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EDITORIAL

This special issue of the *OJES* is devoted entirely to American literature. We take this opportunity to thank Dr. D. S. Reddi, Vice-Chancellor, Osmania University, for making available an additional grant without which this number would not have been possible. It is our hope that, with the growing popularity of American literature here at Osmania and elsewhere in India, it will soon be possible to publish annually a journal devoted to American literature.

THE EDITORS

EMERSON'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS WAR AND PEACE

ADAPA RAMAKRISHNA RAO

EMERSON has sometimes been criticized for the inconsistency apparent in his early profession of pacifist sentiments and his subsequent approval of the Civil War. He had written to Henry Ware, Jr., in 1835, that he was in favour of abolishing war because it is inhuman and unmanlike, and that he would gladly study the " outward signs and exponents of that progress which has brought us to this feeling."[1] And in his Address to the American Peace Society in 1838, he had described war as " epidemic insanity." Yet, when the Civil War broke out in 1861, he exclaimed that " sometimes gunpowder smells good,"[2] and, in his Address at the Dedication of the Soldiers' Monument in Concord, in 1867, he declared that " war civilizes, rearranges the population, distributing by ideas,— the innovators on one side, the antiquaries on the other."[3] This shift in his position on the problem of war led critics like Phillips Russell[4] and Alfred Odell[5] to conclude that the Civil War had been for Emerson a philosopher's holiday, when the emotional fervour of the war affected him so deeply that he conveniently forgot his early support to pacifism. Firkins suggested that the horrors of the Civil War did not touch Emerson vitally, and that " the romantic impulse which had formed his love of Scott and fed his love of Shakespeare...irradiated war with a courtly glamour."[6] Though such criticism seems tenable when statements and incidents are viewed in isolation, a close scrutiny of the available evidence will show that it is not hard to reconcile Emerson's stand on the Civil War with his earlier attitude to pacifism, and that the charge that he had turned into a " war-monger " during the Civil War is without any basis in fact.

The pacifist movement in the early decades of the nineteenth century in America was a manifestation of the urge for humanitarian reform that stirred the country, and, according to Miss Alice Felt Tyler,[7] probably the first peace society in the world was formed in New York city in August, 1815. In 1828, the many local and state peace societies, scattered all over the country, were united into one

central national organisation, which was named the American Peace Society. Among the distinguished lecturers who addressed it were William Ellery Channing, Henry Ware, Jr., Samuel May, and Emerson.

Emerson's Address to the American Peace Society, characteristically entitled " War," was delivered in the spring of 1838. But Emerson had many occasions earlier to examine the question of war and peace, as his Unitarian friends in Boston were actively associated with the pacifist movement. In one of his sermons in 1828, which has only recently been published,[8] Emerson referred to the current optimism in America, engendered by a period of peace and prosperity, which almost led people to think that a new order of things had taken place in the New World. He found no evidence to guarantee such facile optimism, and observed:

> Consider what have been the causes of war. Human passions. Are they removed? When our fathers shook off the dust of the old world from their feet did they shake off all its pollutions? Was there an emigration from the passions and from sins as well as from prelacy and corrupt institutions?...No,... human nature doth not change with change of place, with change of condition. Fifty or sixty centuries have spent upon the head of Man the storms of their wrath and the sunshine of their bounty; he has met with all events; he has acted all the parts in the round of life; but here he stands the same being God made in the garden; he has not lost one passion nor parted with one frailty.[9]

It is significant that Emerson went to the very source of all evil, human nature, in his consideration of the contemporary claims of progress and peace, and asserted that since human nature had not altered radically, the possibility of wars had not diminished either. Evil is inward and therefore merely legislative and outward reform measures cannot eradicate it.

Ten years later, Emerson delivered his Address on " War."[10] In view of the charge of apostasy levelled against him by Phillips Russell and Alfred Odell, this address deserves close attention.

Emerson began his speech by pointing out how war was unavoidable in the infancy of society, when food was scarce, competition high, and men were in a savage state in which their animal appetites took universal precedence over the needs of the mind and the heart. In those days even religion provided stimulus to the general frenzy of war. Ever devoted to the doctrine of compensation, Emerson observed that war at that stage played a useful role in actively forwarding the culture of man, for, " war educates the senses, calls into action the will, perfects the physical constitution, brings men into such swift and close collision in critical moments that man measures man."[11] War acts as a unifying and civilizing force, and promotes the great and beneficent principle of self-help, Emerson averred.

He then stated that as man evolved and gained a higher state of perception, war appeared to him to be juvenile and revolting. " And as all history is the picture of war,... so it is no less true that it is the record of the mitigation and decline of war." So, Emerson declared, " All history is the decline of war, though the slow decline. All that society has yet gained is mitigation; the doctrine of the right of war still remains."[12] It is obvious that Emerson entertained no illusions about the true nature of contemporary civilization, and also that for him total peace was still a visionary dream rather than a realized aspiration. He hoped that universal peace would prevail in the world one day, when man recognized that love could achieve the same end better than hate.

Next Emerson raised the question of the means by which to achieve universal peace, and categorically stated that it could not

> certainly, in the first place, [be attained] *in the way of routine and mere forms*,—the universal specific of modern politics; not by organizing a society, and going through a course of resolutions and public mainfestoes, and being thus formally accredited to the public and to the civility of newspapers.[13]

He reminded the gathering that that game had been played to tediousness and that a great objective such as peace could not be achieved by public opinion, but " by private opinion, by private conviction, by private, dear and earnest love."

In the face of this evidence, to say that Emerson ever supported peace at any price or that he believed that in his day society had evolved to such a degree of moral perfection that war for it would be a thing of the past is to do violence to the facts. His Address on " War " offers no basis for that supposition. He had his reservations on the question, and cautioned the members of the Peace Society that, till war became a thing of the past through man's private integrity and love, man might not be able to give up his right to fight, because " a wise man will never impawn his future being and action, and decide beforehand what he shall do in a given extreme event."[14]

This was in 1838. The next year Emerson again reflected on the extreme stand taken by some pacifists who declared that they would refuse to fight in any circumstances. Emerson could not subscribe to that view. He noted in his *Journal:*

> I do not like to speak to the Peace Society, if so I am to restrain me in so extreme a privilege as the use of the sword and bullet. For the peace of the man who has forsworn the use of the bullet seems to me not quite peace, but a canting impotence : but with a knife and pistol in my hands, if I, from greater bravery and honour cast them aside, then I know the glory of peace.[15]

If Emerson was aware of the foolishness of war, he did not share the view of the pacifists that it was an unmitigated evil which should be avoided at any cost. For one thing, Emerson's philosophy does not conceive of an unmitigated evil. To the enlightened mind evil has no essence or substantial existence. Evil is to good as shade is to light.[16] Moreover, out of the so-called evil may come forth some good. Benefit is the end of nature, and hence no devil, poison, or vice lacks its compensatory values.[17] Emerson could find such compensatory values even in war. He could see the benefits that society sometimes reaps during war, and was also aware of the possibility of war acting as a beneficent stimulant to the individual.

That war sometimes has been a civilizing influence Emerson could readily see in the pages of history. Alexander's conquest " brought different families of the human

race together,—to blows at first, but afterwards to truce, to trade, and to intermarriage."[18] Even the civil wars of Cromwell, the military persecutions of the Czars, and the savagery of the French Revolution were not without their compensation, as these painful incidents were like " the frost which kills the harvest of a year " and yet " saves the harvests of a century, by destroying the weevil or the locust."[19]

As for the individual, war may turn out to be a great blessing for his spiritual growth, as it teaches him self-reliance. For

> we have many teachers; we are in this world for culture, to be instructed in realities, in the laws of moral and intelligent nature; and our education is not conducted by toys and luxuries, but by austere and rugged masters, by poverty, solitude, passions, war, slavery; to know that paradise is under the shadow of swords; that divine sentiments which are always soliciting us are breathed into us from on high, and are an offset to a Universe of suffering and crime; that self-reliance, the height and perfection of man, is reliance on God.[20]

Thus Emerson viewed war as stimulating the dormant faculties of the individual and forcing him to fall back on his resources and thereby leading him to practice the great virtue of self-sufficiency. These facts should be taken into account in considering Emerson's attitudes toward the pacifists and the Civil War.

Emerson was deeply affected by three wars, and reacted to each of them in a different way. He took pride in the American Revolution and the part played by his own Puritan ancestors in it, though he admitted that few wars could be justified on such good grounds. He often praised the Puritans for their uncompromising championship of political liberty. His grandfather, William Emerson, had served as chaplain to the American army at Ticonderoga during the Revolution, and had died of a fever, contracted in the army camp. Emerson sang of the Revolution in his " Concord Hymn," in which he referred to the embattled farmers as those who " fired the shot heard round the world," and sung of the " spirit, that made those heroes dare / To die, and leave their children free."

In contrast, he vehemently opposed the Mexican War, as he believed that it was fought for the benefit of the slave states. In 1845, he participated in an anti-annexation convention held in Concord. He declared that New England should resist the annexation " tooth and nail." He realized very well that the ultimate practical difference would be negligible.[21] Yet, he deemed it his duty to register his protest. His friends, Thoreau and Alcott, had refused to pay taxes to a government which could perpetrate such a gross act of injustice, preferring instead to go to jail. Emerson avoided such an extreme position, but denounced the war with Mexico in no uncertain terms. Addressing an anniversary meeting to celebrate the emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies, he asserted that his attitude was determined by ethical considerations. He said:

> I concern myself now with the morals of the system, which seem to scorn a tedious catalogue of particulars on a question so simple as this. The sentiment of right, which is the principle of civilization, and the reason of reason, fights against this damnable atheism.[22]

And in his *Journal*, he noted: " The United States will conquer Mexico, but it will be as the man swallows the arsenic, which brings him down in turn."[23]

As for Emerson's attitude toward the Civil War, it is well-known that he supported the North without any reserve. His support was so definite that he was even appointed a member of a committee of visitation to West Point.

While addressing the Tufts College in July, 1861, he said: " The brute noise of cannon has a most poetic echo in these days, as instrument of the primal sentiments of humanity."[24] Emerson advocated the merciless use of force against the Confederates. In a letter to his brother, William, in 1862, he wrote: " But far better that this grinding should go on, bad and worse, than we be driven by any impatience into a hasty peace, or any peace restoring the old rottenness."[25] Not only was he opposed to a hasty peace, but he was also opposed to clemency and easy terms of peace. He noted in his *Journal:*

> It is far best that the rebels have been pounded instead of negotiated into a peace. They must remember it,

> and their inveterate brag will be humbled, if not cured....General Grant's terms certainly look a little too easy...and I fear that the high tragic justice which the nation, with severest consideration, should execute, will be softened and dissipated and toasted away at dinner-tables.[26]

These are certainly harsh words, coming from an enlightened philosopher, and when such statements are considered in isolation, it is easy to see why Phillips Russell thought that the frenzy of war had transformed Emerson into a war-monger. But, then, it must be remembered that Emerson visualized the Civil War not as a mere conflict between the Northern and the Confederate states of America, but as an event which would bring lasting social benefits to all humanity. Dr. Huggard[27] has ably argued that Emerson supported the North in the Civil War only because he believed it to be a second American Revolution, which would extend the political freedom gained for the white race in 1776 to all men in America, and extend the breadth of American thought by clearing away false social ethics—the assumption of the superiority of one race over others—which had hampered its cultural growth.

