and so they partake of the transformation of Paddy, passing beyond life to take on an eternal quality of beauty, for "Edith could dimly see"—the observer Edith sees the peacocks looking, observed and themselves observing—"their eyes had changed to rubies". To cap the observing, the peacocks are followed by Charley, the last to arrive to observe the transfiguration of Paddy, and who like the peacocks is himself changed into something more lasting, suggestive of a change from an individual to a type: he is changed by the "sovereign light" so that "the skin of his pale face altered by refraction to red morocco leather".

The setting for the transfiguration of Paddy is a saddle-room encumbered with "dust and cobwebs and fern bedding". In an attitude of adoration, the two girls in their priest-like uniform, "*bend* to look," as, opening the door to this domain of Paddy's, his "life," they "let the sun in". The sun is both the agent of the transformation and the main element in it: as it falls on the dust and cobwebs, it turns them to gold. Beyond this straight description of the effect of sunlight, symbolic elements emerge as the gold sunshine is itself wealth: "the shafted sun lay in a lengthened arch of blazing sovereigns". Paddy himself is visible there, unchanged, and yet he *is* changed—a prisoner, no longer of the dirt that surrounds him and the repulsion he usually evokes, but now a prisoner of gold:

caught in the reflection of spring sunlight this cobweb looked to be made of gold as did those others which by working long minutes spiders had drawn from spar to spar of the fern bedding on which his head rested. It might have been almost that O'Connor's dreams were held by hairs of gold binding his head beneath a vaulted roof on which the floor of cobbles reflected an old King's molten treasure from the bog.

Paddy has become a royal figure, the living image of the statue of an old king, like those dug up from the bog and represented on the map as "two nude figures male and female recumbent in gold crowns" [49]. On this map the pointer connected to the weathervane on the roof has jammed and now steadfastly indicates, not the direction of the wind, but only these two representa-

tions of the nude statues dug up at Clancarty: the whole of Kinalty Castle is under the sign of love and of loving.

In this way the “lowest” and most despised character of the novel—Irish, filthy, and incomprehensible<sup>8</sup>—is made one with the richest emblem, he is made a king of love, touched by the golden sun, an Apollo figure. The numerous indications of who sees Paddy, how he is seen, what he appears as, stress the overwhelming importance of this vision scene, placing love as the supreme value, and associating it with royalty in the person of a lampman.

The second main vision is somewhat shorter [64-65] and appeals both to the eye and to the ear. It functions in much the same way, though here, instead of suggestions of the transmuting force of love seen in a transfigured lampman, it works to suggest the harmony of eternity represented by two girls dancing together. This time Charley Raunce is the only observer. Led on by the sound of music, before receiving his vision he undertakes a journey through Kinalty Castle—the length of the journey is emphasized by the names of the different parts of the mansion that are enumerated: Grand Staircase, Long Gallery, Chapel. Then he walks through all the shut-up part of the house. The vision to come will take on added importance in that here nothing is to be seen: the rooms are dustsheeted in a “white wrapped dimness,” and the high windows are “muted by white blinds”. The word “muted” in connection with sight introduces the mingling of the two senses of sight and hearing that will dominate the vision awaiting Charley. On the way, following the “ghostly music,” Charley receives intimations of mortality when he dabbles his fingers in a bowl of potpourri described as the “dead bones of roses”. Reminders of mortality precede the suggestions of eternity.<sup>9</sup> He follows “like the most silent cat after two white mice”—again the same two girls are associated with mice<sup>10</sup>—pauses on the threshold of the ballroom to turn the doorknob, “a leaping salmon-trout in gilt”—a typical Henry Green invention. The salmon is the emblem of wisdom. Here it is not a salmon but its smaller relation,

8. Paddy’s silence stands out in the novel, as there is so much dialogue. The reader is told that his accent is so thick that no one but Kate can understand him, and she interprets to the others what he has said. Green, who is so expert in reproducing the intonations of English working-class speech, makes no attempt to reproduce this Irish accent, but the complete muteness of his character means that it stands out more than it would through any attempt at rendering it.

