CHAPTER II
THE HUMAN SELF: SOURCES OF THOUGHT AND IMAGERY
IN DAY LEWIS'S POETRY
In the previous chapter (Chapter I, Section iv) it is stated that a biographical study of poetry is helpful in understanding the poet's central concerns and the sources from which he draws his imagery. In the same chapter (Section iii) it is explained how Day Lewis considers the 'human self' as the basis for the poetic self to work upon. He frequently says that poetry is an ordering of experience, and that the poet tries to 'communicate something to himself'\(^1\) so that he can have a clear picture of his experience. According to him, the poetic self works on the material provided by the human self and the resulting poem affects the reader on two levels -- the human and the poetic. If the theory is applied to his own poetry, his poems should have some relation to corresponding experiences in his life. The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to study the 'Human Self' that is behind the poetry of Day Lewis. This study of human self involves, among other things, a study of his memories, the personalities that influenced him, the various periods in his life, his habits, attitudes and psychological traits, the physical experiences that influenced and the various authors that appealed to him and so on.

One of the earliest memories of Day Lewis, as
he informs in his autobiography, is the 'image of a white china cup in a green wood'. An accurate description of the memory is found in the poem 'Passage From Childhood', in the following lines:

His earliest memory, the mood
Fingured frail as maiden hair,
Was this - a china cup somewhere
In a green deep wood.²

The only difference between his prose reference in his autobiography and his reference in the poem is that the latter contains two more words, namely, 'somewhere' and 'deep'. But it is those two words that add mystery to the passage and convey his sense of longing for childhood. This an extremely good example of what Day Lewis calls a 'sleeping image'.³ The image of the 'white china cup' sleeps in his heart for forty five years till it suddenly emerges into the poem "Passage from Childhood".

A memory of his mother, whom he lost in his childhood, remained in his mind almost like a photograph. As Day Lewis informs, the picture was: "I am sitting in my pram; church bells are chiming; swans float on a pond in the evening light: my mother stops the pram so that I may look at the swans."⁴ The images of his mother,
the church bells, the pond and the swans are the 'bright transfers pressed' on his memory. The lines which present the picture in the poem "The Innocent" are:

The bells that chimed above the lake
The swans asleep in evening's eye
Bright transfers pressed on memory
From him their gloss and anguish take.

Another memory of his childhood was of the time when Day Lewis watched 'the cleared spring in the paddock'. When the gardener cleared the spot, particles of sand danced as the young Lewis watched raptly. The scene, preserved in his memory, springs into poetry many years later in the poem 'O Dreams, O Destinations'. Here the scene is described as though watched by children who take pleasure in everything that happens in life, yet wishing all the time to grow big:

They watch the spring rise inexhaustibly -
A breathing thread out of the eddied sand,
Sufficient to their day.

As a boy Lewis was greatly excited by the humming sound produced by the telegraph poles. In his autobiography he says: "here [i.e., at Sheringham] too I first became acquainted with the most mysterious noise
of my young life - the sound of telegraph poles humming to themselves drowsily all through the day. I was never tired of listening to this. Thirty five years later, the 'humming poles' appear in the poem "O Dreams, O Destinations":

It is the **humming pole** of summer lanes
Whose sound quivers like heat-haze endlessly
Over the corn over the poppied plains -
An emanation from the earth or sky.9

Nor is it the visual images alone that enter his poems. Sounds and tunes heard while he was very young float into his poems, which were heard by him probably thirty or thirty five years earlier. About the poem "Cornet Solo" Day Lewis writes in his autobiography:

The German bands playing waltzes or popular airs with an unveiled dolefulness are linked in my memory with night, **lamp light**, shining on **wet streets**, empty save for an occasional hansom cab, my own warm bed. I was ravished most of all by the cornet when it played alone, its harsh and plangent tone the very voice of romantic longing ....... 10
Thirty years later, the images of the streets and cabs along with the tune played on the cornet appear in the poem 'Comet Solo':

I could have lain for hours together,
Sweet hours together,
Listening to the cornet's cry
Down wet streets gleaming
    like patent leather
Where beauties jaunted in
cabs to their revelry
    Jewelled and spry.  