There is ample evidence to show that Emerson was fully aware of the horrors of the War. When he spoke in the Concord Town Hall in 1861, he stated that war was an awful thing, but that for a cause which appeared to contain within it the sources of an ultimate good, it was fitting that a man give his life.[28] In 1862, in a letter to Carlyle (who supported slavery and ridiculed the ideals of the Northern states), Emerson admitted that the country had fallen into doleful days, but thought that " even the war " was preferable to the politics which preceded it.[29] As Dr. Huggard remarks, the phrase "even the war" does not seem " to come from one whose senses were so titillated by war's glamour that he was unaffected by its tragedies."[30] And, then, there is the testimony of his friend, Moncure Conway, who stated that for Emerson the Civil War had been a severe ordeal from which he never completely recovered.[31]

Emerson's approval of violence in 1861 was not prompted by a spirit of animosity or vengeance toward the citizens of the Southern states, but by a belief that there were compelling moral sanctions behind the suffering and bloodshed

called forth by the war. In a lecture on " Natural Religion," he predicted that slavery would end, for, " the forces of the universe oppose it."[32] For Emerson slavery was not so much an economic or a socio-political question as an ethical problem. As the institution of slavery caused an inversion of the normal order of things, the Civil War appeared to him to be an inevitable compensation, brought into existence by the violation of a moral law. In a speech, made before the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, in January, 1861, Emerson clearly announced that his opposition to slavery was primarily based on moral grounds. He said:

> They say that the Asiatic cholera takes the vital principle out of the air by decomposing the air. I think it is the same with the moral pestilence under which the country has suffered so long; it actually decomposes mankind. This institution of slavery is based on a crime of that fatal character that it decomposes men. The barbarism which has lately appeared wherever the question has been touched, and in the action of the states where it prevails, seems to stupefy the moral sense. The moral injury of slavery is infinitely greater than its pecuniary and political injury. I really do not think the pecuniary mischief of slavery, which is always shown by the statists, worthy to be named in comparison with the power to subvert the reason of men, so that those who speak for it, who defend it, who act in its behalf, seem to have lost the moral sense.[33]

The key to the problem of Emerson's eventual participation in the Abolition Movement may be found in these words. He regarded slavery as an ethical issue, and as it involved the very basis of his philosophy—the right of every person to his individuality, in view of the divinity latent in him—he was for once willing to stir " in the philanthropic mud."[34]

Moreover, Emerson did not view the Civil War as just a means to liberate the American Negro. He saw in it a hope for the liberation of American culture. The war was to free the American mind, which had hitherto been shackled by its defence of the slave economy. By focusing people's attention on the necessity for developing the former slave into a useful citizen, moreover, it was to underscore the value of individual character among all citizens.[35]

In one of his letters to Carlyle, Emerson asserted that America was waging a war for charity and humanity.[36] He sincerely believed that the Union army was fighting not merely for the unity of the Republic but for the principle of liberty throughout the world, and that, if America should survive its test of battle, it would become the moral leader of the nations.[37] When Richmond fell in 1865, he hailed the success of the North as " a great joy to the world, not alone to our little America."[38]

Emerson's approval of the Civil War was thus based on his moral values and not on any sadistic delight in the tragic clash, nor was it nurtured by any romantic impulse, as Firkins suggested. He knew the horrors of war well enough. But he was also philosopher enough to transcend the sight of present suffering to visualize a great and enduring good emanating from the temporary evil. His attitude to the Civil War was perfectly in accord with the teachings of the *Bhagavadgita*, with which he was long familiar, which declares that a true warrior should not hesitate to fight and even kill, when forces of evil make war inevitable.[39]

Emerson understood the desirability of universal peace. But he knew that founding peace societies and passing resolutions would not bring about universal peace. For, he felt that salvation for the individual comes through his private integrity and not through agitation or legislative measures. Emerson praised the cause of peace because it was a noble ideal, but he would not shrink from the horrors of war when dearly cherished ideals were in danger, as he could also see war as a part of the evolutionary process, and recognise that " its evils might pave the way for good, as flowers spring up next year on a field of carnage."[40]

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1. *The Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. E. W. Emerson and W. E. Forbes, 10 Vols. (Boston, 1909-1914)—hereafter cited as *Journals*, III, 574.

2. Emerson had been visiting the navy-yard in Charlestown, Massachusetts. See J. E. Cabot, *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 2 Vols. (Boston, 1887), II, 601.

3. *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Centenary Edition, 12 Vols. (Boston, 1903-1904) —hereafter cited as *Works*, XI, 353.

4. See his remark in *Emerson the Wisest American* (New York, 1929), p. 265 : " It is odd to behold in Emerson a war-monger, an airer of prejudices, and an opponent of merciful peace terms; but war-fevers will buckle and warp the sanest minds, as the world has re-discovered within recent years."

5. See *La Doctrine Sociale d'Emerson*, University of Paris dissertation (Paris, 1931), 204, and also the chapter on Slavery, 139-201.

6. O. W. Firkins, *Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston, 1915), p. 140.

7. Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment* (Minneapolis, 1944), 401.

8. See *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. William H. Gilman and others (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), III, 121-22.

9. *Ibid.*, 121-22.

10. It was first published in 1849 in *Aesthetic Papers*, edited by Miss Elizabeth Peabody, and subsequently included in *Works*, XI, 148-1 76

11. *Works*, XI, 152.

12. *Ibid.*, 157-159.

13. *Ibid.*, 170.

14. *Ibid.*, 169.

15. *Journals*, V, 253.

16. *Works*, III, 79.

17. *Journals*, V, 28.

18. *Works*, XI, 154.

19. *Ibid.*, VI, 254.

20. *Ibid.*, XI, 236.

21. *Journals*, VII, 26-27.

22. Cabot, *op. cit.*, II, 432.

23. *Journals*, VII, 206.

24. *Works*, XI, 579.

25. *Journals*, IX, 354.

26. *Ibid.*, X, 93-94.

27. William Huggard, " Emerson and the Problem of War and Peace," *University of Iowa Humanistic Studies*, V, No. 5 (April 1938), 1-76.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

29. *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 1834-1872, ed. C. E. Norton, 2 Vols. (Boston, 1884), II, 316-17.

30. Huggard, *op. cit.*, 65.

31. *Emerson at Home and Abroad* (Boston, 1882), p. 313.

32. Cabot, *op. cit.*, II, 774.

33. Reprinted by Rollo G. Silver, " Emerson as Abolitionist," *NEQ*, VI (1933), 155.

34. *Journals*, IV, 430.

35. *Uncollected Lectures by Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Clarence Gohdes (New York, 1938), 45.

36. Cabot, *op. cit.*, I, 242-43.

37. *Journals*, X, 62.

38. See Huggard, *op. cit.*, 69.

39. None of the existing studies of Emerson's Orientalism mentions this similarity; but, as Emerson had read the *Bhagavadgita* with reverential attention long before the outbreak of the Civil War, it is not perhaps fanciful to think that his convictions on the problem of war and peace were partly strengthened by his knowledge of Krishna's teachings on the subject.

40. *Works*, XI, 578.

SINGERS OF ARMS AND MEN: THE CIVIL WAR POETRY OF WALT WHITMAN AND STEPHEN VINCENT BENET

MARY E. TOMKINS

WALT WHITMAN'S *Drum Taps* is the section of *Leaves of Grass* devoted to his poems about the Civil War (1861-1865) which completed the unification of the United States begun in 1776. *Drum Taps* complements Whitman's prose commentary on the war found in *Specimen Days*, the poems being the clear distillation of the swift, often muddy flow of everyday life reflected in the autobiography. For this reason it is tempting to consider the two as one coherent work. The poetry, however, exhibits a consistent emotional progression lacking in the prose. Whitman very consciously arranged the sequence of the poems in *Drum Taps* to achieve a cumulative emotional effect, whereas the war section of *Specimen Days* is a diary account of the poet's daily activities. Unhampered by the limitations of strict chronology, Whitman was enabled to broaden *Drum Taps*, building upward and outward in ever more reverberant waves of emotion, from the early war cry of "Beat! Beat! Drums!" to the tragic illumination of the war-spent "Reconciliation," then soaring to the eternal affirmation of life in death, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd."

The unity of Whitman's war journal is thematic. It is a low-keyed celebration of soldiers' courage and endurance, of the "divine average" viewed responding to the unrelenting test of war, and viewed always through Whitman's poetic response to war, concerned with the unity in diversity of death and love.

The themes of death and love, pervading both poetry and prose, are approached differently in the poetry. Here they attain a universality which is rarely, if ever, attempted in *Specimen Days*. Whitman's mystical conception of himself as cosmic "soul" seems controlling in the poetry, while the individual "I," the man Whitman dominates the prose. Although the "soul" is a projection of the "I," the difference in level of response of the two to the same experience,

the Civil War, is one of kind rather than degree, and this separation seems unbridgeable by literary critics.[1] The poems are the pure metal extracted from the rough ore of *Specimen Days* and fused by poetic genius.

The differences between *Drum Taps* and Stephen Vincent Benét's *John Brown's Body* are, on the other hand, those of degree, since both are poetry. These differences stem from two sources: differences in artistic goals and radically differing perspectives on the war itself. Whitman was able to identify himself utterly with the Civil War not only because he possessed, or was possessed by, a deep mystical pantheism, but also because he simply happened to be there while the war was going on. Benét, on the contrary, was narrating events of almost seventy years ago, for he wrote *John Brown's Body* in the 1920's. Consequently each of the poets arrived at interpretations of the war's significance which could only have grown out of his own time. Whitman's view of history, saturated with the cosmic idealism of the Transcendentalists, informs his work with shining optimism. The theory of history which is the organizing principle of *John Brown's Body* is, conversely, one which denies man the large say in his destiny which Whitman unquestioningly assumed man has. Thus Whitman works more freely than Benét, for he is at one with his time. But Benét is hampered because his way of organizing experience is basically unsympathetic to the outlook of Civil War times idealized by Whitman, yet he must somehow attempt to convey that outlook. I am not at all sure Benét himself was conscious of this tension in *John Brown's Body*. I shall try later to show how this tension operates to invalidate the superficial unity of the poem, a unity imposed by the poet on his material which does not succeed in hiding his own ambivalence toward the essential significance of the Civil War.

II

Whitman's essential optimism and subjectivism lie at the base of his form and the particular arrangement of the poems in *Drum Taps* he finally chose. This arrangement consisted of forty-four poems included in *Drum Taps* and six grouped under the heading, *Memories of President Lincoln*, selected by Whitman for the deathbed edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1892). The opening poem of *Drum Taps*, "First O Songs for a Prelude," is a call to arms. The collection thereafter can be divided into eight sections, each darkening

in tone and mood as the poet's tragic view of the war developed. Fot his experiences in hospitals and in the field forced upon him a realization of the terrible waste of spiritual resources brought to fruition by the conditions of the very war which then destroyed them. Dealing with the problem of evil inherent in war was perhaps Whitman's basic concern in these poems. " By Blue Ontario's Shore," the magnificently affirmative restatement of his belief in the importance of the individual and the future of democracy, reveals his resolution of the struggle between the forces of good and evil he had witnessed during the war.

The opening section of *Drum Taps* deals with the poet's immediate, personal reaction to the secession of the Southern states from the union. In " From Paumonok Starting Like a Bird " Whitman sets for himself the task of transcending his individual consciousness so he can " sing the ideas of all . . .," and in the following poem " Song of the Banner at Daybreak " he discovers his " theme is clear at last." He announces,"I see but you, O warlike pennant! O banner so broad, with stripes, I sing you only. . . ." His mission clear, the poet deals in the second section with scenes of war. " Come up from the Fields Father " concludes this section and marks a decided change from the preceding poems. The tone alters from the confident, facile patriotism noted in vivid sketches of armies marching or camped, not yet fighting. Death and mourning enter, but there is not yet any doubt expressed about the fitness of the soldiers' sacrifice of life.

The third section begins with " Vigil Strange I kept on the Field One Night." Here a note of personal grief is struck upon the death of a friend in battle. This group of poems concerns the deaths of individual soldiers. In " A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim " the poet, shaken, attempts to reach some conclusion about these deaths. Here Whitman overreaches, likening one of the dead to " the Christ himself." The poem is wrenched out of tone as the poet forces the note of universal brotherhood in death as in life with the overt comparison of one of the corpses to the dead Christ.

The fourth section contains the recognition of the length and difficulty of the war. In " Not the Pilot " doubt enters as the first terrible year of war is reviewed. The personal resolution of the poet to dedicate himself to helping the

wounded is crystallized in "The Wound Dresser." The poet next tries to transfer his own sense of dedication to all Americans in "Long, Too Long America." He cries, "For who except myself has yet conceived what your children en-masse really are?" Sickened by war, he turns to the serenity of nature and of man at peace in the lyrical "Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun." In strong contrast to this poem is the somber "Dirge for Two Veterans" which begins the fifth section. In this poem Whitman for the first time uses moon imagery in apposition to death. By this means he begins the transcendance of the earthly, human aspect of the war dominant in previous poems. He approaches the aspect of eternity finally achieved in the Lincoln threnody "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd." For in "Dirge for Two Veterans," Whitman intertwines three strands composing the experience, the moon, the music of the funeral march, and the poet's heart, all offered as tributes to the memory of the dead. This poem marks a turning point in *Drum Taps*. There is in it a hint that love may repair the ravages of war. Speaking for the living, Whitman addresses the dead soldiers on their way to burial: "The moon gives you light, / And the bugles and the drums give you music, / Any my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans, / My heart gives you love." Hope becomes explicit in the poems which follow. These celebrate the love of "comrades" and offer the reminder, in "The Artillery Man's Vision," that the war will be only a dream when the future, now only a dream, arrives.

