Imagination and Unity in Owen Barfield's *The Rose on the Ash-Heap*

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OWEN BARFIELD (1898-1997) WAS A VISIONARY OF HIS TIME, drawing on and expanding some of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's ideas including polarity,[1] unity-in-multeity, and the function of the imagination. Opposed to modernism's dualistic thinking and materialism, Barfield developed his views on cognition and the imagination partly from romanticism. For him, imagination is not just a mental process. The view of imagination, from Coleridge and the Romantic Movement, is "in some way a vehicle of truth or knowledge. But it was not asked *how*".[2] Barfield seeks to answer and show *how* imagination can convey truth or knowledge. Imagination expressed through language must *make meaning*, as part of its connection with truth, and be "a way of life"[3] that helps humanity live in harmony with each other and the natural world. Barfield's early imaginative story *The Rose on the Ash-Heap* expresses his vision of reversing social decline and fragmentation by uniting language and meaning through imagination's power. The story's title refers to a woman central to the story (as the rose) and the location of her former home burned into an ash-heap, which now serves as the site of a perverse amusement park.

This article evaluates Barfield's short story within his first and longest novel *English People* as exemplary of the themes he continued to engage with throughout his life. The themes of *English People* prove Barfield's social and cultural engagement as he sought alternatives that were "realistic and practicable".[4] According to Thomas Kranidas, the "brilliant and prophetic" novel is

> Barfield's ambitious treatment of an England which was between the wars and poised on the brink of the dissolution of Empire . . . [and] traces the lives of four young English people, very consciously English, consciously transitional. England is pictured as in the midst of crisis; radical ideas clash with traditional, cosmopolitan with national, scientific with religious.[5]

Overall, Blaxland-de Lange describes the novel's "theme" as "that of the inner soul journey of a small group of English individuals—who are not merely particularly well suited for such a quest but have a strong affinity to certain aspects of Owen Barfield himself" (240). This theme of spiritual development pertains to Barfield's fictional efforts and focus throughout his career;

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[1] These topics are central to *What Coleridge Thought* and *Poetic Diction*.

[2] Barfield, *Romanticism Comes of Age* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1966), 29-30.

[3] Astrid Diener, *The Role of Imagination in Culture and Society: Owen Barfield's Early Work*, Leipzig Explorations in Lit. and Culture 6 (Berlin: Galda & Wilch, 2002), 145.

[4] See Diener 170 and 164-71 regarding Barfield's social and economic views during this time.

[5] Respectively, "The Defiant Lyricism of Owen Barfield", *Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review* 6 (1985), 24; and "Two Prophetic Nouvelles" in *A Barfield Sampler: Poetry and Fiction* by Owen Barfield, eds. Jeanne Clayton Hunter and Thomas Kranidas (Albany: State U of New York P, 1993), 94.

"'English People' is to all intents and purposes an imaginative depiction of its author's own soul journey, as expressed through the four principal characters" (Blaxland-de Lange 242). John, Janet, and Humphrey Trinder are siblings, and their "nicknames" suggest Barfield's theme, highlighted in earlier chapters, of threefold unity: "Freedom (John), Equality (Janet) and Fraternity (Humphrey), from which follow the relationship of John to the intellectually-orientated part of Steiner's threefold view of human psychology and its social manifestations, of Janet to the heart-orientated part, and of Humphrey to the future-orientated will" (Blaxland-de Lange 240). Their distinct yet interconnected natures manifest the necessity to merge the head, heart, and will in daily life.

Along with the significance of the threefold, the imagination and evolution of consciousness are central to *English People*, and the 1920s was a formative time as Barfield developed his ideas through his writings.[6] In 1925, Barfield published his first fictional work *The Silver Trumpet*, a long fairy tale. He returns to the fairy tale form, which he refers to with the German term Märchen, at the end of *English People* and later publishes the story as *The Rose on the Ash-Heap* as its own shorter, stand-alone piece (a format likely more appealing to readers). Barfield also develops his early themes such as the threefold (thinking /feeling /willing) and male/female relationships, and he maintains his critique on society and cultural issues. Barfield wrote *English People* during the late 1920s, and it "must have been completed by the summer of 1931, as it was described in" a publication that year.[7] Chapters 73-74 of part four of the novel, written by the novel's character Gerald, was first published in 2009 as the novella *The Rose on the Ash-Heap*.[8] The idea that Barfield is writing for the future is perceptible in the text as "surprisingly prophetic" and apocalyptic. *The Rose on the Ash-Heap* develops common Barfieldian themes such as the tension between the sexes and subsequent need for unity between not only male and female individuals but humanity in general.[9]

The idea that spiritual development will move towards a universal harmony lies at the heart of romanticism, and this idea is central to Barfield's thinking,

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[6] See Barfield's *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry*. The evolution of human consciousness, briefly, is that over time, the way humans think and process language has changed and continues to change, which also affects meaning and human experience.