The railway noises from Paddington, which he heard as a child, appear in the poem "The Last Words" after many years:

The child who in London's infinite
    intimate darkness,
Out of time's reach
Heard nightly an engine's whistle,
    remote and pure ... 

In his autobiography, Lewis writes of an experience of his Sherborne days which occurred on a Sunday afternoon as he was 'sitting in a deck chair' at the back of the Harper House. The following is the description of the experience:
A gramaphone played in one of the studies behind me. And I began to be flooded in a ravishing sense of peace that flowed from the whole scene, rinsing away all impurities, gently rising and rising till I seemed to float as one with the lawn and the sweet peas and the gramophone music and the blue sky, on a deepening ecstasy where everything was to be loved, from which nothing was excluded but time.

The description of the experience in its similarity of expression clearly indicates that it is an experience which psychologists call 'the unitary consciousness'. The experience gives birth to many images in D.H. Lawrence. This experience is one of those wherein he was able to get the still out of the moving flux of experience; an instance wherein he could abstract a gestalt from experience. It is an experience 'intensely realised', when all objects comprehended by the consciousness dilate with absolute potency, an experience

..... that could so relay
The truth of flesh and spirit,
sun and clay
Singing for once together
all in tune.
Experiences flock into the poetry of Day Lewis not only from childhood; his whole life, at every stage finds expression in his poems. The experience of his father's death is behind the poems "Overtures to Death" and "Son and Father". Poems like "The Stand To" and "Watching Post" are the outcome of almost immediate experiences as a homeguard. Some parts of the Transitional Poem, according to Lewis, are love poems addressed to his wife. The subject of From Feathers to Iron, as he explains in his autobiography, was "my own personal experience during the nine months before the birth of my first child". The same explanation regarding the theme of From Feathers to Iron is found in A Hope for Poetry. The Magnetic Mountain brings out his sympathy for communism. A Time to Dance had for its subject the adventurous flight of Farer and M'Intosh in the 'junk heap' the D.H.9. "The Nabara" indicates his passionate feeling for freedom and his attitude to the Spanish Civil War.

Many images in Day Lewis are the outcome of his psychological associations. Lewis seems to think of his friends and relations in terms of associations. A man or woman is generally associated with an image, and whenever Lewis thinks of the person, the image appears
before his mind's eye. In *Transitional Poem* we get many examples for this kind of imagery. While declaring his allegiance to those "...who built / My house and never a stone of it laid agley" Lewis mentions four people, two women and two men who influenced him. He says:

You first, who ground my lust
to love upon
Your *gritty humorous virginity*,
Then yielding to its temper suddenly
Proved what a *Danube* can be stuck
from stone.  

The 'you' referred to in the lines is Mary King, his first wife, to whom he 'addressed' parts of the poem. The secret can be shared by us if we read the abstract about Mary King in *The Buried Day*:

Her loyalty, her deep capacity for attraction, and her honesty - a kind of *gritty substratum*, inherited perhaps from her North County Country parentage beneath the youthful softness were qualities I soon recognised. They would gently purge me of my self-delusive cynicism, so that I should discover in myself, a tenderness, a *spring of altruism* which had been latent hitherto.
It is interesting to note that *The Buried Day*, written after thirty years after the writing of *Transitional Poem* still speaks of Mary King in association with 'gritty substratum' and 'a spring of altruism' which appeared in the early poem as 'grittly humourous virginity' and 'Danube'. The second reference in *Transitional Poem* is to

...the hawkfaced man, who could
praise an apple  
In terms of peach and win the
argument.  

The secret about the 'hawk-faced man' is revealed in another poem, "For Rex Warner on His Sixtieth Birthday", written thirty five years later:

'The Hawk-faced man' — thirty five years ago I called him — 'who could praise an apple in terms of peach and win the argument ...'.