We come now to an anomalous poem which does not fit neatly into any category of *Drum Taps*, "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors." This poem addressed to a slave is puzzling and enigmatic. It is abstract and lacks any sign that Whitman identifies himself with the slave portion of America. It is as though he included the poem because the war was, after all, fought over the issue of slavery. The use of rime is unusual; the poem, composed of triplets, uses rime in the second and third lines of each of the five stanzas. This poem, and the formal "O Captain! My Captain!" are the only two poems in *Drum Taps* in which full rimes are consistently used. It seems clear, from the fact that this single poem represents Whitman's sole reaction to slavery in *Drum Taps*, that this issue was peripheral to him, and that the mystical concept of Unionism, dwelt upon in the concluding poems, and in the Lincoln ones, was central. There is a curious coldness, addressed, as if from a height, at a "dusky

woman, so ancient hardly human," a curious obliviousness to actual misery so often accompanying idealism, which seems to perceive the woods so much more clearly than the trees. It is as though Whitman, fearing the threat of slavery to the Union, had to force himself to consider what slavery had done to the " hardly human " Negroes.[2]

The sixth section, beginning with " Not Youth Pertains to Me " is a celebration of soldiers. Here the poet starts to ponder the idea that the war was necessary to preserve the Union, that, in other words, evil is a necessary component of good. Once more the moon sheds transforming light over the maimed and the dead. And in " Reconciliation " Whitman transcends death and revenge through love and acceptance. Ressurection of hope marks the seventh section as the poet turns to rebuilding the nation. He promises now " to fiercer, weightier battles give expression."

The last section, really a separate one, called *Memories of President Lincoln*, or *Sequel to Drum Taps*, contains the four Lincoln poems, " By Blue Ontario's Shore," and a six line postscript to it entitled " Reversals," in which Whitman, as always, seemingly admits the place of evil in the totality of experience. The Lincoln memorial poems present a problem to literary criticism. It seems unlikely that Whitman was unaware of the discrepancy in poetic merit between " When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd "and the other three, for it is a glaring one. By purely literary standards, Whitman demonstrated faulty taste to group the poem as he did. But it is possible that the Lincoln section is a demonstration of Whitman's theory of the function of the poet in a democracy. The artistic superiority of " When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd " to the three following poems becomes in that case irrelevant. Each of the four could then be considered of equal value, for each represents an aspect of the people's mourning for the lost saviour. The greatest was the least lament, for it was the poet's own. " O Captain! My Captain ! " is the poeple's lament, a bit crude, lacking subtle overtones, but deeply felt. " Hush'd Be the Camps Today " is the soldiers' lament for their lost leader. The culminating poem " This Dust Was Once a Man " is that of the One, containing all the parts, the celebration of the preserver of " the Union of these States." For Whitman these last four lines may well have been the greatest lament.

After the publication of *Drum Taps* Whitman wrote to his friend W. D. O'Connor expressing his satisfaction with the poems. He felt that they excelled his previous work because the collection was " more perfect as a work of art, being adjusted in all its proportions, and its passion having the indispensable merit that though to the ordinary reader let loose with the wildest abandon, the true artist can see it is yet under control. . . ."

One of the marks of control, he continued, is seen because " I have in it only succeeded to my satisfaction in removing all superfluity from it, verbal superfluity I mean. I delight to make a poem where I feel clear that not a word but is indispensable thereof and of my meaning."[3]

III

Although *John Brown's Body* consists of a formal arrangement of a prelude and eight " books, " there is discernable no clear line of development paralleling that found in *Drum Taps*. The divi ions seem to be largely a mater of pagination, each one being from forty to fifty pages long. The story mounts a curve of intensity from Harper's Ferry in Book One to the climax, the Battle of Gettysburg, in Book Seven, dropping swiftly to the resolution and ending of the war in Book Eight. It is structured around John Brown seen as an agent of fate playing a part in the evolution of the United States. The work is no mere romantic cyclorama of the Civil War, but a combination of factual history, fiction, and a theory of history. Thus Benét attempts to ride three horses, and the poem is constantly threatened with dissolution as it gallops off in several directions. The whole train of events is foreshadowed in the Prelude when the captain of the slave-ship justifies the slave trade to his first mate, declaring, " We're spreading the Lord's seed—spreading his seed—" The seed spreads its own destruction, resulting in John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, which in turn leads inevitably to war.

The unity of *John Brown's Body* is maintained by occasional references to the role of Brown, and in the working out of the lives of the protagonists from the North and the South, Jack Ellyat and Clay Wingate. Events are related on two narrative levels, historical and fictional, and the distinction between them is not always clear. Ellyat is the main fictional character. His experiences provide a view of the war from a

variety of perspectives. He appears in most of the decisive battles of the war up to and including Gettysburg, is wounded, taken prisoner twice, escapes and falls in love with Melora, the daughter of a " hider " on the run, trying to save his son from conscription. The story is told from a Northern point of view, despite Benét's attempt to be objective. The bias is clearly revealed by his full, engaged account of Ellyat in contrast to the shadowy accounts of the exploits of his Southern counterpart. Wingate's experiences are generally related to the reader rather than directly presented.

There are fine sketches of minor characters like Luke Breckenridge, the Southern mountaineer who thought of the war as an outsized family fued and relished it accordingly. But the main characters are stereotypes, and the author manipulates them much as he contends fate would manipulate them in real life :

> Iron-filings scattered over a dusty
> Map of crook-cornered States in yellow and blue.
> Little, grouped male and female iron-filings,
> Scattered over a patchwork-quilt whose patches
> Are the red-earth stuff of Georgia, the pine-bough green of Vermont.
> Here you are clustered as thick as a clump of bees
> In swarming time. The clumps make cities and towns.
> Here you are strewn at random, like the single seeds
> Lost out of the wind's pocket. (p. 69)

In a long soliloquy on war and fate, Benét communicates Lincoln's stature, permitting him a choice between endurance and despair in the face of the constant defeat of the Union armies which preceded Gettysburg. Allowed some autonomy as a human being in this passage, Lincoln seems alive, and his predicament is moving to the reader. But on the whole the historical characters are manipulated by the forces of history just as the fictional ones are. Brown's role as a passive agent of fate is shown by Benét's cool appraisal of him as a misfit fanatic " . . . with a certain minor-prophet air, / That fooled the world to thinking him half great. . . . "

Benét's commitment to blind determinism is explicit in the following passage, which precedes Brown's speech after his conviction for treason:

> Sometimes there comes a crack in Time itself.
> Sometimes the earth is torn by something blind.
> Sometimes an image that has stood so long
> It seems as planted as the polar star
> Is moved against an unfathomed force
> That suddenly will not have it any more.
> Call it *mores*, call it God or Fate,
> Call it Mansoul or economic law,
> That force exists and moves.
> And when it moves
> It will employ a hard and actual stone
> To batter into bits an actual wall
> And change the actual scheme of things.
> John Brown
> Was such a stone—unreasoning as the stone,
> Destructive as the stone, and, if you like,
> Heroic and devoted as such a stone.
> He had no gift for life, no gift to bring
> Life but his body and a cutting edge,
> But he knew how to die. (*John Brown's Body*, p. 48.)

Here is no romantic's vision but a harsh appraisal of humanity, denied heroism, denied ideals, granted only blind will.

Despite the grim philosophy of *John Brown's Body* with its insistence that its characters respond like " iron-filings " to forces of which they are not aware, there is melody and lightness in the book. Benét is at his best in the ballad and in dialogue. Conversations among characters are natural and life-like, and it would be worthwhile, in this age of the ballad, to collect the ballads from the book, set them to music and publish them. Some of them have been set to music and they are as delightful in their way as Elizabethan madrigals sung to the accompaniment of recorders. Unencumbered by the burden of history, Benét indulged his natural gift for melody and tender sentiment. But in the book there is not any real fusion between the ballads and the portentous passages, such as the following one, a versification of economic determinism:

And so the game is played,
The intricate game of the watchers over the sea,
The shadow that falls like the shadow of a hawk's wing
Over the double-chessboard until the end—
The shadow of Europe, the shadow of England and France,
The war of the cotton against the iron and wheat.
If the knights and bishops that play for the cotton-king
Can take the capitol-city of wheat and iron,
The shadow hands will turn into hands of steel
And intervene for the cotton that feeds the mills.
But if the fable throned on a cotton-bale
Is checkmated by the pawns of iron and wheat,
They will go their ways and lift their eyes from the game,
For iron and wheat are not to be lightly held.
So the watchers, searching the board.
And so the game.

(*John Brown's Body*, p. 158)

Here Benét presents the practical threat to the United States if the South had won the war. He is as concerned with the importance of the Union, on a material level, as was Whitman in his spiritual vision of Unionism, the all-encompassing One. But Whitman's vision was organically incorporated into *Drum Taps*, while Benét drags political and economic theories into *John Brown's Body* by the scruff of the neck, doing violence to his true poetic endowment, of smaller scale, but as valid as Whitman's in its proper realm. Contrast the sober lesson in world politics quoted above with the following short ballad which leaps with the nervous vitality it describes, and which effortlessly evokes the long, sad sweep of history and of war:

Pickett came
And the South came
And the end came,
And the grass comes
And the wind blows
On the bronze book
On the bronze man
On the grown grass,
And the wind says
" Long ago,
Long
Ago." (*John Brown's Body*, p. 261)

Here, in twelve short lines, is almost everything that needs to be said by a poet about the battle of Gettysburg.

The war in *John Brown's Body* draws swiftly to a close after Gettysburg. The stories of the principal characters are tidily completed. Jack Ellyatt is re-united with Melora and Clay Wingate with Sally Dupree and all four are destined, presumably, to conform happily to the dictates of fate forever after. Lincoln's dream of " the black, formless vessel" ends in his assassination. An epilogue explains how John Brown's deed is related to present day America; " out of John Brown's strong sinews the tall skyscrapers grow..."; the chain of events of which he was a key link has resulted in American industrialism; a " tireless serf already half a god," it is a " flame, alone and steadfast, without praise or blame." The Machine, neither good nor evil in itself, is now in control of human destiny. There is nothing but to acknowledge " It is here." Man can exert no real control over the future; what will be, will be.

Drum Taps and *John Brown's Body* are America's closest equivalents to epics of the Civil War. Neither resembles very closely the epics which died out with the ancient gods, gods who honored battle above all the pursuits of men. Yet, the world changes and, perhaps, progresses. How strange would Whitman's bardic strains, celebrating the warriors of peace, rather than war, sound to shades of Norse warriors in Valhalla, or to Greek heroes enjoying the well-earned peace of Elysium. Strange, surely, but recognizable as in the true tradition.[4] But what would they make of Stephen Vincent Benét? For Whitman exalted man to divinity, but Benét robs him even of humanity.

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1. Walter Lowenfels, editor of *Walt Whitman's Civil War* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), evidently agrees. His book features Whitman's prose reports of the war gathered from *Specimen Days*, letters, and other Whitman documents. Poems from *Drum Taps* and some very fine Civil War drawings by Winslow Homer serve as backdrops to the prose accounts.

2. Roger Asselineau, in his important study *L'Evolution de Walt Whitman apres la premiere edition des Feuilles d'Herbes* (Paris, 1954), which has recently (1962) appeared in English translation in a publication of the Harvard University Press, roots Whitman's strange silence on the subject of slavery in *Drum Taps* to a hidden aversion to Negroes, asserting that Whitman's reaction to Negroes was like that of " a Long Island peasant

whose grandparents had owned slaves." (v. 2, p. 191, 1962 edition) Whatever the reason, Whitman shows a strange reluctance to deal with slavery in his poetry. In " By Blue Ontario's Shore " (section 6) he condemns slavery as part of a " conspiracy " to wreck the Union, which supports the idea that he was more interested in the concept of union than in specific social injustices, except as they threatened the unity of the states.

3. F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance* (New York, 1941), p. 596.

4. Whitman himself supremely conscious of his role as bard, justifies his right to add his poems to the " immortal songs " of the " poets of old lands." " As I Ponder'd in Silence," one of the dedicatory poems in *Inscriptions*, the opening section of *Leaves of Grass*, equals the proud hauteur of the " Phantom " which challenges that right :

> I too haughty Shade also sing war, and a longer and greater one than any,
>
> Waged in my book with varying fortune, with flight, advance and retreat, victory deferr'd and wavering,
>
> (Yet methinks certain, or as good as certain, at the last), the field the world,
>
> For life and death, for the Body and the eternal Soul,
>
> Lo, I too am come, chanting the chant of battles,
>
> I above all promote brave soldiers.

—:o:—

THE WOLFEAN MOMENT

HARI SINGH

COMMENTING on the reference to time in Act I, Sc. vii of *Macbeth*, Thomas Wolfe wrote:

> Shakespeare had not yet said the thousandth part of all he knew about the terror, mystery and strangeness of time, dark time, nor done more than sketch the lineaments of one of time's million faces, depending on the tremendous enchantments of his genius to cover the surrender of his will before a labor too great for human flesh to bear.... If the greatest poet that had ever lived had found the task too great for him, what could one do who had not a fraction of his power, and who could not conceal the task, as he had done, behind the enchantments of an overwhelming genius ?[1]

The above passage indicates Wolfe's deep and almost obsessive concern with the problems of time. But neither modesty nor an awareness of the complexity of the problem deterred Wolfe from exploring at length the role of time in human affairs. It is not possible, in this brief paper, to give a complete statement of Wolfe's ideas on the subject spread throughout his four monumental novels, two sizable volumes of letters and his various other writings. I shall, therefore, confine myself to an interpretation of Wolfe's concept of the moment and the standpoint from which he views the single moment—these being of central significance in his philosophy of time.