[7] Simon Blaxland-de Lange, *Owen Barfield: Romanticism Come of Age; A Biography* (Forest Row: Temple Lodge, 2006), 314n17. Blaxland-de Lange states that the novel "was a kind of test-case for his [Barfield's] prospects as a writer of imaginative literature; and its failure even to be published closed that particular door as regards its author's future as a writer and required him to earn his living—somewhat unwillingly—in his father's legal firm" (203). The transcribed novel, edited by the author of this article, is now available online on the Owen Barfield Literary Estate website.

[8] *The Rose on the Ash-Heap* (Oxford: Barfield P UK, 2009). In a letter to Barfield (possibly written in Mar. 1935), C. S. Lewis suggests: "Why don't you send *Tertium Quid* to a publisher? Now that P. R. [Lewis' *The Pilgrim's Regress*] has gone through so easily, I am sure T. Q. would—and they'd make a pretty pair" (*The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis, Vol. 2: Books, Broadcasts, and the War 1931-1949*, ed. Walter Hooper [New York: Harper, 2004] 156).

[9] In a letter dated 11 Sept. 1986 to Marjorie Lamp Mead, Barfield notes the following:
English People is a very very long novel, and would of course be correspondingly expensive to produce. But it concludes with a "novelle" or M[ä]rchen written by one of the characters, in the book entitled "Tertium Quid". . . [which was] published under the title *The Rose and the Ash Heap*. . . . [A]lthough it was written before 1931, it is surprisingly prophetic both of the "permissive society" and of totalitarianism. (Catalogue of papers of [Arthur] Owen Barfield, Dept. of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, Dep. c. 1062. Bodleian Lib., Oxford).
This latter comment indicates Barfield's own view that his writing is for the future though that might not have been his motive or intent when he created his fiction.

particularly evident in *The Rose on the Ash-Heap*. M. H. Abrams summarizes this aspect of Coleridge's vision and that of the German romantics:

> *The poet or philosopher, as the avant-garde of the general human consciousness, possesses the vision* of an imminent culmination of history . . . equivalent to a recovered paradise or golden age.[10] The movement toward this goal is a circuitous journey and quest, ending in the attainment of self-knowledge, wisdom, and power. This educational process is a fall from primal unity into self-division, self-contradiction, and self-conflict, but the fall is in turn regarded as an indispensable first step along *the way toward a higher unity* which will justify the sufferings undergone en route. *The dynamic of the process is the tension toward closure of the divisions*, contraries, or "contradictions" themselves. . . . The goal of this long inner quest is to be reached by a gradual ascent, or else by a sudden breakthrough of imagination or cognition; in either case, however, *the achievement of the goal is pictured as a scene of recognition and reconciliation, and is often signalized by a loving union with the feminine other*, upon which man finds himself thoroughly at home with himself, his milieu, and his family of fellow men.[11]

This quest and eventual redemption, specifically between the sexes as well as the natural world, relates to the Rose tradition and the Eternal Feminine concept, and accords with Barfield's neo-romantic development, for "English anti-modernists . . . were united in looking for salvation also in 'feminine' principles, now represented as the unconscious as well as Mother Nature".[12] His engagement with and reinterpretation of these ideas also shows his futuristic bent because "few yet questioned the polarity of the sexes" at the time (Trentmann 603).[13] In her introduction to *The Rose on the Ash-Heap*, Jane Hipolito writes that the text "can be seen as an extended meditation on the concluding lines of Goethe's poetic drama *Faust*: 'The Eternal-Feminine / Draws us onward'" (ix). Barfield himself defines the Eternal Feminine as "the actual concrete *meaning* of life—the living heart of nature".[14] *The Rose on the Ash-Heap*'s closing image illustrates the Eternal Feminine in these particular nouns—meaning, life, heart, and nature—through the unity of a man and woman.