9. Certainly death is very present in this comic novel. It opens with the death of the butler, continues with the Nanny dying, and the housekeeper is described as though she were already dead: she has a “shiny skull”, bare and terrible when her wig slips askew, a “pinched nose” and “terrible eyes” [37]; in the dovecote the doves jostle each other so that there are repeated thuds as tiny bare fledglings fall to the ground; the refugee nephew of the cook strangles a peacock whose dead body haunts the servants, continually reappearing as they try to get rid of it, etc.

10. A bilingual French-English joke is not excluded here; there are other examples in Henry Green’s novels.

a salmon trout, and it is not gold but gilt—in all, an economical reference to the fraudulent element of all the Big House décor in *Loving*.

Suddenly Charley opens the door:

They (Kate and Edith) were wheeling wheeling in each other's arms heedless at the far end where they had drawn up one of the white blinds. Above from a rather low ceiling five great chandeliers swept one after the other almost to the waxed parquet floor reflecting in their hundred thousand drops the single sparkle of distant day, again and again red velvet panelled walls, and two girls, minute in purple, dancing multiplied to eternity in these trembling pears of glass.

In its use of repetitive sounds—"wheeling wheeling," "heedless," "white blinds," "single sparkle," "distant day," "red velvet," "purple eternity"—the description here is consciously literary, in no way assignable to the observer Charley and quite unlike the final vision Charley has of his beloved Edith, and yet it is also a vision seen through Charley's eyes: the great chandeliers can only be said to sweep "almost to the waxed parquet floor" when seen from a position such as the one Charley has adopted, at the other end of the vast ballroom, its size magnified by the tiny figures that Kate and Edith make, "minute in purple," in its great expanse of floor. The rhetorical nature of the paragraph forces the reader's attention and the importance of the scene is again impressed on him, not only by the incantatory effect of the repeated sounds, but also by ironic comment, as, at the end of the scene, the narrator dismisses these two girls who "made their way back. . . their day's work done" [66]. The dancing was their work. Within the novel, as here in this passage, dancing was their function. The contents of this vision are both different from the transfiguration of Paddy scene, and similar to it. True, there are two characters, not one, girls not a man, movement, not stillness, sound and sight, not silent vision.

When in the first the sun is the transfiguring element, here light is present and plays its part, but it is not alone to perform the miracle. The light is distant, it does not only transmute natural objects as it has the cobwebs, but it is itself multiplied by beautiful and multiple, fragile, man-made objects: the shining pears of glass of the five great chandeliers. Above all, light is not alone the direct author of this transformation, for it is associated with sound and movement, the music and the dance. This association and its effect are conveyed to the reader by the rhythm of the prose with its echoing consonantal and vowel sounds. As in the first vision poverty and dirt were metamorphosed into royalty and wealth, so here fragility and the ephemeral—for dancing and music are continuous phenomena, broken as soon as interrupted, and so contrast with the static quality of sight—are metamorphosed

into the eternal, the single into the multiple, the minute into the infinite. This modern “vision” contains the traditional elements of perfection: music, dancing and the circle—“they were wheeling”—so that two rather vulgar lively under-housemaids become emblems of eternity, harmony and light.

In each of these visions, the scene is prepared for by an observer, who, as it were, plays the role of the narrator. This is not done overtly, and the narration is not attributed to this character observing, for it continues objectively and externally, but the looking and the looker have been carefully placed. So much so that at the same time as the eye of an observer is suggested, like the narrator spying on a scene and relating what supposedly takes place—and so heightening the vividness and illusion of the scene—the reader also finds himself in the place of the narrator-observer. In other words, the narrator is present yet eliminated, and the impression given is that the reader eyes, and hears, the scene directly.