In his attempt to understand time, Wolfe has used the methods both of analysis and synthesis, isolating the single moment of experience as the basic component of time and striving to view the fleeting moments in the durational river of time as also against the background of timelessness and eternity. Wolfe's concept of the moment is elaborately described at several places in his novels and with his habit of being as explicit as he could be and leaving as little as possible to the imagination of his readers, he has prefaced many of these descriptions with the announcement that this is a "moment". *Look Homeward, Angel* opens with one such passage:

> Each moment is the fruit of forty thousand years. The minute-winning days, like flies, buzz home to death, and every moment is a window on all time.
>
> This is a moment.[2]

And then follows the history of Eugene's grandfather, Gilbert Gant, who married a young widow of modest means and led an easy careless life, and on his death "left five children, a mortgage and...in his strange dark eyes which now stared bright and open...something that had not died: a passionate and obscure hunger for voyages."[3] His second son, Oliver, who received this legacy of wanderlust is also fired by passionate desire to become a sculptor, to carve angels and to "wreak something dark and unspeakable in him into cold stone."[4] After an unhappy marriage and the death of his first wife, William Oliver migrates to Altamont where he meets Eliza Pentland, the energetic book-agent, who was obsessed by the desire to be a woman of property, and was talking constantly about real-estate, sale-price, appreciation and depreciation and first and second mortgages. To William Oliver who considers landed property a curse, her talk was distasteful. But through the strange attraction between opposites they decide to get married. During his courtship of Eliza, William Oliver, on a visit to Elizabeth Pentland's house, sees himself in a flash of intuition as the doomed stranger fated to suffer and die among the alien Pentlands. Their talk of death and destiny is hateful to his opulent and expansive nature, with its ambition to explore all earth instead of merely owning a small plot and waiting patiently to be entombed forever in six feet of it:

> And as they sat there in the hot little room with its warm odor of mellowing apples, the vast winds howled down from the hills, there was a roaring in the pines, remote and demented, the bare boughs clashed. And as they peeled or pared, or whittled, their talk slid from its rude jocularity to death and burial; they drawled monotonously, with evil hunger, their gossip of destiny and of men newly lain in the earth. And as their talk wore on, and Gant heard the spectre moan of the wind, he was entombed in loss and darkness, and his soul plunged downward in the pit of night, for he saw that he

> must die a stranger—that all, all but these triumphant Pentlands, who banqueted on death—must die.[5]

And then comes the moment for which Wolfe has been preparing the reader :

> And like a man who is perishing in the polar night, he thought of the rich meadows of his youth: the corn, plum tree and ripe grain. Why here? O lost ![6]

Gant's passion for wandering forever, his ambition to express and objectify his turbulent nature in the fixity and permanence of hard marble is, in this moment, seen at cross-purposes with the Pentlandic ethos of death as the goal of life, their preoccupation with man's tragic destiny and their habit, not of growth upwards and outwards like trees, but of burrowing in like a rabbit. Added to this pressure of the past, of hereditary forces and the flood-tide of racial, tribal and familial compulsions which make the present moment the acme of all the time that has gone before it, is another element. Gant sees in this moment not only the tensions and conflicts generated by the heavy hand of the past but also of the dark, uncertain future that lies before him and makes him feel lost and bewildered. It is a moment of reminiscence and premonition, of memory and expectation, and may be likened to the doorway of a room in which the entire past is locked up while the unrealized future is knocking importunately at the door to be let in and merge in the past. The Wolfean moment is a complex transitional point in the everflowing river of time, pressed down by the accumulated impact of the past and aquiver with the hopes and misgivings for an unrealized future.

This habit of viewing the individual moment both as a denouément and as an inception finds expression in a short essay which Eugene wrote on a French painting while at school. A painting is conceived only in space without any temporal dimension; it is nonexistent in temporal duration just as music has no spatial continuity and exists purely in time. The single instant of time captured by the painter is devoid of temporal reality as a point is without spatial dimension in Euclidean geometry. But when Eugene wrote, as a

school-boy about this picture of a French peasant girl listening to the song of a bird in the early morning, with her face turned towards the irradiated east, he constructed a fable around the solitary instant, weaving into it a past as well as the aspirations and longings for the future.[7]

Wolfe's concern with this dual aspect of every instant of time, impelled by the momentum of the centuries behind it and pregnant with the unborn future, is so intense that even when his characters transport themselves back to some point in the past with the help of memory, they not only reanimate a dead moment in the Proustian fashion but trace the curve from that moment of the past to the present instant and endeavour to peer into the future and know the line of movement as it crosses the present moment into the still unrealized time to come. When Gant steps out of his shop with " Queen " Elizabeth, the brothel-keeper, he suddenly feels the passing of youth and the coming of old age. His mind is transported back to an instant of his exuberant youth:

> And in that second the slow pulse of the fountain was suspended, life was held, like an arrested gesture, in photographic abeyance, and Gant felt himself alone move deathward in a world of seemings as, in 1910, a man might find himself again in a picture taken on the grounds of the Chicago Fair, when he was thirty and his mustache black, and noting the bustled ladies and the derbied men fixed in the second's pullulation, remember the dead instant, seek beyond the borders for what was there (he knew); or as a veteran who finds himself upon his elbow near Ulysses Grant, before the march, in pictures of the Civil War, and sees a dead man on a horse; or I should say, like some completed Don, who finds himself again before a tent in Scotland in his youth, and notes a cricket-bat long lost and long forgotten, the face of a poet who had died, and young men and the tutor as they looked that Long Vacation when they read nine hours a day for ' Greats '.[8]

And, significantly, Gant ends his reverie by asking " Where now? Where after? Where then?"[9] A concern for the future is an integral part of the revivification of time past. Professor Louis D. Rubin, discussing the above passage has

observed that " here in a moment of cognition Gant has suddenly been made aware of the relentless progression of time, and of how much of him has receded into the unredeemable past."[10] But a consideration of Gant's final question shows that in the novels of Thomas Wolfe recreation of the past has a close relevance to a knowledge of the present and an understanding of the future.

The only occasion when Wolfe has described the evocation of a moment purely as a recreation of the past is during the childhood of Eugene Gant when some solitary instant out of the dead past would return to him with such force and immediacy that it would put the living present into the shadow of unreality and keep the future securely excluded from consciousness:

> His life coiled back into the brown murk of the past like a twined filament of electric wire; he gave life a pattern, and movement to these million sensations that Chance, the loss or gain of a moment, the turn of the head, the enormous and aimless impulsion of accident, had thrust into the blazing heat of him. His mind picked out in white living brightness these pin-points of experience and the ghostliness of all things else became more awful because of them.[11]

But as Wolfe is careful to point out in the same context, it was a habit of mind of the immature Eugene who " did not understand change...did not understand growth.[12] Except during this brief period in Eugene's early life, everywhere else in Wolfe's novels, a moment of time combines in itself the elements of retrospect and prospect, reminiscence and premonition, memories of the past as well as hopes and forebodings about the future. Thus, the single instant is not an insulated fragment but epitomises in its fleeting brevity the entire destiny of man. Towards the close of *Of Time and the River* when Eugene sees Esther for the first time and sees the stirrings of a grand passion within himself while the other travellers experience the thrill and magic of boarding a great ocean-liner, the occasion is etched in Eugene's mind with an abiding sharpness:

> For if as men be dying, they can pluck one moment from the darkness into which their sense is sinking, if one moment in all the dark and mysterious forest

> should then live, it might well be the memory of such a moment as this which, although lacking in logical meaning, burns for an instant in the dying memory as a summary and a symbol of man's destiny on earth.[13]

And in the moment Eugene has a prescience of all the ardour and passion of the love that will blossom between Esther and himself, of all the bitter quarrels and anguished jealousy that will mark their relationship and of the final break with her to gain a disenchanted freedom :

> He turned, and saw her then, and so finding her, was lost, and so losing self, was found, and so seeing her, saw for a fading moment only the pleasant image of the woman that perhaps she was,and that life saw. He never knew: he only knew that from that moment his spirit was impaled upon the knife of love. From that moment on he never was again to lose her utterly, never to wholly repossess unto himself the lonely, wild integrity of youth which had been his. At that instant of their meeting, that proud inviolability of youth was broken, not to be restored. At that moment of their meeting she got into his life by some dark magic, and before he knew it, he had her beating in the pulses of his blood—somehow thereafter—how he never knew—to steal into the conduits of his heart, and to inhabit the lone, inviolable tenement of his one life; so, like love's great thief, to steal through all the adyts of his soul, and to become a part of all he did and said and was—through this invasion so to touch all loveliness that he might touch, through this strange and subtle stealth of love henceforth to share all that he might feel or make or dream, until there was for him no beauty that she did not share, no music that did not have her being in it, no horror, madness, hatred, sickness of the soul, or grief unutterable, that was not somehow consonant to her single image and her million forms—and no final freedom and release, bought through the incalculable expenditure of blood and anguish and despair, that would not bear upon its brow forever the deep scar, upon its sinews the old, mangling chains, of love.[14]

In this moment Eugene's lonely inviolate youth is being relegated to the past while a future of ardent, anguished passion is surging up into the present. Time is thus viewed not as a series of segregated instants but as a two-way process where the past and future meet and merge in each moment of the present. Professor Hans Meyerhoff has ascribed to Wolfe the metaphysical idea of a timeless co-presence of temporal elements. Citing Wolfe's remark that we " shall see begin in Crete four thousand years ago the love that ended yesterday in Texas,"[15] Professor Meyerhoff has observed that in Wolfe, as in several other literary writers, " the ordinary modalities of time—past, present, and future—are, strictly speaking, indistinguishable in experience; that they are contained (even those not actually experienced) as infinite possibilities within *any* moment of the life span of a timeless co-presence."[16] But an examination of the context in which Wolfe made the above observation—it occurs in *Look Homeward, Angel* in Ch. I which is devoted entirely to the hero's hereditary past and which subsequently is found to have a profound influence upon his life and character—would,I believe,bear out my view that in Wolfe's experience of time, there is no destruction of the objective categories of past, present and future but only a sense of the continuing impact of the past upon the present which in turn contains the seeds of the future.

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1. Thomas Wolfe, *The Web and the Rock* (New York, 1939), p. 274.
2. Thomas Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel* (New York, 1929), p. 3.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Louis D. Rubin, *Thomas Wolfe: The Weather of His Youth* (Baton Rouge, 1955), p. 32.
11. Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel*, pp. 191-92.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
13. Thomas Wolfe, *Of Time and the River* (New York, 1935), p. 908.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 911-12.
15. Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel*, p. 3.
16. Hans Meyerhoff, *Time in Literature*, (Los Angeles ,1960), p. 26.

THE GREAT GATSBY AND THE EYES OF DR. ECKLEBURG

M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA

The Great Gatsby, admittedly Fitzgerald's best novel, evoked criticism which is both thematic and formalistic. By and large criticism has come to regard the novel as Fitzgerald's nearest approach to a perfect fusion of form and content. Nevertheless, the novel has not escaped the type of criticism which, basing itself on the premise of a preconceived framework, either structural or thematic, pronounces as irrelevant features or incidents which do not seem to fit that frame. Correspondingly this means that analysis of general themes—of which there is already God's plenty—is of little help. It is only by tracing the perfect skill with which Fitzgerald studs a scene or an incident with apparently irrelevant details, but all forming an orderly whole, that one begins to have an adequate conception of Fitzgerald's achievement in the novel.