Such imagery and themes are central to Novalis's writing as well, a key

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[10] Related to these concepts, two characters named the Poet and the Philosopher are in Barfield's novella.

[11] Italics added in quotation from *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971), 255.

[12] In the novel, "Gerald goes on to speak about his appreciation of the metaphorical aspect of art and of his path towards understanding the medieval imagination. His heart is full of the 'Rose' tradition, 'the great warm, mystical Rose, which is both the lady and the lover's own heart, and yet at the same time is Paradise itself—is the beating Heart of the Universe" (Blaxland-de Lange 209).

[13] Preceding quotations from Frank Trentmann, "Civilization and Its Discontents: English Neo-Romanticism and the Transformation of Anti-Modernism in Twentieth-Century Western Culture," *Journal of Contemporary History* 29.4 (1994): 603.

[14] *Romanticism Comes of Age* (Letchworth, Hertfordshire: Rudolf Steiner, 1966), 132. Gerald also refers to the Eternal Feminine as another name for *tertium quid*, in part 4 of *English People*, before reading the fairy tale aloud to the others.

Barfieldian source.[15] On "Romantic love" (as "redeemed" not just "erotic love" [Monks 6]) and its "expression," Barfield remarks, "Perhaps adoration is not the word, joy if you like. Simply to be in the same room with the beloved is all that you are really asking. Now Novalis does use that emotional state, or that soul state, a great deal. And a great deal of what he says grows out of it".[16] In his foreword to Novalis's *Hymns to the Night* and *Spiritual Songs*, Sergei Prokofieff explains the significance of Novalis's spiritual experience at the graveside of his beloved Sophie von Kühn, who "like Dante's Beatrice" is "a guide to the higher archetype of the 'eternal feminine', to the Divine Sophia" (2).[17] Death can be revelatory, not an ending but a spring of hope, enlightenment, and inspiration. For Novalis, "the image of Night, as a counterpart to day, with its ordinary, prosaic consciousness, became the symbol of a higher, poetic consciousness, of a new faculty of perceiving the purely spiritual world, which is experienced by him as a world of divine wisdom, or the world of the Sophia" (Prokofieff 3). Similar to the Divine Sophia, the Virgin Mary and Dante's Beatrice often serve as prototypes of women dispensing spiritual grace and guidance.[18]

Barfield's allusions to such women in his writing is to portray them not as a mere object of physical desire but as the prized and pursued "Beloved". In "Human Relationships", Barfield laments the increasing cultural disappearance of the "whole tradition of courtly love" and praises the "mystical" quality of love that occurs when "the beloved is experienced neither as a desired object nor simply as a fellow human being, but as a kind of theophany" (16). Barfield then quotes Henri Corbin's definition of mystical love—this concept as theophany values both the "spiritual" and "physical nature" of a person in loving the "concrete Image" of the person but not "to take *possession* of that Image, but to be totally enveloped by it" (16).[19] These points materialize in the apocalyptic ending of Barfield's novella. In Barfield's depiction of a man's quest for his beloved, Sultan moves from self-love, interested in obtaining his desire, to focus instead on the Beloved's virtues and love's true qualities, thus transforming him and uniting the couple.

Before evaluating *The Rose on the Ash-Heap* in more detail, some background about the Märchen form (also used in his last novella *Eager Spring* decades later) explains why it appealed to Barfield. James Engell writes in *The Creative Imagination* that

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[15] Specific references to Novalis occur in chapters 52 and 55 of *English People*, for example, when Gerald reads Novalis's poetry and is inspired to write his own (Blaxland-de Lange 231-32).

[16] Clifford Monks, "Reflections on C. S. Lewis, S. T. Coleridge and R. Steiner: An Interview with Owen Barfield", *Towards* 1.6 (1980): 6, 7.

[17] Sergei O. Prokofieff, Foreword. Trans. Simon Blaxland[-]de Lange. See Novalis 1-4 (full citation in footnote 42). Anthroposophia is Steiner's interpretation of this feminine, spiritual guide.

[18] A passage by Friedrich Hiebel about Novalis's writings elaborates on these themes also found in Barfield's fiction: "The *Hymns to the Night* lead from the maternal ground of the world, Night, the Sophia, to the Resurrected Christ. The *Spiritual Songs* lead from Christ to Mary-Sophia. The *Hymns* tell of the initiation experience that originated with Sophie and found its way to Christ. In the *Songs* the earthly image of the Sophia is transfigured by the light of Christ into the heavenly Queen of the World" (qtd. in Prokofieff 4).