Similarly, one can understand with the help of the autobiography that the 'sorrow's familiar' in *Transitional Poem* is Margaret, who, according to Lewis, gave him when he was lost, 'a compass and a country that I was lost in'. In *The Buried Day* Lewis describes the Auden of the thirties as one
'with a lock of tow-coloured hair falling over the brow'. In *Transitional Poem*, the lines that describe Auden are —

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Last the tow-haired poet, never done
With cutting and planting some new
gnomic prop
To jack his all too sable universe up.27
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Nor are these associations limited to friends and relatives. Certain stages in Lewis's life are associated somehow with certain images, and these images are frequently found in his poems. His early life undoubtedly seems to have provided Lewis with a large number of such associations. Describing his childhood, Lewis says that his father and the other elder members of the family made it possible for him to HAVE his childhood, keeping their worries from him without drawing him "into the periphery of their emotional problems".28 "The lazy boring conversation" of the elders, says Day Lewis, while talking of his life at Monart, "came to my ears like sea sound in a shell".29 This experience of listening to conversations and leading a passive life, was like 'the repetitive rhythm which children and poets thrive on'.30 Thus the image of the 'shell' or the
'humming shell' was formed in his mind, and it jumps into his poetry whenever he thinks of his childhood. Such associations about childhood are very commonly found in his poems. Writing of his childhood in "Passage From Childhood", Day Lewis says:

Quick to injustice, quick he grew
This hermit and contorted shell

Lewis describes his infancy and childhood as though it is an experience common to all children in the poem, "O Dreams, O Destinations":

For infants time is like a

\textit{humming shell}

Heard between sleep and sleep,

wherein the shores

Foam-fringed wind-fluted of the

strange earth dwell

And the sea's cavernous hunger

faintly roars!^32

The children are, as he describes in the same poem, 'the lisping rushes in a stream'. In "Reconciliation", he describes the troubled man:
All day beside the shattered tank
he had lain
Like a limp creature hacked out of
its shell.
Now shrivelling on the desert's grid
Now floating above a sharp-set ridge
of pain.
There came a roar, like water, in
his ear.33

An early obsession of Day Lewis as a boy was looking into mirrors in search of identity and contemplating his own image. A child begins to realise its identity from the two opposite sides namely the father and the mother. Lewis lost his mother when he was four years old. He explains his confusion as a young boy in his autobiography:

...if one of these mirrors i.e., the father and the mother is taken away, the child may suffer from bewilderment or from a growing obsession with the question 'who am I?' Certainly, as a boy, I was often staring into looking glasses; and I still do; it was not from vanity — for I thought my face weak and rather absurd — nor straight narcissism but in a spirit of enquiry: 'Are you real?' 'Who are you' and later, more teasing still, 'which of you is you?'34
The passage just quoted from the autobiography, apart from explaining the source out of which a large number of images enter into the poetry of Day Lewis, also explains the metaphysical temperament in him which makes him seek the real behind the apparent. The child looking either into a mirror or into water and contemplating at its reflection is an image frequently seen in the poetry of Day Lewis. In "Passage From Childhood", Day Lewis says:

Who can say what misfeatured elf 
First led him into that lifelong 
Passage of mirrors where, so young 
He saw himself...

In "Sketches for a self-Portrait", a similar picture is given:

I am one who peered 
In every stranger's face for 
my identity 
In every mirror for a family 
likeness, 
In lakes and dew-drops...

Day Lewis finds 'double vision' in autumnal streams where the 'image and the real are joined like the Siamese twins'. In Transitional Poem the counterfeit
Achilles standing beside Scamander feels a 'river-god surge up to tear' him ‘asunder’. A woman looking into the mirror, contemplating the 'selves' in her is the subject for his poem "The Mirror".