Even a cursory glance at some of these allegedly irrelevant features in the novel would show a further tendency which has been persistent in all Fitzgerald criticism, a tendency from which *The Great Gatsby* itself seems hardly exempt: obsession with Fitzgerald the man and consequent judgement of his work as, more or less, a fictional recreation of personal predilections. In an interesting article entitled "The Eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg: A Re-examination of *The Great Gatsby*,"[1] Tom Burnam, for example, comes to conclusions which, stemming from this tendency, have far-reaching implications. Stating that the novel is much more than a plot and a protagonist, Burnam lists some of the things which seem to puzzle "the practical-minded" on the ordinary narrative level; these include the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckelburg, the presence of the owl-eyed man and the "blankets of prose" to instance a few. Above all, Burnam finds the conversation between Jordan Baker and Nick Carraway regarding carelessness in driving automobiles puzzling. This, in conjunction with some of the other features which look equally puzzling, leads Burnam to postulate "a duality of symbol-structure." Invoking Fitzgerald's admissions[2] regarding some of these disturbing features in the novel (admissions which, by the way, have a peculiar *interest* but not a peculiar *authority*), Burnam contends that these result from

the fact that Fitzgerald was, unconsciously, developing two disparate themes. Fitzgerald, like Mark Twain, wanted order but found around him carelessness and disorder; and, in *The Great Gatsby*, Burnam holds he was poised between two themes; " the theme which Nick represents in his own character," and " the theme which may be called, for want of a better name, the Fitzgerald theme," which is, in short, the theme of carelessness. Acceptance of this theme, explains, at least for Burnam, the puzzling conversation between Jordan and Nick and illumines the other features in the novel which otherwise have little overt structural justification. Apart from the major postulate of duality of themes, which is puzzling enough, Burnam makes the startling observation that not only does one find the two themes but all the conscious symbolism in the novel directed towards the " subdominant motif," that is, the motif of carelessness. " No major work of fiction," he writes, " with which I am acquainted reserves its symbols for the sub-theme. . . ."[3] In other words, the conversation between Nick and Jordan, the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg, the numerous asides of Nick regarding the sterility of contemporary life, all seem to Burnam pointers towards the theme of carelessness, " the Fitzgerald theme " of the novel. Fitzgerald desired order above everything else and the thin red circle which Gatsby's blood traces in the swimming pool reveals for Burnam the novelist's desperate search for order amidst the welter of chaos.

II

There can be little doubt that from the strictly ' structural ' point of view the conversation in question seems apparently irrelevant and hardly warranted. The conversation takes place in Chapter III between Jordan Baker and Nick Carraway when they are returning from a house-party in Warwick. They are driving in Jordan's borrowed car—about which she has already lied to Nick—when she drives so close to some workmen that the fender of the car " flicked a button on one man's coat." This provokes Nick to comment on her carelessness:

> " You're a rotten driver," I protested. " Either you ought to be more careful or you oughtn't to drive at all."
>
> " I am careful."
>
> " No, you're not."

" Well, other people are," she said lightly.

" What's that got to do with it?"

" They'll keep out of my way," she insisted. " It takes two to make an accident."

" Suppose you met somebody just as careless as yourself"

" I hope I never will," she answered. " I hate careless people. That's why I like you."[1]

This is the conversation which, among other things, Burnam finds puzzling and which seems to point to the theme of " carelessness." " Why emphasize *Jordan's* inability to handle an automobile safely?"[5] he asks, when, in fact, one can easily find structural reasons for a conversation between Daisy and Gatsby or Nick and Daisy, since it is Daisy who kills Myrtle by her careless driving. But what seems to have been orverlooked by Burnam is the fact that the conversation is no more odd than some of the things connected with automobiles in the novel, particularly in the very chapter in which the conversation takes place. To begin with, to contrive a conversation between Daisy and Gatsby or Daisy and Nick seems aesthetically naive and would have betrayed a strange lack of craftsmanship on Fitzgerald's part. This apart, what Burnam seems to have done is to abstract this conversation (together with other things) from its context and fit it, even somewhat violently, into the theme of carelessness. For a close scrutiny of Fitzgerald's use of automobiles, both in conversation and incidents at some of the most crucial points in the novel, hints at a much more complex and orderly organization than is readily apparent.

Malcolm Cowley has noted the fact that the symbolism of motor cars plays a significant role in the delineation of character. " The characters," he writes, " are visibly represented by the cars they drive: Nick has a conservative old Dodge, the Buchanans, too rich for ostentation, have an ' easy-going blue-coupé,' while Gatsby's car is ' a rich cream color, bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hat-boxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes and terraced with a labyrinth of wind-shields that mirrored a dozen suns."[6] But what is far more interesting than this is Fitzgerald's almost flawless symbolic use of automobiles when he seems to press the automobile into service to articulate the very theme of the novel. And the over-

all importance of automobiles in the novel can hardly be over-estimated. As R. W. Stallman puts it, " Space and time—which formerly only the gods controlled—are controlled today by the tin-chariots that hurl us at the rate of a century a minute towards the green light of the future. Our ailing machines pause in flight only long enough to get reconditioned—at garages to get repaired.... A garage is our temple of worship, our spiritual machines resting here for repair."[7] Apart from this general significance of automobiles, the novel abounds in conversations and incidents which seem to suggest a skilful manipulation of this symbol in illumining the total meaning of the novel. Significantly enough, George Wilson who kills Gatsby is a garage-owner. He is, to quote Stallman again, " the archpriest of commotion " and his tremendously vital wife is " the priestess of power and pressure and combustion."[8]

It is, then, no accident that Fitzgerald draws the pointed attention of the reader to Gatsby's car by describing it in " glowing " terms. And from the point of view of the symbolic use of automobiles, Chapter III, in which the conversation already referred to takes place, seems to be a crucial one. Apart from this conversation, an even more puzzling incident connected with automobiles occurs in this chapter. The incident is in fact the first clearest and unmistakable hint at the symbolic use of automobiles. Coming as it does after Jordan's return from Gatsby's room after listening to what she calls " a most amazing thing " it offers its own comment. For within minutes of this Nick witnesses a " bizarre and tumultuous scene." Nick finds a coupé—one remembers that the Buchanans own an ' easy-going blue coupé '—resting in a ditch shorn of one wheel and later on a man tries to drive it back even when he knows that there is no physical bond between the car and one of its wheels. The man finds " no harm in trying " to do this. On one level the attempt is analogous to Gatsby's obsession with Daisy and his attempt to repeat the past with her is as naïve as the man's attempt to drive the car when a wheel is missing is absurd.

Structurally it is worth noting that the chapter is full of " bizarre and tumultuous scenes," and, of these, two incidents and one conversation are concerned with automobiles. And both the conversation and the incident seen by Nick need symbolic interpretation. At least on this ground they need a closer scrutiny than the conversation which Burnam

abstracts for comment would seem to warrant, for they seem to point to the main motif of Gatsby's tragedy itself. First there is the presence of the man with the owl-eyed spectacles (at the incident witnessed by Nick) whom we meet at Gatsby's library where he finds books " which are real " but with pages uncut. Apart from the wonder at Gatsby's thoroughness which the owl-eyed man expresses, his remarks to Nick and Jordan in the library, hint, analogically at the weakness inherent in Gatsby's romantic infatuation for Daisy which is real for him but not real enough to come out into the open but biting air of reality—reality as people like Tom and Daisy conceive it. Again, the owl-eyed man appears at the incident of the overturned coupé which is in fact the first, and the most puzzling, car wreck in the novel. But here he is not a passive admirer, as he was in the library scene, but an active participant. The very fact that he is involved in the car-wreck (when one remembers that he doesn't appear again till Gatsby's funeral) suggests that there is in the incident more than what meets the eye. Maybe, as already noted, by making the other occupant of the car drive a coupé shorn of one of its wheels, Fitzgerald seems to hint, at a remove, at the impossibility of Gatsby realising his dream. It is, at least apparently, no more or no less odd than Gatsby's incredible remark to Nick: " Can't repeat the past? Of course you can ! "

The conversation between Nick and Jordan. from this perspective, falls into a pattern which illumines the main motif itself and hardly seems to suggest " a sub-dominant motif." Jordan, as must be obvious, stands in close though muted contrast to Daisy, and yet represents in her character features akin to Daisy's. Technically one of the most useful characters, Jordan in her conversation with Nick hints at, and much more than hints at, the basic weakness in her own character. It is, indeed, one of the rare instances in the novel where one gets an unerring insight into the sort of standards by which people like Jordan live and let others live. Not only does the conversation pinpoint the reasons behind the break-up of relations between Jordan and Nick but it foreshadows the tragedy of Gatsby himself. It has thus relevance on two counts: on the one hand, as Burnam himself concedes, it serves to suggest the reasons behind the break-up of relations between Nick and Jordan and, on the other, it seems to throw into relief Gatsby's tragedy which was not of his own making. This view is reinforced by the fact that Fitzgerald carefully conducts the reader to a

recurrence of the conversation almost at the fag end of the novel. This last conversation which, strangely enough, is not commented upon by Burnam, suggests that the earlier conversation is not just casual, illumining but a minor theme, but consciously aimed at the total design of the novel. But to treat this conversation as pointing in some such way to Gatsby's tragedy brought about by his lack of awareness does not validate the contention that there is behind this the Fitzgerald (sub) theme of " carelessness ' and the corresponding desire for order. Rather it seems to point to a complex ordering of material which suggests the totality of meaning in the novel. And once this is admitted the many references to automobiles—both in conversation and incidents—which otherwise look bizarre and disjointed fall into a pattern. It is curious, for example, that the first time Tom drops in at Gatsby's place Gatsby has something to say about cars:

> " Did you have a nice ride?"
> " Very good roads around here."
> " I suppose the automobiles. . . ."
> " Yeah."[9]

What Gatsby says here regarding automobiles with which Tom concurs is anybody's guess but the fact that he mentions them makes us suspect that there is something more here than just casual conversation. Again, Fitzgerald places in Chapter IV, the scene of Gatsby's driving to New York in his car—" with fenders spread like wings "—alongside a funeral procession. This juxtaposition is significant because Gatsby's car is called, after the accident which kills Myrtle, as ". the death-car " by the reporters. Finally as opposed to Gatsby, Nick and Myrtle, both of West Egg, and all the characters who inhabit East Egg—Tom, Daisy and Jordan, have at one time or another been involved in automobile accidents.

III

These repeated references to things connected with automobiles scattered throughout the novel point to the fact that the conversation is not an isolated happening but a reflector illumining the major catastrophe that occurs in the novel. For, as Stallman reminds us, " Gatsby exists in relation to everything in the novel. . . .and nothing is in the novel that does not exist in relation to everything else.

If we explore it as an integrated whole a new interpretation rewards our scrutiny."[10] The first car wreck, for example, has deeper implications which strictly structural criticism is apt to bypass. The presence of the man with the owl-eyed spectacles seems to be a major clue in coming to grips with the problem of the symbolic use of automobiles of which Jordan's conversation is only a less puzzling element. It must be obvious that, together with the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg, the owl-eyed man forms one of the two unblinking bases of detached observation. The eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg preside, as it were, over the drifting lives of the people in the wasteland. But the owl-eyed man, besides functioning as a point of rest in the novel, seems to pronounce a positive judgment on Gatsby. In his wonder the owl-eyed man recalls Gatsby himself. His cryptic remark to Jordan and Nick in the library that " if one brick was removed the whole building was liable to collapse " signifies the tenuousness of Gatsby's infatuation for Daisy. It is only after the owl-eyed man has vindicated Gatsby's world that Fitzgerald involves him in the car-wreck. The fact that the owl-eyed man is directly involved in the car-wreck has a two-fold significance: on the one hand he furnishes the point of positive judgment, as later events prove, on Gatsby's tragedy; on the other the fact that the owl-eyed man is initially accused of a crime he hasn't committed foreshadows Gatsby's own plight when he has to lose his life for a crime he hasn't committed. If the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg ("you can't fool God" cries George Wilson staring at them), impassively watch Myrtle's death, the owl-eyed man not only watches but seems to sympathise with Gatsby. By making him appear again at Gatsby's funeral Fitzgerald raises the stature of the owl-eyed man from a passive participant to one who actively judges and puts the seal of approval on Gatsby. Thus the first car wreck, in fact, becomes an initial enactment of the later tragedy and the owl-eyed man's defense of himself against the crime he hasn't committed could, we feel, very well be Gatsby's own defense. At least the symbolic framework of cars sustains such an interpretation. On this count Gatsby is, as the owl-eyed man calls him, indeed, a " poor-son-of-a bitch " for he wasn't even driving the car.

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1. Tom Burnam, "The Eyes of Dr. Eckleburg: A Re-examination of *The Great Gatsby*," *F. Scott Fitzgerald : A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Arthur Mizener (New Jersey, 1963), pp. 104–112.

2. These include, on Fitzgerald's admission, " the lack of any emotional tone at the very height of it (*i.e.*, the Gatsby story," vagueness

in depicting " the emotional relations between Gatsby and Daisy from the time of their reunion to the catastrophe," and above all " the blankets of excellent prose " with which Fitzgerald tried to cover up the lacunae, See *The Crack-up*, pp. 270-271 and *The Letters*, ed. Andrew Turnbull (New York, 1963), p. 173 and p. 551.

3. Burnam, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

4. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York, 1953), p. 45. All subsequent references are to this edition to be found in *Three Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (New York, 1953).

