

but Fanny, diffident and meek, who offers this daring defiance. Mary Crawford does not defy the opinions of the world; she exemplifies them.

In the last chapter the narrative completes its curve; all the ironies stand revealed and take us back to the opening chapter: the reversal of accepted values is complete. If the encompassing irony of the novel is that Fanny alone is free, the stress is always on the difficulty of achieving such freedom against the formidable pressures of time and place and circumstance.

## *Below the Ghat*

Below the ghat where the bodies  
are burnt on the funeral pyres  
the turtles slowly glide and dream  
lazily beneath the water,  
replete with remnants of flesh  
not consumed by the flames.

Inside the Tower of Silence  
the gluttonous vultures savagely  
tear at their prey, while high  
above them eagles, kites and buzzards  
wheel, anxiously waiting to seize  
the meagre leavings of the feast.

Under the churchyard the worms  
softly perform in the darkness  
the same service as turtles and birds.  
For one expecting a Christian burial  
their blind insidious infiltration  
seems the most disquieting of all.

RAYMOND TONG