[19] "Human Relationships," *Towards* 1.7 (Winter 1980-81): 15-16.

> The *Märchen* might best be described not as a story about fairies, nor as a fairy-tale as such, but as a story predicated upon imagination, built and constructed according to the dictates of the imagination, of its leaps, inventions, and unifying powers. It is a story in which imagination predominates and the secondary touches are provided by reason and understanding.[20]

Because Barfield stresses imagination's significance in daily life, this form is ideal for embodying his ideas. He follows in the tradition of German romantic writers in such narrative techniques as "to combine poetry and prose into a new kind of literature based on *Märchen*"; "the German *Kunstmärchen* arose as a highly spiritual reaction to the stifling intellectual atmosphere of the *Aufklärung* [the Enlightenment]".[21] Barfield does not end there, however, with a "spiritual reaction" but extends with neo-romantic intent to challenge modern science and unite the two, mind and matter.

"Tertium Quid" was the original title of Barfield's fairy story, and this Latin phrase points towards the novel's meaning and characterization. According to the *OED*, *tertium quid* means "some third thing" and is "[s]omething (indefinite or left undefined) related in some way to two (definite or known) things, but distinct from both". It was also a term "used by the alchemists of a third substance different from its two constituents", a reference in keeping again with Barfield's scientific interests akin to Coleridge.[22] One critic interprets Barfield's use of the Eternal Feminine as "the *Tertium Quid*, the essential 'third thing' which bridges the gap between self and other in modern consciousness, and enables true self-knowledge".[23] Without stretching the point too far, these definitions of *tertium quid* could be extended to the idea of uniting two different entities, male and female, to bring about a "third thing"[24]: that is, harmony between the sexes, a central concern for Barfield, which he emphasizes in several stories.

Another instance of *tertium quid*'s importance occurs in chapter 47 when Gerald and John discuss a poem John wrote (Blaxland-de Lange 223); "Gerald is deeply interested in John's ideas" but "doesn't think John's poem could be published" (224). When John "encourages Gerald to write something himself", Gerald responds with "the melancholy Barfieldian retort that 'those that read don't need: those that need don't read!'" (224).[25] Like Barfield, Gerald has "a

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[20] *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1981), 239.

[21] Gary K. Wolfe, "Symbolic Fantasy", *Genre* 8 (1975): 204 and 205, respectively.

[22] "Tertium quid, n." *OED*, 2nd ed., online June 2012 (Oxford UP, 2012).

[23] Jane Hipolito, Introduction, *The Rose on the Ash-Heap*, xi.

[24] This idea relating to polarity has ties to Coleridge's view of language and polarity that Barfield explains in a lecture he gave on Coleridge's philosophy in 1932. An example is that language has letters and sounds that are used the same, yet the letters and sounds are also different when in endless varying positions (and, as this author observes, can be read in some combinations that are words with meaning). This "Sameness and Difference [of the letters] are the positive and negative aspects … [o]f *Likeness*", representing the Coleridgean productive unity of polarities (seeming opposites) to make meaning. From *Romanticism Comes of Age*, 155.

[25] This is an early form of Barfield's "Law of literary endeavour" meaning that "when a book appears with anything upsetting in it, the few who read it don't need it, and the many who need it don't read it" (*Night Operation* [Barfield P UK, 2009], 61).

deep wish for 'romanticism' to 'come of age'" (228).[26] In other words, "[t]he ideas of wholeness and participation, which Coleridge and other romantic thinkers had developed, needed to be rescued from the merely mental sphere and made accountable again in the public sphere" (Diener 99). Later, in chapter 72 of the novel,

> Gerald has been reading Novalis, and is full of thoughts about the heart and the importance of feeling. … Humphrey then helps Gerald to explain that what he has in mind is no mere 'abstract *idea* of a *via media* between body and mind': 'He [Gerald] wants to make it clear that he's not talking about some neat psychological theory of a balance between Thinking, Feeling and Willing. What he is talking about is a definite *Thing*—a sort of *Tertium Quid*—you have either got it or you haven't.'
>
> (Blaxland-de Lange 235)

This passage illustrates why Barfield might have originally titled his fairy tale "Tertium Quid" and valued its definition because abstractions and theories are not helpful or meaningful if they are not understood and applied to become "things" or realities that instigate change.