The two main “visions”—“epiphanies” for the reader—govern the whole novel, transforming a comic-toned love story into a work of beauty, an ideal of beauty. The different characters all wend their way towards this ideal but all are far from it. The moments of transfiguration represent different moments in their search: all are ways of “loving.” They are representations of the transformations effected by “loving,” as is most obvious in the case of the transfiguration of Paddy.

Edith is the catalyser of all changes, the participant in all transfigurations and all moments of beauty. She is the nearest to love. She is, of course, the most beautiful, and is set off by her foil, the other under-housemaid, Kate. Where Kate has “a doll’s face and tow hair” [51] with small “gimlet eyes” [82], Edith is the epitome of beauty. Few details are given.<sup>11</sup> Edith’s beauty is suggested, rather than described: only the fact that she is dark is given, but even here her hair, for instance, is described rather by comparison and image than by direct description: she has “dark-folded hair” [19], a lock is “a sickle of black hair” [123], her windblown hair is a “black yew branch” [125]. Above all her eyes are mentioned—not described but evoked. Huge eyes, “dazzled dazzling eyes” [76], “great eyes. . . fathoms deep” [132], “double-surfaced” [122], or “with a quadrupling of depth” [131], they “caught the light like plums dipped in cold water” [24]—this is the most striking image, one of sparkling and light, and one linked with fruit, with natural food of the earth.

For Edith is a witch figure or rather, a “bewitching” figure—not a hag or a beldame, but a “Belle Dame sans Merci”. Her eyes are described in terms of fruit, the fruit that the Belle Dame sans Merci made the knight-at-arms eat

11. Green discusses the difficulty of presenting a beautiful character in “A Novelist to his Readers” [425].

to enchant him.<sup>12</sup> When she first appears she has a peacock feather in her hair, and she is continually associated with these birds. Even her vulgarities, the hand she raises to her mouth to giggle behind, her way of running off, swinging her hips, evoke the peacock: "What she saw made her giggle mouth open and almost soundless. Then she slapped her hand across her teeth and ran on ahead" [25]. Her flaunting approach to Charley Raunce is like the dance of the peacock with outspread tail: "she fairly danced up. . . She began once more to force her body on his notice, getting right up to him then away again, as though pretending to dance. Then she turned herself completely round in front of his very eyes" [79]. The mode of speech given her, with its slightly vulgar expressions, and the quality of her voice, correspond to the peacock's, and the connection is made even more obvious by juxtaposition: "Edith gave a screech then slapped a hand over her mouth. . . A peacock screamed beneath" [45-46]. Her eyes, like the peacock's eyes, suggest jewels: when she blushes "the slow tide frosted her dark eyes, endowed them with facets" [20].

So she is the peacock girl, enchanting, and with the hundred eyes of Argos in its tail, the bird of Juno-Hera, the patroness of women. Charley is bewitched by her, he becomes paler and paler throughout the book as he falls more and more completely under her spell, so that at the end, there is no longer, in the vision of Edith waiting for him, the reference to a character looking—but Charley is looking; there is no longer the journey and the ritual—but Charley has made the journey to her and is in her toils. Indeed, the description of Edith at the end is merely a development of his first vision of her at the beginning. When he first asks her jokingly for a kiss, he comments on her eyes "With those eyes you ought to be in pictures" [25]—the highest point of beauty imaginable for this acting butler—so that his final view of her continues this first judgement: "it made a picture" [203]. Charley's is a Hollywood vision of love and beauty; but the reader has been given, with Edith, a revelation of the power of love, in the vision of Paddy metamorphosed into a king, and, with Charley, an intimation of eternity in the vision of the dancing girls.

12. Charley, a comic and at times grotesque anti-hero, "lucky Charley. . . Father beautiful" as he calls himself, is a strange knight-at-arms, but it is he who falls a prey to this enchantress's wiles. She collects peacock's eggs to make magic spells, but has in fact no need of them, for she herself is the peacock.

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