Out of this psychological and metaphysical obsession of searching for the identity arose many themes which appear again and again in the poems of Day Lewis irrespective of the period of his poetic career. Lewis considers himself a combination of myriad selves—the selves dying and being born every minute of his life. These selves move in him like an eternal flux; and each poem, Lewis believes, is a successful encounter with one of these selves in bringing the life of that self to reality. While explaining why he could not rewrite or improve upon his poems, Lewis says that he would like to do so, but as matters stand he could not, because "the selves who wrote those poems are strangers to me and I cannot resume their identities or go back into the world where they lived....At any rate I could no more reconstruct an old poem than I could reassemble the self out of whom it was constructed; I can only write another poem, feeling my way along the same themes with the self now I am."
One of the philosophical ideas associated with this concept of self is the idea of transition. Lewis considers the human body a tree shedding the outer rings of a bark; he thinks of the body in terms of a snake sloughing off the skin. He also thinks of the human-frame in terms of a house or a room, into which the past selves - the 'travellers' - enter now and then for brief moments. The body, to Lewis, is "Saint Anthony's shirt".

It is also interesting to note that what Lewis calls the 'self now I am' is not always one self. There are always opposite selves in him fighting and contradicting each other, thereby making his heart a theatre of war. Day Lewis's poetry, thus, is a poetry of conflict and ambivalence. In every poem, except in those poems which deal with material outside his psychic life and which rarely reveal any signs of conflict except in terms of sociological preoccupation, the theme of conflict is found either implied or explicit.

The main source for the various conflicts in Day Lewis's poetry can be grasped if we understand what he says of himself with reference to transition. He was,
he tells us, reluctant to leave the state of childhood. He was 'slow to grow up' like Thomas Hardy. It is not only so with the state of childhood, but with any other state in his life. "Just as I had clung to the state of childhood", he says, "arriving at Sherborne with a child's innocence and ignorance, so my adolescence would protract itself through Sherborne into Oxford and beyond, and it would not be till my thirties I should effectively throw off and emerge into the clearer air, the wider, the more settled prospects of manhood". Had it been only reluctance to leave one state for another, the problem would not have been so great a subject for poetry. He had another trait in him — to look forward into the future with eager anticipation — the kind of anticipation found in children expecting a Christmas gift. He is well aware of these traits, for he explains this dual nature in him very clearly, in The Buried Day:

For there is a sanguine streak in my temperament, inherited perhaps from my father, which runs ahead of me into the future and greets the unseen with a cheer, so that, just as I am still faintly excited by the post every morning, able to
believe it may contain a huge cheque or a passionate love-letter from an unknown admirer, I experience when I move house a delightful sense of better things to come, of being reborn. But this sanguine, forward looking self is counter weighted by a self both nostalgic and melancholy, which hates leaving places. If I am staying weakened with friends, depression comes seeping in my mind several hours before I have to go — depression, but also a restless urge to be gone, to get clear of the limbo which, however much I love the people or the place, they are now becoming.42

The passage just cited offers a clue to understand the vast number of travel images found in Day Lewis. Many poems of Day Lewis are based on the theme of travel; the poems express both the reluctance to leave a place and the desire to leave it, making the conflict between the two ideas the theme of those poems. Day Lewis introduces the theme in "Departure in The Dark":

Nothing so sharply reminds a man
he is moral
As leaving a place
In a winter morning's dark, the
air on his face
Unkind as the touch of sweating metal...
No doubt for the Israelites that
early morning
It was hard to be sure,
If home were prison or prison home;
the desire
Going forth meets the desire returning. 43

The same theme, based on the same psychological conflict,
is found in "Word Over All":

Always our time's ghost-guise of
impermanence
daunts me; whoever I meet,
Wherever I stand, a shade of
parting lengthens
And leaps around my feet. 44

In "Days Before a Journey" Lewis says that man's mind
starts on its journey many days before the real journey
takes place. The 'anticipating self' is well described
in the poem:

Between staying and going
Opens the little death,
Shadowed, unformed, uncanny
And makes the real a wraith.
Oh, travelling starts many
Days before the journey. 45
The same theme is found in the poem "The Tourists". The theme of travel, since its very origin lies in the exploration of the self, takes metaphysical dimensions and appears a recurring theme.