In *The Rose on the Ash-Heap*, Barfield esteems neo-romantic ideals and challenges the materialism of modern society. The West is corrupt and dying, which the main character Sultan discovers as he seeks his Beloved Lady, a dancer: "The second section of the m[ä]rchen specifically connects the Eternal-Feminine with the Romantic Movement in England. Here, the beautiful dancer is … Lucy; she is the adoptive daughter of the Lord of Albion, and with him guides and guards all that is good in the English spirit" (Hipolito x). The Lord of Albion and Lucy must leave their Palace that is burned and becomes the Ash-Heap upon which the evil Abdol builds his Amusement Park, or Fun Fair. Near the novella's end, the Rose, likely symbolic of Lucy, grows on the Ash-Heap. Barfield's increasing neo-romantic inclination, perhaps explains why he also uses the Rose as a symbol of English history, since the Rose may represent the daughter of the Lord of Albion.

Barfield often employs names and characters as allegorical or symbolic of key ideas. For example, Lucy's name and connection with a rose is appropriate and prophetic. Stemming from the Middle Ages, "Lucy" is a variant spelling of "Lucia", which comes from "Lucius" meaning "light".[27] Lucia, also known as Saint Lucy, was the name of "a 4th-century martyr from Syracuse" who became "the patron saint of the blind". In his *Paradiso*, Dante gives the Italian saint a place of honor in a rose: "And opposite the father of us all [Adam] / sits Lucy, who first urged your lady to you / when you were blindly bent toward your own fall".[28] These definitions of "Lucy" also lend to interpreting

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[26] This phrase becomes a Barfield book title *Romanticism Comes of Age* in 1944.

[27] See "Lucia", "Lucius", and "Lucy", *Behind the Name: The Etymology and History of First Names*, Mike Campbell (2012). Parts of *English People* also take place in a southern Italian village called Luci.

[28] Alighieri Dante, *The Divine Comedy: The Inferno, the Purgatorio, and the Paradiso*; trans. John Ciardi (New York: New American Lib., 2003), 885. C. S. Lewis and Barfield read *Paradiso* together in 1930 (*The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis, Vol. 1: Family Letters 1905-1931*, ed. Walter Hooper [New York: Harper, 2004], 915).

Barfield's fictional Lucy since she experiences suffering, is light in a sense (when she glows as a symbolic rose [75]), and tries to help enlighten the people deceived by Abdol.

The Lord of Albion's character is also symbolic; he does not have a specific name except that he rules Albion (and is later referred to as the Ringmaster). According to the *OED*, Albion is Old English, evoking the island's ancient language, people, and mythic past; with Albion later referring to "the nation of Britain or England, often with reference to past times, or to a romanticized concept of the nation". Albion's etymology is associated with other words meaning "world" and "white", both of which could be read one way as the dominating former world power of England and its white-skinned people.[29] Due to these definitions, juxtaposing Abdol as negative versus the Lord of Albion as positive might reflect the problem of racism or xenophobia of the time as the British Empire disintegrated (hinting at cultural deterioration), or Barfield's ongoing focus on Eastern and Western culture and approaches to thinking.[30] An alternatively intriguing and more current interpretation of Albion's meaning is as an esoteric quality of Englishness (as well as the physical location). All places where English is spoken are included in the term, and now with the extraordinary phenomena of English being the global lingua-franca this has an ever greater resonance, perhaps one can go so far as to say it's a visible sign of consciousness evolving. How we speak shifts how we think.[31]

Other cultural and political commentary is pivotal to the novella, some of which Barfield summarizes as follows:

> Sultan . . . is eventually lost in a country not unlike the advertisement-machine- and sex-ridden Eur-America which we were getting to know before the War. Formerly ruled and guided by the Lord of Albion, it is now under the total dominion of Abdol, who needs no secret police to enforce his highly centralised authority, since he uses the technique not of scarcity but of plenty—*panem et circenses* in a literal sense.[32]

Abdol gains control as the people readily accept his cheap thrills, an example of how Barfield critiques modern social problems as society embraces consumerism and temporal pleasures that lead to thoughtless, meaningless acts with long-term negative consequences if not resisted. Barfield explains further:

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[29] "Albion, n." *OED*, 3rd ed., online Sept. 2012 (Oxford UP, 2013). Additionally, in the *OED*, "[t]he Celtic base underlying the name probably originally denoted the world above ground, illuminated by the sun, as opposed to the dark underworld". This meaning is interesting because the Lord of Albion relocates from aboveground to house his stables and circus in "subterranean works" (*Rose* 17) to train people who then return to the outside world. Lucy, as the Lord of Albion's daughter, is described more than once as "White-skinned" (e.g., 16, 92).