5. Burnam, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

6. Malcolm Cowley, Introduction to *The Great Gatsby* (New York, 1953), p. XX.

7. R. W. Stallman, " Gatsby and the Hole in Time," *The Houses that James Built* (Michigan Univ. Press, 1961), p. 145.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *The Great Gatsby*, p. 77.

10. Stallman, *op cit.*, p. 131.

THE WOODCUTTER IN THE SAHARA: SOME NOTES ON *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE*

T. G. VAIDYANATHAN

THERE are two *Catchers*. There is *The Catcher* of the critic who sees the progression in the novel as marking the various stages of Holden Caulfield's gradually worsening neurosis and there is *The Catcher* of the other kind of critic who sees the skies clearing towards the end of the book as Holden recovers his mental health, thanks to some mystical first-aid from little Phoebe. But both kinds of critics are surprisingly in agreement over the analysis of the first-two-thirds of the book (the analysis of the Stradlater, Sunny, Sally Hayes and Jane Gallagher episodes, for instance, vary ever so little from critic to critic) and it is only in their treatment of the Phoebe scenes towards the end of the book that the differences begin to emerge. Still, even in their differences, the terms of reference of the two kinds of analyses are the same for both groups of critics. For the first group,[1] Holden moves from a state of relative neurosis (the critic usually feeling himself bound to point out the incipient neurosis of the Holden of the early parts of the book) to a complete and engulfing one in a steady downward curve—the " terrible, terrible fall "[2] of that amateur psychoanalyst, Mr. Antolini—while for the second group of critics,[3] Holden moves from a condition of more or less established neurosis to the point where he achieves his own self-cure in a spirited upward climb towards health. In other words, both see progression of some kind (downward or upward) in the book, and in order to invest this progression with some definiteness, they feel impelled to conclude the book at a convenient point. And strangely enough, it is Phoebe's ride on the carousel that has a fatal attraction for critics of both schools. Thus Heiserman and Miller, who can be taken as the best representatives of the first school, see Holden's absorption in Phoebe's carousel ride as " the lunatic delight in a circle, from where he is shipped off to a psychiatrist."[4] For Carl F. Strauch, on the other hand, whose long intricate essay is the most ambitious product of the second school, Holden, watching Phoebe ride the carousel, experiences nothing less than the Wordsworthian natural piety. He is like " any apprehensive parent " when he remarks to her that she will have to take her chances with falling off the horse when reaching for the gold ring. But

meanwhile he has quietly added " a cubit to his psychological stature."[5]

What both groups of critics seem to have ignored is the fact that the novel does not end with Phoebe's carousel ride (whatever its enigmatic meaning) but has a further short chapter, the sole function of which seems to be to take us precisely to the point at which the novel began. We have been listening to a *recit* in the manner of Camus' *The Fall* and like that book *The Catcher* has all the ambiguity of first person narration. For, Holden has been telling us about his past from the vantage point of a present which is after all a psychoanalyst's couch and one may legitimately wonder whether it is the past that is being revealed or merely a clue to the present. Some judgement of Holden's present is involved before we can accept or evaluate his account of the past and the evidence for the present is itself the past! Surely we are involved in a vicious circle that has evidently escaped the attention of critics.

The truth is that the movement of *The Catcher* is circular and this is merely another way of saying that there is no movement at all in the novel, no movement of a linear kind. For it should not be forgotten that the psychoanalyst's couch provides the outer frame of the novel which begins and ends here, so that is may be said that the novel describes a complete circle. It is this circular motion of the outer frame of the novel that is imparted to the inner structure of the book so that episodes occur with such a rhythmic regularity that they give the impression of *similarity*, of having already occurred before. It is the same with the people that Holden meets. They too resemble each other to such an extent that only the names are different. The cumulative effect of all this sameness is that the meaning of the novel instead of expanding appears to be stationary at a certain indeterminate point. It is like the " nutty music " of the carousel at the end of the novel which has been playing the same tune for several years. Holden, too, is caught in this circular motion of the novel with the result that he is essentially static.

The circularity of the book has, as remarked earlier, a direct consequence on the ' meaning ' of the book. If there is dramatic and linear progression, the later event clarifies the status and meaning of the earlier event and there is a resulting scale of values which facilitates judgement. But when the later event is in every respect similar to the

earlier event, and this happens when there is an absence of linear progression, the result is ambiguity. Consider, for instance, the attitude to psychoanalysis expressed in the beginning and at the end of the book. In the beginning we meet a Holden who is scornful of any attempt to reconstruct his past (" all that David Copperfield kind of crap" (p. 5) he calls it) which is certainly a surprising attitude in an erstwhile psychiatric patient. And, at the very end of the book, Holden is scornful of the psychoanalyst's question whether he was going to apply himself when he goes back to school (" It's such a stupid question, in my opinion. I mean how do you know what you're going to do till you *do* it. The answer is, you don't. I *think* I am, but how do I know? I swear it's a stupid question " p. 220). Are we to take this as a sign of Holden's incomplete cure or are we to read it alongside of the several scornful references to psychoanalysis in the Salinger canon? We are not sure. This situation will recur throughout the novel when the repetition of an attitude or a cluster of attitudes will serve only to put the critical brakes even more firmly. For, if psychoanalysis is despised by a patient under psychiatric care, the meaning is ambiguous. It either means taking the patient seriously and accepting his definition of reality or taking it as one more sign of his neurosis. This ambiguity is central to the book.

This pattern of repetition envelops the whole book through a series of similar situations and similar pairs of characters. Certain episodes reappear without imposing or adding to the meaning already achieved. For instance, there is the reference to the Egyptian mummies in Holden's abortive attempt at an answer in his History paper which reappears in the Museum scene when Holden explains to the little boys the significance of the mummies in almost the same words he had used in his answer paper at Pencey. Even crucial experiences like the one he has walking up Fifth Avenue the day after he has visited Antolini

> —Then all of a sudden, something very spooky started happening. Every time I came to the end of a block and stepped off the goddam kerb, I had this feeling that I'd never get to the other side of the street. I thought I'd just go down, down, down, and nobody'd ever see me again (p. 204)—

which have been regarded by some critics as the beginning of Holden's nervous breakdown have already been reported

before. As Holden is making his way from Thomsen Hill towards the house of the Spencers, his state of mind is reported in the following words: " After I got across the road, I felt like I was sort of disappearing. It was that kind of crazy afternoon, terrifically cold, and no sun out or anything, and you felt like you were disappearing every time you crossed the road " (p. 9). Similarly, if after the beating up he gets from the elevator-operating pimp, Maurice, he has a fantasy of himself staggering with a bullet in his guts, the very same kind of fantasy recurs as he sits moody and depressed in the bar after his meeting with Carl Luce: " When I was *really* drunk, I started that stupid business with the bullets in my guts again " (p. 156). The list of such recurrent episodes and states of mind in *The Catcher* could be extended *ad infinitum*. But, perhaps, even more than all this is the feeling of stasis that is imparted to the book through Holden's continuous preoccupation with death and self-mutilation that covers the surface of the novel like an enveloping fog.

But the pattern of repetition and cyclical recurrence in the book is most clearly established through a series of similar pairs of characters. Three such pairs will be examined in this essay: Spencer-Antolini, Stradlater-Carl Luce and Jane Gallagher-Phoebe. To take the first of these pairs. Mr. Antolini is very similar in many respects to his Pencey counterpart. Both teachers are staunch conservatives who have failed to understand the peculiar nature of Holden's sensibility: Mr. Spencer seeing in Holden, and his eulogy of Egyptian mummies, nothing but the portrait of a failure, of academic indifference allied to incompetence, and Mr. Antolini equally failing to understand the spirit behind Holden's love of digressions. Both teachers are equally obtuse about life: Mr. Spencer is an inveterate nose picker with a lot of inflated rhetoric about life being a game which " one plays according to the rules " (p. 13) (Holden's unspoken comment that " if you get on the other side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's a game about. Nothing. No game" (p. 13) is a crushing rejoinder to the life-is-a-game thesis) and Mr. Antolini with his Stekelian clichés about not dying nobly for a cause but living humbly for one. Again Mr. Spencer's warning to Holden that he will give thought to the future only when it's too late is matched by Mr. Antolini's peroration a la Polonius in which all moral perplexities are categorised—as if life were the same for all men —topping it off with his extraordinary defence of academic education as something which enabled one to have

" an idea what kind of thoughts [one's] particular mind should be wearing " (p. 197)—a travesty of the function of a truly liberal education. Mr. Antolini, we may be sure, is only an improved and more deadly version of Mr. Spencer (even their relationship to their respective wives is similar!). Now the significant question to be asked is this: what point is Salinger making about Holden in presenting the episodes featuring these two schoolmasters who are so nearly identical in their incomprehension of Holden? Is it to emphasise Holden's academic uselessness or is it to be taken as an indictment of all schoolmasters and all school education? As in the case of psychoanalysis, a judgement of pedagogy is perhaps in order but what kind of judgement are we asked to make?

The Stradlater episode has been regarded by some critics as crucial in precipitating neurosis in Holden (Carl Strauch has argued for such a position), but we have Holden's own admission to Antolini that his hatred for boys like Stradlater didn't last long: " After a while, if I didn't see them, if they didn't come in the room, or if I didn't see them in the dining-room for a couple of meals, I sort of missed them " (p. 194). This admission, let us remember, is reiterated again at the end of the book: " I sort of *miss* everybody I told about. Even old Stradlater and Ackley, for instance " (p. 220). So when one looks at the Stradlater episode, free of any critical preconceptions, it can be seen in its true colours as just another episode in Holden's life. It is exactly paralleled towards the end of the book when Holden meets a Whooton schoolmate, Carl Luce. And once again, as with the other pair of characters, the similarities between Stradlater and Luce are striking. Both are sexual athletes (or pretend to be): both have given up girls and started new affairs—Stradlater has given up a girl with the name of Fitzgerald and take up with Jane Gallagher while Luce has given up the girl he had while in Whooton and has acquired as aging oriental mistress. Both are equally contemptuous of their past affairs: Stradlater refers to his former girl as " that pig " (p. 34) while Luce refers to his Whooton flame as " the whore of New Hampshire " (p. 157). Both Stradlater and Luce jealously withhold information about their current affairs, goading Holden into a helpless fury. Significantly both boys are conformists. Of Stradlater we are told, " It drove him crazy when you broke any rules " (p. 45), and Luce, of course, is full of stale psychoanalytic jargon: " He's helped me to *adjust* myself to a certain extent but an extensive analysis hasn't been necessary " (p. 154).

So again we come up against a blind alley. What is the significance of providing Stradlater with a double? The Luce encounter cannot have any significance for a Holden who has known a Stradlater. Critics like Carl Strauch who argue that it marks " a turning point " because " the psychological direction of the novel...is by now unmistakable "[6] have merely imported a meaning into the episode which is simply not there.

And so we come to the most ambiguous of doubles in the book: Jane Gallagher and Phoebe. The comparison may seem outrageous especially when it is suggested that they perform the same function in the novel as the other two pairs: Spencer-Antolini and Stradlater-Luce. It would appear (from the sentimental accounts given of both girls by most critics) that they are symbols of some inviolate purity in Holden's mind: Jane Gallagher, with her immobile kings in the back row, and Phoebe, with her Yogic postures and Esme-like charm are generally taken to perform the function of lodestar by which Holden steers through a stormy adolescence. Jane is idealised in Holden's mind (so the argument runs) and her possible seduction by Stradlater is taken by some critics as the harbinger of neurosis in Holden. Phoebe is the little girl with mystic properties who won't let Holden go away and it is her ride in the carousel that restores Holden to some semblance of sanity in the opinion of those critics who argue for a regenerate Holden at the end of the novel. But what are the facts? Jane is the kind of girl who dates a man like Stradlater and who signs out for 9-30 p.m. and stays on much later in the back seat of Ed Banky's car. She can even date a man like Al Pike who was " all muscles and no brains " (p. 141). The sensitive Holden cannot understand how a girl like Jane can date a "show-off bastard" (p. 141) like Al Pike and even asks her about it. But Jane springs to the defence of her man. It seems reasonable to assume that Holden's disillusionment with love and sex had its beginnings in the inexplicable behaviour of Jane. But the image of Jane as pure and inviolate is something Holden needs, although he probably knows the facts to be otherwise, and he continues to think of her at Pencey as the girl who won't move her kings from the back row. The pressure of forcing himself to believe what is palpably untrue must be accounted among the reasons for Holden's unhappiness. For, after all, Jane does move her kings from the back row like any other girl.