One image frequently found in most of the poems of Day Lewis is the alternation of light and darkness. The origin of the image lies in Lewis's experience of the gloom and light, the depression and the sudden exhilaration felt by him during his Sherborne period. "Like one of those series of tunnels which carry a railway line across a rocky coast", says Lewis in his autobiography, "mine alternated stretches of gloom with rapid glimpses of brilliant, almost fabulous light — light so powerful that the objects it momentarily revealed seemed to be made of light themselves, and the brief narrow vistas flashed at me and were gone like passes of a magic wand". One reason for this gloom and disorder felt by him certainly lies in his psychological bent of 'taking everything too much to heart'. For instance, the philosophers whom he studied haunted him like ghosts. If he had accepted the philosophical studies as 'a game', as something to be undergone for the honours degree, he could have avoided, he says, "the mental confusion which spread outward from the
subject I was reading into the life around me.\textsuperscript{48} The study of philosophy, however, was not the only thing responsible for his gloom. As it could be understood from the following passage from his autobiography, such moods seem to be inherent in his nature:

About this time - my eighteenth or nineteenth year - began those periodical black moods, unfocussed, un-intelligible, irresistible, which for many years were to sweep over me out of the blue, drenching me with misery and rendering me so morally impotent that I could not descry any gleam of reassurance through their mirk, nor make the least move to free myself. I learnt later that theologians knew it as a deadly sin, accidie. But I also learnt by experience that those moods were often forerunners of a new bout of poetic activity, as though I must go down into the uttermost darkness before the seeds of life in me could germinate.\textsuperscript{49}

The experience of finding brilliant and powerful light followed by utmost darkness appears in many of his poems. A fine description of this gloomy mood, and its necessity
as felt by the poet, is found in the poem "The Pest", for which the passage cited from The Buried Day just above, seems to be a kind of commentary. The lines are the following:

That was his youthful enemy,
    fouling the azure
With absolute mirk risen from
    god knows where -
A zero mood, action's and thought's erasure,
Impassable as rock, vapid as air.
When angels came, this imbecile thing infesting
His home retired to its sanctum below stairs;
But emerged, sooner or later, clammy testing
His hold on grace, his bond with the absent stars;
Till the horror became a need, the blacked-out sky
A promise that his angels would reappear,
A proof of light.... 50

The gloomy mood about which Day Lewis writes both in his autobiography and in "The Pest" seems to have been experienced by him so frequently, that he generalises his experience and makes it a common feature of youth
in "O Dreams, O Destinations":

Out. youthtime passes down a colonnade
Shafted with alternating light and shade. 51

In Transitional Poem he describes how the gloom in the
shape of a 'shadow' haunts him wherever he goes:

But finding all things my strenuous
sense included
Ciphers new copied by the indefinite
sunlight
I fell once more under the shadow of
my Sphinx. 52

In the same poem he describes how he felt the great
thrill when he saw the flame of the "burnt out faggot":

... and yet I was lord of
Something, for seeing the fall of a
burntout faggot
Make all the night...sag down I became
lord of
Light's interplay - stoker of an old
parable. 53

Sudden flashes of light followed by sudden depressions
of gloom are described in various poems. But mostly
these images depicting the alternation of light and shade
appear in the early poems. Day Lewis describes the flash and the darkness very clearly in *Transitional Poem*:

...and then the flash
That bleakly enlightens a
few acres leaves but
A more Egyptian darkness whence
it came. 