[30] Abdol is a variant spelling of "Abdul", which is the "[f]irst part of compound Arabic names" and means "servant of the". See "Abdul", *Behind the Name*, Campbell. There are instances, specifically regarding people of African heritage, in the novella that could be read as racist. In a note in the 1993 *Barfield Sampler* publication of the novella, "Barfield now asks the reader to remember that this passage [describing a 'naked negro'] was written 'in the unregenerate days before 1930.' This passage does not represent his personal view then or now" (103). The 2009 publication of the novella repeats part of this note and highlights another place to apply the note as well (21, 63).

[31] Comments sent to the author from Owen Barfield, grandson to Barfield, in an email ("Albion" on 30 Sept. 2020).

[32] Headnote to "The Rose on the Ash-Heap," *Barfield Sampler*, 97.

> The story tells of Sultan's many and varied experiences, his encounters, his efforts and his lapses, until at last he finds his way out, not (like some mystics of today) by retracing his steps to the East whence he started forth, but rather by pursuing his westward journey to its utmost limit. There he finds a special master key. This he takes back with him on his final return to the West, where Abdol's blatant and horrible Fun Fair is in progress. It lets him in to the secret Circus under the great ash-heap in its midst. After long and arduous training he himself becomes a circus-rider, is united to the daughter of the Lord of Albion—the bride whom he has so long been seeking—and together with her participates in the apocalyptic end of the Fair and of Abdol's reign. (Headnote 97-98)

Barfield achieves this neo-romantic vision in combining modernist concerns with the romantic themes of his predecessors. M. H. Abrams expounds: "The term 'apocalypse' has come into increasing vogue in recent literary criticism, where it is often applied loosely to signify any sudden and visionary revelation, or any event of violent and large-scale destruction—or even anything which is very drastic" (41). Abrams "restrict[s] 'apocalypse' to the sense used in Biblical commentary, where it signifies a vision in which the old world is replaced by a new and better world" (41). Connected with this definition of apocalypse, "the coming of the new heaven and new earth is signalized by the marriage between Christ and the heavenly city, his bride" (42). A similar spiritual union that is redemptive occurs in Barfield's apocalyptic conclusion. Disaster ensues as evil materializes, unleashing its effects on those foolish enough to feed on unfitting fare at the Fun Fair, which ultimately is not fun at all.[33] The Ringmaster's well-trained group makes an impact in resisting Abdol's evil and achieves a glorious end, symbolized by unifying humanity and the cosmos to some degree.

In *Creature and Creator: Myth-making and English Romanticism*, Paul Cantor explains that romantic writers "envisage[d] a radical transformation of the world which would fundamentally alter human relations and make it possible for everyone to participate actively and harmoniously in the creative life" (22). This view connects with "the apocalyptic phase of Romantic myth, symbolizing some form of revolution, originally conceived as coming about through political means, but later thought of as a more purely spiritual liberation, accomplished through art itself" (22). Cantor adds:

> Romantic myth-makers took the revolutionary ideal of a harmony between reason and passion, which man is to quest for in the future, and projected it back in time, into a primeval past. In order to understand what man can become, one must look at what he once was, for whatever man once was, he can become again. The Romantic attraction to the idea of the fall must be explained by the Romantic interest in the idea of an

[33] Hunter and Kranidas write that the novella's "extraordinary vision of the Fun Fair precedes *Brave New World* by at least a year, and another fiction with which it claims comparison, *The Day of the Locust*, by twenty years" (Introduction, *Barfield Sampler* 13).

apocalypse, a revolutionary transformation of the human condition.[34]

Here again is the idea of quest as redemptive, building on history to transform the future, that Barfield neo-romantically reshapes from modernist issues.

Apocalyptic themes extend beyond romantic literature and signal elements of modernism in Barfield's work. Brian May states that "impressionism, elementalism, apocalyptism—are significantly 'modernist' modes of representation".[35] In *Modernism and Mass Politics*, Michael Tratner writes, "modernist visions of ultimate revolutions of consciousness or of society—anarchistic, mystical, or apocalyptic moves beyond everyday reality—as ways of advocating or rejecting particular social changes. Modernist works themselves suggest that apocalyptic imagery may function as a transitional device".[36] Barfield's "apocalyptic imagery" can be "a transitional device" in his version of a people and place in transition.