The disillusionment with women which probably set in with the behaviour of the Diana-pure Jane (and this happens offstage long before the crucial three days with which the novel is primarily concerned) is merely given confirmation in the Phoebe episodes towards the close of the book. The technique employed is similar to that used with the other two pairs of characters examined in this essay (Stradlater-Luce Spencer-Antolini), with one important difference that Stradlater and Spencer—characters belonging to the period under survey—are introduced first, while Luce and Antolini—characters belonging to an earlier period in Holden's life—are brought in later to underline the essential sameness and continuity in Holden's character. Whereas Jane (belonging to the past) is sketched in first while Phoebe is introduced only towards the very end of the book.

Phoebe's place in the novel has been grossly misunderstood. She has been regarded as Holden's alter ego when she seems more like his super ego. She has been described as "the still contemplative center of life"[7] and in her offer to dance with Holden, Salinger is seen as indicating " the viable relationship between the contemplative and the active participation in the dance of life—a spiritual perception that is as ancient as the *Bhagawad-Gita.*"[8] Phoebe has been given the key role in Holden's psychological and spiritual regeneration and her ride in the carousel, as mentioned earlier, has been raised to mystic dimensions. But, again, what are the facts? In the first place like Bernice, the girl from Seattle, with whom Holden dances, Phoebe doesn't even listen to Holden and her first reaction to the news that Holden has been sent out of Pencey is, "Daddy'll kill you !" (p. 173). This remark is repeated several times in the ensuing scene (pp. 173-180). There is little evidence that she shares Holden's values, for his long, bitter account of life at Pencey only evokes from her the response, " You don't like *any thing* that's happening. . . you don't like any schools. You don't like a million things. You *don't.*" She goads him to state what he likes, and when he comes up with the memory of his brother, Allie, Phoebe's reaction is astoundingly callous, " Allie's *dead.* You always say that! If somebody's dead and everything, and in *Heaven*, then it isn't really—". When Holden retreats in desperation to the present and holds it up as a thing of value, " Anyway I like it now. I mean right now. Sitting here with you and just chewing the fat and horsing—" , Phoebe curtly declares, " That isn't anything *really !* " In the face of this cruel retort, Holden can

only make an anguished affirmation of the reality of the present, " It is so something really ! Certainly it is ! Why the hell isn't it? People never think anything is anything *really*. I'm getting goddam sick of it." Then Phoebe proceeds to reveal little understanding of what Holden could be in life when she suggests that Holden could be a lawyer or a scientist. Holden's analysis of the futility and vanity of law only draws from Phoebe the familiar, unfeeling taunt, " Daddy's going to kill you. He's going to kill you." Even Holden's heartbreaking and lovely catcher-in-the-rye fantasy leaves Phoebe unmoved. It's the old " Daddy's going to kill you." There is truly nowhere to turn for poor Holden. It's only Antolini and the blighted couch. As he prepares to leave, Phoebe informs him gaily that she is taking belching lessons from Phyllis Margulies. This is the Phoebe who is said to perform Holden's spiritual regeneration!

As we take a long look back, we see a Holden who is passing through the customary upheavals of adolescence for even he recognises that his troubles are not unusual. " Everybody goes through phases, don't they ? " (p. 19) he asks an uncomprehending Spencer. Holden's father is a " touchy " man, a successful corporation lawyer who is seldom at home—he is too busy even to attend the play in which Phoebe is acting. Holden's mother is nervous and ill (she is subject to frequent headaches). She doesn't enjoy life much " even when she goes out " (p. 183) and, in addition, is an insomniac who smokes cigarettes all night. Yet she admonishes Phoebe for smoking—although the girl has much the same reasons for smoking as her mother. We know little of Holden's childhood—" all that David Copperfield kind of crap "—except his reaction to the death of his brother Allie. The sense of kinship he feels for Allie can be taken as a measure of his alienation from the rest of his family, including, of course, Phoebe. We get some insight into his life at two of the schools he attended before coming to Pencey from his conversation with Antolini (his teacher at Elkton Hills) and Carl Luce (his schoolmate at Whooton). Mr. Antolini's prognosis of the " terrible, terrible fall " (p. 193) Holden is heading for is based upon the fact that Holden has been the *same* boy right through his school years and it's interesting to note that although Antolini and Holden have been out of touch for quite a while Antolini can significantly ask Holden, " How're all your women ?" (p. 197). That Holden's women should continue to be Sally Hayes and Jane Gallagher, while both Stradlater and Carl Luce have taken

up with new girls, underscores the lack of change, inward or outward, in Holden's life. The point is reinforced in the conversation with Carl Luce, whose very first remark on meeting Holden is: "Same old Caulfield. When are you going to grow up ?" (p. 150). The latter remark, by the way, is repeated three times in the course of the conversation.

In the light of the above facts it is hard to see how critics have argued for a changing Holden in the novel. He neither gets worse and neurotic nor better by effecting his own self-cure, but remains, as his friend Carl Luce observes, the same old Caulfield. But what does this *sameness* consist in? To this question we must address ourselves.

As observed earlier, the novel does not end with Phoebe on the carousel. There is the disquieting return to reality, to the psychoanalyst's couch in the last chapter. Critics who argue for a Holden precipitated into neurosis are, presumably, not troubled by the intrusion of psychoanalysis: they probably feel that it confirms their diagnosis of Holden. Holden is under psychiatric care. Therefore he is neurotic or must have been so between "last Christmas" (p. 5) and the present of the novel. *Q.E.D.* But those critics who have argued for a sane and matured Holden at the end are troubled by the "blunted conclusion" of the novel. Carl F. Strauch, after a victorious and sweeping march through the 'madman,' 'crazy,' 'kill,' and 'yellow' patterns in the book meets the "blunted conclusion" of the novel head-on. Undaunted, he takes it in his critical stride. It is true it is blunted, he concedes, but that is "only because we cannot say what society will do to impose adjustment upon a boy who has effected his own secret cure."[9] This appears a contradiction in terms because "cure" must be defined in terms of "adjustment to society," for otherwise we would be using the term in some unspecified, non-medical sense for which we have absolutely no warrant. Strauch seeks to overcome logical obstacles by a transcendental leap to the theological plane. The "blunted conclusion" is now declared to be simultaneously "a realistic narrative device" and also the "paradoxical product of a tremendous leap in thought."[10] There follows some elucidation of the *koan* of Zen Buddhism and then the critical coup is delivered. We are told that the situation between the analyst and Holden is analogous to the relationship between a Zen master and his disciple, with the important difference that here, in *The Catcher*, it is Holden who is the Zen Master and the

analyst who is the disciple! The ignorance and mental backwardness of the analyst is revealed in his asking Holden foolish questions like whether he (Holden) was going to apply himself at school. Holden's answer (which has already been quoted) that he didn't know is held to be the near-summit of Zen wisdom. The summit of Zen wisdom itself is found in Holden's final dictum, " Don't tell anybody anything. If you do you start missing everybody " (p. 220).

One quarrels with such accounts because they altogether leave the frame of reference of the novel moving, as Carl Strauch himself admits, from the psychological to the ethical and theological planes. But, are we entitled, as literary critics, to this departure? The first kind of critic, committed to Holden's neurosis, submerged himself so thoroughly within the psychoanalytic framework of the novel that he took the psychoanalysis as binding on his critical voyages. He felt bound to prove that the beginning and the end of the novel were justified. If Holden was in a psychiatric ward, then, this type of critic argued, there must be reasons for this. Reasons must be produced and evidence offered for Holden's gradually deepening neurosis, for, otherwise, Holden would have been in hospital long before " this madman stuff that happened to him around last Christmas " (p. 5). So the critic plotted a convenient graph which showed a gradual intensification of Holden's neurosis with a dramatic and clear-cut beginning, middle and end and he assigned suitable episodes to each of these well-marked phases. Thus for one critic, the Stradlater episode precipitated the crisis which was maintained in the middle ranges of the book (in the scenes with the girls from Seattle and the prostitute, Sunny). The end began with the Phoebe scenes in Central Park and probably got its final push in the fiasco with the homosexual Antolini[11] (although Holden's own comment on the Antolini episode is simply, "That kind of stuff's happened to me about twenty times since I was a kid " p. 200). Phoebe and the carousel with its " nutty music " provided a fitting finale for the exertions of this critic who felt that Holden's neurosis was well and properly accounted for. The other kind of critic, just as tenaciously committed to Holden's eventual maturity, read several patterns into the book and, suddenly, without turning a critical hair, stepped up the tempo of the final scenes and ensured the salvation of the hero through that immaculate child-wonder, Phoebe. No doubt a leap in thought was needed and one was provided with Buddhism dancing on the ruins of psychoanalysis.

We knew the sound of two hands clapping, the critic in all humility reminded us, but did we know the sound of one hand clapping? And the critic proceeded to give a demonstration.

The alternative suggested in this paper is the third position which regards Holden Caulfield as neither moving toward neurosis nor away from it towards health and a serene maturity, but as remaining essentially the same person throughout the book. The word *same* is tantalising, and siren-like invites interpretation to give it a body and a name, but honest criticism will desist here. For Salinger in *The Catcher* is portraying, not interpreting, the ' inner " biography of Holden Caulfield for us, and, working in the deceptively confessional and autobiographical vein of Camus' *The Fall*, has demonstrated, unwittingly perhaps, the impossibility of revealing the truth in a purely solipsistic fictional world where the subjectivity of the narrator-protagonist remains unmodified by any other viewpoint. Besides the truth is not told merely by repeatedly emphasising the truthfulness of what is being narrated and Holden's frequent interruptions of the narrative with his " It really did " or " It really is " merely underline the desperate manoeuvres of the novelist to camouflage the basic egocentric predicament. Trapped in the subjective mode of his own hero, Salinger is, in Ortega's evocative phrase, like a woodcutter in the Sahara, working within the confines of a naturalism which has already reached the point of exhaustion and barrenness as a literary genre. For the ' whole truth '—to which naturalism is committed—is open-ended and although Holden might say, " I could probably tell you that I did after I went home, and how I got sick and all, and what school I'm supposed to go next fall, after I get out of here. . . " (p. 220) he cannot do so for the novel has to end with so much of the truth left out. There is a further limitation, for even the ' truth ' that is enclosed by the novel is subjected to a methodological doubt that leads straight to the egocentric predicament of " I *think* I am, but how do I know " (p. 220) and to Holden's bewilderingly anti-climactic declaration, " If you want to know the truth, I don't *know* what I think about it " (p. 220). This serves as a gloss on the novel's opening sentence, " If you really want to hear about it. . . if you want to know the truth "[12] and may be taken either as Salinger's critique of judgement or as an honest confession of failure to bring about a self-validating aesthetic whole. And so the novel ends where it began and remains an elusive structure of ambivalent

meanings, with no conclusions of the kind the reader is used to. Even Heiserman and Miller, in the final turn they give their splendid essay, decide that it is not Holden who should be examined for a sickness of the mind but the world into which he has sojourned and found himself an alien. We need not go so far, for, in doing so we abandon literary criticism for sociology. We need not maintain as critics have so far done that either Holden is insane and the world which produced him is sane or that Holden is sane and it is only the world that begot him that is insane. This is to be impaled on the horns of a dilemma of our own making. Instead we can construe *The Catcher* not as a closed and ordered system of values but as a " field of possibilities," an open ambiguous work with various strata of meaning and a wide, if finite, range of significance. The ' meaning' of the book is not ' given ' to us in the epistemological sense of this word, for what Salinger has given us instead is a system of signs, in which the meaning is, one might say, *suspended*, insistently offered but persistently elusive. The only ' meaning ' the book can have is the meaning the critic decides to bestow on it by a deliberate act of critical intervention, an operative choice which cannot be explained under any of the canons of literary criticism. For to make a judgement is to pass beyond the book and decide what sort of young man we want and since (as Aristotle has observed) ethics leads to politics, the kind of society we ultimately desire to build.

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1. This group has been the most influential so far. Its representatives include Arthur Heiserman and James E. Miller, Jr., " J. D. Salinger: Some Crazy Cliff," *Western Humanities* Review, X (Spring, 1956), 129-137; Edgar Branch, " Mark Twain and J. D. Salinger: A Study in Literary Continuity," *American Quarterly*, IX (Summer, 1957); Frank Kermode, " Fit Audience," *The Spectator*, CC (May 30, 1958), 705-706; Peter J. Seng, " The Fallen Idol: The Immature World of Holden Caulfield," *College English*, XXIII (December, 1961), 203-209 and Brian Way, " *Franny and Zooey* and J. D. Salinger," *New Left Review* (May-June, 1962), 72-82.

2. J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (Penguin Books, 1960), p. 193. All references *to The Catcher in the Rye* in the essay (except one which is indicated separately) are to the Penguin edition of the book. Figures in parenthesis throughout the essay refer to page numbers in the same edition.

3. This group has been gradually gaining ground since Charles H. Kegal's essay, " Incommunicability in Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*," *Western Humanities Review*, XI (Spring, 1957), 188-196. The best product of the group so far is, of course, Carl F. Strauch's massively documented essay, " Kings in the Back Row: Meaning Through Structure, A Reading of Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*," *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, II (Winter, 1961), 5-30. Another recent convert to the group is George R. Creager, " Treacherous Desertion: Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*," (Connecticut, 1961).