Another conflict found in Day Lewis's poems is that between his love of solitude and his longing for society. The conflict, though it appears merely psychological in the beginning, assumes greater dimensions by becoming a conflict between loyalty and belief. The world in which he was born and bred up "a world insulated, self-important, artificial, anxiety ridden, yet endeared to me by familiarity", and the world which he had come to see and understand stand at opposite poles making it difficult for him to declare his allegiance. The transformation of the shy young boy into the socialist who declares himself a lover of the oppressed and downtrodden certainly had its beginnings in the Edwinstowe period. Lewis describes himself as a child playing in the 'well-shaved lawn' in many poems. He had enjoyed the privacy and the comfort of the family.
garden till his father shifted to Edwinstowe, which was a colliery district. Accidents of some sort or the other frequently occurred, says Lewis, "deep below my very feet as I sat in the sunny rock garden reading Swinburne or the early Yeats". It was at Edwinstowe, according to Day Lewis, that his "social conscience was born".

The description of himself as a young man sitting in the "sunny rock garden" is to be noted, as the garden becomes an image for the comfortable middle-class life. The garden appears as 'lawn', the 'well shaved lawn', the 'walled garden', 'Paradise' and 'Eden' out of which Lewis wants to escape for sometime; after sometime he says that he has 'come out of Eden'. The 'garden' image inevitably appears in almost all the poems which refer to his social commitment.

The social consciousness of Lewis was also the source of another conflict in him—the conflict between personal love and love for society. His self-consciousness, which was like a rock, was struck by his love for his wife, and this private love paved the way for his altruism. "Mary's qualities, her loyalty,
affection and honesty", says Day Lewis, "would gently purge me of my self-defensive cynicism, so that I should discover in myself a tenderness, a spring of altruism, a power to sympathise with someone other than myself, which had been latent hitherto. Added to this was the freedom he wished to have from his father's possessive love, about which, he says, almost sadly, in "Son and Father":

... The father is dead whose image
And superscription upon me I had
to efface
Or myself be erased. Did I thus,
denying him, grow
Quite dead to the Father's grace,
the Son's redemption?  

To the Edwinstowe period in the life of Day Lewis can be traced a lot images and ideas that appear in his poetry. The newborn 'social conscience' introduced him to a totally new approach to life, that his heart became a 'ring' wherein the new and the old attitudes fought incessantly. The new approach to life, poetry, society and religion have naturally come into conflict with the old approach.

Day Lewis's attitude to poetry and the poet
seems to be highly imaginative and even artificial till he has decided to cast away his 'school boy clout'. He says in the Transitional Poem:

I thought to have had some fame
As the village idiot
Condemned at birth to sit
Oracle of blind alleys. 60

He wanted to "live like a Poet, walk and eat and drink and think like a Poet", 61 in his youth. He wanted to write poems on nature and love, living a life of solitude and contentment in his 'walled garden'. The social consciousness brought about a change in his attitude: he began to feel that a Poet should be involved in life. He says: "A Poet should be involved, so far as his nature and circumstances allow it, in the main stream of human experience". 62

Being the son of a clergyman, Lewis was closely associated with the church and the clergymen in his boyhood and youth. He had the 'early habit of going to churches' and he seemed to have had a great respect for the church till the Edwinstowe period. Certain trivial incidents during this period changed his attitude
to the church to a very great extent. A discussion between his father and himself on the propriety of a clergyman receiving a fallen woman into his home made Lewis feel 'baffled indignation' at his father's way of thinking. When Lewis supported the clergyman, his father disapproved of it and quoted St. Paul's dictum that 'all things are lawful, but not all things expedient'. The conversations among parsons which, even in Tennis Parties, generally centred round "stipends or shortcomings of the colleagues" made him highly averse to them because of his nature of 'taking everything too much to heart'. This dislike for the clergy was to appear later in the poems, which reveal his socialist ideology.

Added to the memories, psychological traits, personal and social experiences, there is another source from which some of the images of Day Lewis enter his poetry — the scholarship. Keeping the images from classical mythology apart, one would be surprised to find how much of the philosophers enters his poems. His study for Greats was mainly responsible for many ideas found in his poems. Philosophy, though it seemed to him to be "far too strong a meat" for the mind which
was "as easily swayed by ideas" as his, was understood by him "only too well". The conflicting ideas of philosophers were another source of conflict in the poetry of Day Lewis. Lewis describes how he was often carried away by the arguments of the philosophers he was reading:

Each proposition advanced by Plato or Aristotle, Hume, Berkeley, Spinoza or Kant seemed too irrefutable until I read the opposing viewpoint.