Barfield's apocalyptic finale incorporates revolution in that the Fun Fair's foulness is challenged not through superficial means but through the Ringmaster's underground circus. Abdol's fair is replete with perversions that stimulate yet dull the people's senses. Much of the entertainment is futuristic and mechanical, such as "automatic tarts" (66) that are robots made to look human and "electric dragons" (86) instead of carousel horses. In contrast, the Ringmaster trains his recruits to ride horses, which have "gone quite out of fashion" (77). The purpose of this rigorous training is "not so much in giving [an] actual performance as in rehearsing for a *future* one" (77; emphasis added).

The Ringmaster's circus troupe clowns, also known as Motleys, become Godivas once they pass their training and can then remove their clown garb. As Godivas, they can ride out on "a mission" (a "Godiva-Send") from which they often return abused by their audience (85). "Godiva" is a "Latinized form of the Old English name *Godgyfu* meaning 'gift of god'"; the name clearly alludes to "Lady Godiva who was an 11th-century English noblewoman who, according to legend, rode naked through the streets of Coventry to protest the high taxes imposed by her husband upon the townspeople".[37] Appropriately named, the Godiva-Send performances are not useless or titillating entertainment but symbolically spiritual in purpose and origin, as well as an effort to provoke change in a corrupt society. Sultan learns that these missions prepare for the eventuality that "[e]verything" in the Amusement Park "will come alive" (86) and cause disaster. Sultan finally passes the test to become a Godiva. During Sultan's performance, the narrative shifts into the present tense (88), a modernist technique of writing demonstrating time's flux that Barfield uses neo-romantically to increase the intensity and individuality of the moment. Sultan later applies his skills to attempt to rescue people when Abdol's machines come to life, wreak destruction, and devour people.

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[34] *Creature and Creator: Myth-making and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984), 40-41.

[35] *Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish Literature, 1899-1939*, eds. Richard Begam and Michael Valdez Moses (Durham: Duke UP, 2007), 137.

[36] *Modernism and Mass Politics: Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995), 36.

[37] "Godiva", *Behind the Name*, Campbell.

During this chaotic conclusion to the Fun Fair, the people repeatedly cry out, "Ah Woe!" (96). Multiple meanings of "woe" include "misery, affliction, or distress" as well as a "curse" when used "in denunciation"; thus, the repetition of "woe" heightens the distressful scene and refers to the cursed nature of the people's situation.[38] Through the people's lament, "a fresh sound was insinuating itself, a mysterious hiss which seemed to arise out of the original sounds, and to mingle with them rhythmically, and yet also to oppose them" (97). The sound was the word "Kiss!" by the Ringmaster "with such rhythmic pauses, that his voice always followed a renewed burst of wailing," producing "Ah Woe! . . . Kiss! . . . rising and falling, rising and falling, as if they had been going on for ever" (97). These are seeming polarities of words and emotions becoming "a *thing*", or a *tertium quid*, perhaps also pointing to the Eternal Feminine that Gerald refers to before reading this tale aloud to his audience.

Connected with Barfield's focus on language, the people's and the Ringmaster's vocalizations are partially produced by the lips, obviously key to human communication. Fittingly and neo-romantically, a kiss between Sultan and Lucy concludes the apocalyptic scene, for kissing can be not only an act of unity and intimacy but also a sign of reconciliation, reciprocation, and/or honor of the other. According to a song at a dance that Sultan witnesses much earlier in the text, "a kiss" is also "eternal" (11), another means of melding music, body, and spirit in timeless harmony.

The novella's ending with Sultan and Lucy's redemptive union involving the moon and sun somewhat resembles Novalis's Hymn 3.[39] While grieving by his beloved's graveside, the narrator is transported, and his "unbound, newborn spirit. . . . s[ees] [her] glorified face" and "[i]n her eyes eternity reposed". This transformative experience that binds him more strongly with her causes him to "hold fast an eternal, unchangeable faith in the heaven of the Night, and its sun, the Beloved".[40] Sultan and Lucy "gaze" into each other's eyes and then "burst together into floods of tears and fell to kissing one another" as they transform and unite "in an endless ecstasy of desire that was at the same time fruition" (98). Such language also echoes Novalis's "On her neck I welcomed the new life with ecstatic tears" (12). As male and female merge, the tale closes with a Grail image, symbolic and frequent in Barfield's fiction: "In the centre of the ever-widening Arena stood the Ringmaster, grown now to gigantic stature, his arms outstretched above his head and forming a great cup. Suddenly all took fire, melted into one, became a chalice of living flames, the petals of a giant Sun-flower into which the journeying Moon fell with a long sigh of relief" (98). Like Novalis's night/moon and day/sun imagery, Barfield uses these symbols as restoring body, spirit, and cosmos through greater perception and wisdom.

The novel itself concludes not long after the fairy tale. On page 547

[38] "Woe, int., and adv., n., and adj." *OED*, 2nd ed., online Dec. 2012 (Oxford UP, 2013).
[39] Gerald reads Novalis in *English People*, and it apparently influences his writing of the fairy tale.
[40] Novalis, *Hymns to the Night and Spiritual Songs*, trans. George MacDonald, 1897 (London: Temple Lodge, 1992), 12.

(chapter 75) of part four of *English People*'s typescript, Gerald finishes reading his tale to the Trinder siblings. John deems it "a very beautiful fairy-story". Gerald says that "it is true in the proportion that it is imaginative," a statement that he follows with "his favourite quotation [from Keats], 'I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of imagination'". Near the end of this final chapter, when the cat Merlin uncharacteristically and affectionately interacts with John, Gerald says that the cat "is prophesying" because "he knows all about the future", perhaps suggesting final participation[41] when humanity and the natural world are whole again. Neither Janet nor Humphrey appears to hear Gerald when he checks for their reaction. Instead, the novel concludes with Humphrey sitting "with his eyes fixed before him, and a curiously anxious look on his face, as if he were watching on some distant horizon the smoke of approaching battle", an anticipated revolution.[42]

Paul Cantor thinks that "Shelley presents the apocalypse as basically an undoing of the fall" (96).[43] The novella's and novel's ending may provide such a reading by protesting against social corruption and seeking to unify humanity and the natural world. About these topics in his novel, Barfield asserts,

> It is now accepted on nearly all sides that the seeds of destruction were inherent in Western civilization before the War began. It may be that peace will be restored and immediate physical destruction averted. . . . If the great heritage of the West is to be preserved, we shall want a new insight, not only to recognize the rotten patches for what they are, instead of welcoming them as triumphs of progress, but also to enable us to penetrate to the core of Western Civilization and draw up its health and goodness to the surface. In the world of the spirit there are shapely things of which our monstrosities are perversions, witnessing to their existence and demonstrating their strength. (Headnote 97)

Barfield's purpose is to bring about social, cultural, and cognitive change, and he uses the novel's fairy tale in order to engage his reader.

Various critics have noted both the problems and values of *English People* and the novella. In one evaluation, Barfield's novel, "apart from its richness of ideas, contains some of the finest passages of poetic writing . . . in his *oeuvre*" (Blaxland-de Lange 242). Barfield's aim is evident in his treatment of the imagination to convey truth through language and meaning, responding to and expanding from Coleridge's ideas and romantic thought. Barfield's strength as a writer and neo-romantic shines out even more in his novella as being more neo-romantic than the predominantly realistic novel. The short story is "prophetic" and "futuristic" (Kranidas, "Two" 94), and "a kind of epitome in fantasy of the basic issues of the novel: the dire confrontation of spiritual and

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[41] Final participation is part of Barfield's evolution of consciousness theory in *Saving the Appearances*.

[42] "'English People', Novel, Part IV". TS. Owen Barfield Papers, Dep. c. 1088, Bodleian Lib., Oxford.

[43] Barfield read Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* in 1925 (*All My Road before Me: The Diary of C. S. Lewis 1922-1927*, 1991, ed. Walter Hooper [San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt, 1992], 368)—a probable influence on his ideas since he wrote *English People* later.

materialistic forces, the apparent defeat of spirit in our time and its ultimate triumph" (94-95). These elements typify Barfield's writing for the future in a tale that he claims is "surprisingly prophetic" (see fn.9). His novella's symbolism, especially pertaining to the Rose, displays how "love and imagination create balance and mobility in the individual psyche and engender true community" (Hipolito xiii). Such themes permeate his subsequent writings in his ongoing appeal for people to think and interact with others and nature in healthy, imaginative, and unifying ways.