The opposing views of philosophers depressed him very often; soon his mind became "a battle-field with antinomies locked in rigid unyielding struggle all the time. It was my old weakness of taking everything too much to heart". A study of the poetry of Day Lewis reveals that it was not only his heart that became the battle-field, but his poetry too. In fact, he informs that some of his poems reveal his struggle with philosophers.

So far an examination has been conducted into the various sources out of which Day Lewis derived his imagery and ideas found in his poetry. The study so far conducted reveals the following facts:
(a) Many images in the poetry of Day Lewis are drawn from his memories. Memories of childhood, like 'the China cup', 'the church bells', 'swans', 'clearing the spring in the paddock', 'the humming pole', 'the comet solo' and the railway noises enter his poems as images nearly after thirty or thirty five years of the experience.

(b) Experiences which are of a strange and uncommon nature, too, enter his poems: For example the gramophone music raptly listened to by him in his Sherborne days, the sad demise of his father, his experiences as a homeguard, his experience of making love to Mary and so on.

(c) Day Lewis usually remembers his friends and relations in terms of associations. There are some examples, such as 'gritty humorous virginity', 'the hawk-faced man', 'the sorrow's familiar', and 'the tow-haired poet' which actually are the associations with the help of which he recollects persons. The associations are not limited to persons alone. Certain states of life or aspects of life are associated
with certain images in his mind, such as the 'ennui of childhood' and the 'shell', the 'self' and the 'mirror' or the 'reflection', the body and the 'bark of a tree' or 'casting off the clout', the combined feeling of reluctance and the desire to leave a place and the 'traveler', etc.

(d) Certain physical experiences such as the feeling of sudden depression followed by the extreme thrill are literally used as images like the alternating stretches of light and gloom out of which arise a large number of images like 'the shadow', the 'Egyptian darkness', 'the colonnade shafted with alternating light and shade' etc. The physical fact of comfortably sitting in a garden and reading poetry leads him to associate the comfortable middle-class way of life with the images of 'garden', 'Eden', etc.

(e) The love for the working-classes or the 'birth of a new consciousness' is a result of his experiences during the Edwinstowe period. The various kinds of accidents that took place under his 'very feet' while he was
reading 'the early Yeats' disturbed him so much that he began to sympathise with the sufferers. That is to say that even his political ideas and allegiances are a result of his personal experiences.

(f) By temperament Day Lewis is an empiricist in the sense that he wanted to know the meaning or the significance of his experience. This attitude to experience is strengthened by his study of philosophers, whose ideas, as he confesses, are found in his poetry.

From the factual information gained in this chapter, it might be safely deduced that a poet's imaginative creation need not necessarily be external to his life and that it is possible to find a poet's life reflected in his poetry. However, in the case of Day Lewis there need not be any doubt regarding his statement that "a poet keeps his experiences for poetry". The study made in this chapter is conducted with the help of biographical evidence, because it is the least risky of all the methods in studying the sources of imagery and the personality of the poet.
The facts brought to light in this chapter make it obvious to us that the method of taking internal evidence alone into consideration while interpreting images cannot always yield good results. Day Lewis’s images like ‘Eden’ and ‘Egyptian darkness’ are likely to be interpreted wrongly by a critic if he does not take into consideration the way in which they have entered his poetry. In the case of images depending purely on psychological associations, it would be impossible to crack the hard nut of the image if the association is not known. For instance, it would be impossible to understand the image of the ‘tow-haired poet’, unless we know that Lewis’s mental picture of Auden as a young poet is associated with latter’s ‘tow-coloured hair’.

Of course, it would be possible to interpret an image with the help of the context in which it occurs. But such interpretations, more often than not, reveal what the critic thinks of the image, and not how the poet might have employed it. Where it is not possible to get any information about the poet such a procedure is not only necessary but inevitable. But where biographical information is available, the advantage of studying it cannot be denied.
The chapter has revealed that Day Lewis is correct in his opinion that 'the human self' is the basis for poetry. Since the poet as a man can be interested in ideas like any other man, it is possible that he may deal with ideas in his poems. Day Lewis has clearly stated that his Transitional Poem contains some philosophic ideas. To make the relation between the 'human self' and the 'poetic self' clear, it is helpful to quote what Day Lewis says on the subject. Here is an extract from his A Hope for Poetry:

In most poets there is an intermittent conflict between the poetic self and the rest of the man, and it is by reconciling the two, not by eliminating the one, that they can reach their full stature....So we may say that, while the poetic function of the man cannot be directly concerned with political ideas, his humanity may be concerned with them, in which case, they will inevitably come into communion with his poetical function and to some extent affect his poetry. ...We may go further and say that, if a poet is going to be receptive of political ideas, it is essential for him as a man to feel strongly about them. For this strong 'human' emotion, working upon ideas
makes them a more tractable material for poetry; the poetic faculty will, in fact, have to deal - not with an abstract idea - but with an idea suffused and moulded by emotion; and that is a common subject for poetry. What is really undesirable is that the poet should have dealings with political ideas as a poet without first having feelings about them as a man: for direct contact between the poetic function and abstract ideas can give birth only to rhetoric.  

If a man reads philosophers and political thinkers, and gets interested in them, and if he is a poet also, there is nothing wrong in the assumption that the particular philosophical and political ideas might enter his poetry. It is altogether a different matter whether ideas should be implicitly or explicitly expressed. If the human self in the poet is interested in ideas, his poetry certainly contains the element of thought. The passage from A Hope for Poetry makes it clear why a study of 'human self' is essential to understand the poetry of a poet. The passage also explains why poetry cannot be served from belief. In the case of poets like Day Lewis who make poetry out of their life, the human
self is the source of the ideas and images found in poetry, and unless that self is understood, their poetry cannot be understood.

So far we have discussed in theoretical terms thought and imagery and their relationship extending it to the examination of Day Lewis's own theory in this regard. And we followed this up with a 'biographical' study of the sources of Day Lewis's thought and imagery. We are now, I think, fully equipped to explore in depth the relation between thought and imagery in Day Lewis's poetry. As said earlier, I am going to take three groups of ideas, centred round his major life-concerns — (1) his ideas about poetry (his literary ideas), (2) his ideas about society, and (3) his metaphysical ideas and explore the way in which they are related to imagery.
Foot Notes


2. "Passage from Childhood", CP., p. 205. All underlining in this and the following chapters mine, unless I indicate otherwise.


4. Ibid., p. 19.


12. "Last Words", *Pegasus and Other Poems*, (London, 1957), p. 64. Hereafter the Collection will be cited as *Pegasus*. 
14. "0 Dreams, 0 Destinations", CP., p. 220.
16. Ibid., p. 218.
17. A Hope for Poetry, p. 38.
18. Ibid., p. 47.
20. Ibid., p. 20.
26. Ibid., p. 177.
29. Ibid., p. 31.
30. Ibid., p. 30.
32. "0 Dreams, 0 Destinations", CP., p. 216
35. "Passage from Childhood", CP., p. 205.
38. Transitional Poem, CP., p. 31.
41. The Buried Day, p. 128.
42. Ibid., p. 89.
44. "Word Over All", CP., p. 221.
48. Ibid., p. 166.
49. Ibid., p. 146.
52. Transitional Poem, CP., p. 15.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., p. 19.
55. The Buried Day, p. 64.
56. Ibid., p. 145.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
60. Transitional Poem, CP., p. 21.
61. The Buried Day, p. 87.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., p. 143.
64. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Lewis says that "the scars" of his "unequal struggle with philosophers" are clearly visible in *Transitional poem* — *The Buried Day*, p. 167.
72. Ibid.
73. *A Hope for Poetry*, pp. 54-55.