4. Arthur Heiserman and James E. Miller, Jr., "J. D. Salinger: Some Crazy Cliff," reprinted in *J. D. Salinger and the Critics*, ed. William F. Belcher and James W. Lee (California, 1962) p. 16.

5. Carl F. Strauch, "Kings in the Back Row: Meaning Through Structure, A Reading of Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*," reprinted in *J. D. Salinger and the Critics*, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

6. *Ibid.*, *p.* 88.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Peter J. Seng has argued for this position in his essay. See "The Fallen Idol: The Immature World of Holden Caulfield," reprinted in *J. D. Salinger and the Critics*, pp. 65-67.

12. Oddly enough the concluding words of the first sentence in the book, "if you want to know the truth" have been left out in the Penguin edition of the book. The words are however to be found in the original edition of *The Catcher in the Rye* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951).

SOCIAL AND MORAL CONFLICTS IN EDWARD ALBEE'S *THE ZOO STORY*

KEITH WILSON

The neurotic is himself a symptom of the modern conflict between the individual and society, a conflict which might in other ages have been productively surmounted in artistic creation. Nowadays the old art-ideology is no longer and the new personality-idea not yet, strong enough to admit either solution for the individual impulse to create. Everyone suffers —individual, community, and, not least, art as an ideological expression of their interrelation.

OTTO RANK, *Art and Artist*

EDWARD ALBEE has recently established himself as the leading new playwright in America. His early short dramas applied methods and techniques learnt from European writers to American themes and characters. *The Zoo Story* (1958) is his first play, " with the exception of a three-act sex farce I composed when I was twelve,"[1] which was first produced in Germany on September 28, 1959 in Berlin. His other plays are *The Death of Bessie Smith*[2] and *The Sandbox* (both 1959), *The American Dream* (1959-1960), *Fam and Yam* (1960), the internationally successful *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) and *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* (1964), based on the novella by Carson McCullers. In *Fam and Yam, An Imaginary Interview* the young writer interviewing the successful dramatist says, " And I thougt it would be good to say that most of our playwrights are nothinhg better than businessmen themselves...you know...out for the loot...just as cynically as everyone else..."[3]. This is of course comically exaggerated yet there is too much truth in it so to be healthy for the American stage which until just recently seemed to have lost its earlier vigour. In the same interview Fam, the popular dramatist, states cheerfully and not very convincingly, " The new generation's knocking at the door. Gelber, Richardson, Kopit... Albee... you ...(Mock woe). You youngsters are going to push us out of the way."[4] Of the youngsters mentioned Albee himself is undoubtedly the most interesting, but this quotation is bitterly ironic as Albee had great difficulties in bringing his plays to the stage in America. He

recounts the protracted business of getting *The Zoo Story* produced:

> Shortly after the *The Zoo Story* was completed, and while it was being read and politely refused by a number of New York producers (which was not to be unexpected, for no one at all had ever heard of its author, and it was a short play, and short plays are, unfortunately, anathema to producers and—supposedly—to audiences), a young composer, friend of mine, William Flanagan by name, looked at the play, liked it, and sent it to several friends of his, among them David Diamond, another American composer, resident in Italy; Diamond liked the play and sent it on to a friend of his, a Swiss actor, Pinkas Braun; Braun liked the play, made a tape recording of it, playing both its roles, which he sent on to Mrs. Stefani Hunzinger, who heads the drama department of the S. Fischer Verlag, a large publishing house in Frankfurt; she, in turn...well, through her it got to Berlin, and to production. From New York to Florence to Zurich to Frankfurt to Berlin. And finally back to New York where, on January 14, 1960, it received American production, off Broadway, at the Provincetown Playhouse, on a double bill with Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*.[5]

Of course it is traditional to ignore the works of youth but the important point is that the play was understood and appreciated in Europe where similar themes were handled in a similar way. It is a play about the lack or the difficulty of communication, which Albee must have felt with some bitterness as his short piece went the rounds. His description of the first performance of his first play emphasizes the author's own isolation:

> ...for this author, at least, opening nights do not really exist. They happen, but they take place as if in a dream; one concentrates, but one cannot see the stage action clearly; one can hear but barely; one tries to follow the play, but one can make no sense of it. And, if one is called to the stage afterwards to take a bow, one wonders why, for one can make no connection between the work just presented and one's self. Naturally this feeling was complicated in the case of *The Zoo Story*, as the play was being presented

> in German, a language of which I knew not a word, and in Berlin, too, an awesome city.[6]

The Zoo Story, contains only two characters. It seems, at a preliminary reading, to be a discussion play drawing on the techniques of Ionesco and Harold Pinter. The apparently harmless conversation and the telling of a strange, yet commonplace story, end in melodramatic violence with an almost ritualistic murder, as Ionesco's *The Lesson* ends in sexual murder and Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter* in impending slaughter. Both these plays, incidentally, have also basically only two characters. *The Zoo Story* fulfills Ionesco's postulate in mixing successfully uneasy farce with tragedy.[7] It is profitless to seek in this type of play a purely rational explanation of the action:

> A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity.[8]

(Martin Esslin has defined this use of ' Absurd ' by Camus as ' out of harmony ' and not simply ' ridiculous.'[9]) Nevertheless it is illuminating to explore something of the meaning and significance of the characters and action in order to appreciate fully Albee's boldness in handling this theme, " this divorce between man and his life."

Jerry is a social outcast, the ' outsider ' who has difficulty in establishing his own character and in making contact with society, with other human beings and even with a dog. He is a fine illustration of a schizophrenic nature and would perhaps be diagnosed by a psychologist as suffering from catatonic schizophrenia with a markedly active response. Like the classic cases he later becomes belligerent towards Peter, pushing him off the park bench, and finally he commits suicide by running on his own knife held by Peter. Mr. Esslin has objected[10] to the ending as melodramatic and tending to mar the effect of the play. I prefer to see the melodrama as essential to Jerry, and thereby to the play, and the logical working out of the schizoid nature.

Albee gives us a careful description of Jerry at the opening when, in contrast to Peter who is well turned out in tweeds as the average successful man who belongs, he is carelessly dressed, slightly younger and has obviously gone to seed somewhat. His once handsome appearance must now give the feeling of a "fall from physical grace."[11] Jerry was clearly a young hopeful, possibly a dashing left-wing hero with European culture imbibed at Left-Bank cafés and ateliers. It is not difficult to see remnants of all this, of a younger Jerry, in his eagerness to talk to Peter, his relish of an audience, his urgency about now merely trivial things like walking due North.[12] Here we see the decline of the man who cared, now pathetically eager, thrown back on his own meagre talents and broken by his attempt to steer clear of conformity. The standard by which Americans live and are judged—success—now applies to Jerry and he is a total failure, an oddity simply and, without an audience, no genius. To Jerry the loneliness of his present life must seem like a never-ending journey in an English railway compartment where conversational silence prevails. Jerry is determined to make Peter his audience and example and knowing no embarrassment he delves with relish into Peter's marital relations, offends, shocks and yet strangely fascinates Peter. The story of the reason for the zoo visit is eventually told; the saga of Jerry's struggle with the dog and his sex-starved, gin-swilling landlady at the seedy boarding house where he lodges. This central monologue, in some ways similar in its seminal importance and positioning to Lucky's outburst in *Waiting for Godot*,[13] is the patient speaking out his dreams to his therapist, the actor to his audience—obviously a parable as the deliberately mocking Biblical language suggests: "It's one of those things a person has to do; sometimes a person has to go a very long distance out of his way to come back a short distance correctly."[14] T. S. Eliot's paradoxes show a similar tortuous path to reality:

> In order to possess what you do not possess
> You must go by way of dispossession
> In order to arrive at where you are not
> You must go through the way in which you are not
> And what you do not know is the only thing you know
> And what you own is what you do not own
> And where you are is where you are not.[15]

The tale of the dog illustrates Jerry's theme as does his taking the subway to Greenwich Village to enable him to walk the full length of Fifth Avenue to the zoo, and more important, the whole play is Jerry's dramatized step towards his own sensational death. This seeking after sensation, notoriety and publicity is a well-documented symptom of schizophrenia; Jerry: "You'll read about it in the papers tomorrow, if you don't see it on your TV tonight."[16] Jerry's home life if it can be described as such, is brilliantly sketched. The squalid boarding house in which he lives contains a collection of America's less-privileged citizens; the negro homosexual who trips around in a Japanese kimono, plucks his eyebrows and remains lonely; Puerto Ricans with hordes of children, and the pitiful hint of the suffering undergone by the lady living on the third floor in the front who, " Whenever I go out or come back in, whenever I pass her door, I always hear her crying, muffled, but...very determined. Very determined indeed."[17]

The house is a home of lost causes, poverty and suffering of which Peter is completely unaware or, more probably, along with most Americans, has closed his eyes to. Peter can only say that it does not sound very ' nice ' and this conventional, trite adjective proclaims his background and his inadequacies. Jerry details his basic possessions, hardly a minimum for life. The simple life has become the sordid. Jerry does not know why he lives there. He has simply drifted there and is too mixed up and too poor to move, too incompetent, lazy or superior to get a job in a competitive world. The two empty picture frames should contain photographs of Jerry's dead parents but his mother was a whore and his father a drunkard who died celebrating the death of his wife. Jerry spent his early life with his mother's sister, a dour, unfriendly, unloving woman who suddenly dropped dead. Here is the perfect background for Jerry's symptoms. Jerry is almost a caricature of the unloved man who admits to brief encounters with prostitutes, women who wouldn't be caught in the same room as a camera. He discloses, not surprisingly, (it is always a disclosure or a revelation) his early homosexual experience. All this has become a too familar part of the sensitive artist's growth of mind so aptly parodied by Philip Larkin:

> Our garden first: where I did not invent
> Blinding theologies of flowers and fruits,
> And wasn't spoken to by an old hat.[18]

Even Jerry's typewriter on which we suppose he was to compose his verse or novel is broken and will only print capitals. His sense of the importance of things has become a mere yearning for headlines. He keeps a collection of letters, ' please ' or ' when ' letters; " please why don't you do this," and " When will you write? When will you come? When ? "[19] These could be letters received from friends of his youth but, equally likely, they could be his own letters pleading for love or recognition of his existence and never sent.

In one of his cases the psychologist Theodor Reik[20] recounts how a patient told him of a dream in which a dog appears as the threatening agent. Reik explains how the idea suddenly came to him that the word ' dog ' here stood for ' God' and that the one word was the inversion of the other. This idea is no stranger to poetry where we find Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven* and Shelley who wrote of " Heaven's winged hound " in *Prometheus Unbound.* I do not suggest that it is the same with Jerry and the dog, but it is a fact that men seek loyalty and love from their dogs as well as mastery over them. Jerry's is certainly a love-hate relationship with his animal which he describes in almost Spenserian terms of repulsiveness. This dog, the Cerberus of this particular underworld, attacks Jerry every time he enters the building but never on his way out. Jerry attempts to bribe the dog with hamburgers but the animal simply devours the meat and then attacks Jerry. He eventually poisons the meat but the dog recovers never to attack Jerry again. Progress has been made but where a positive state of distrust and hatred existed previously there now is a purely negative lack of contact:

> And what is gained is loss. And what has been the result; the dog and I have attained a compromise; more a bargain really. We neither love nor hurt because we do not try to reach each other. And, was trying to feed the dog an act of love? And perhaps, was the dog's attempt to bite me not an act of love? If we can so misunderstand, well then, why have we invented the word love in the first place.[21]

As Jerry begins to wander about the stage and suddenly sits for the first time not on the empty bench but on the one

occupied by Peter, his thwarted love is transformed into an aggressive, fascist bullying which forces Peter to assert himself, to fight for something, the bench, a symbol of possession; " Now you pick up that knife and fight with me. You fight for your self-respect; you fight for that goddamned bench."[22] When Jerry is impaled on his own knife held by Peter his expression changes from one of agony to a relaxed smile which covers his face as he achieves his death and the news item on the TV programme. He thanks Peter and remembers the final histrionic gesture learnt from detective fiction and wipes the handle clean of finger-prints. His final words mimic scornfully Peter's meaningless exclamation at the disaster, " Oh...my...God."[23] He finds a God, love and possibly a meaning denied on earth, in death. Death is the logical conclusion of the divorce between man and his life.

Peter is in every way a representative of the conforming class and in Britain would be dubbed a member of the Establishment. In the U.S.A. he is simply established. There is something English about him with his pipe, tweeds, his ' now look here ' and his ' My Dear Fellow ' which contrasts sharply with Jerry and his Americanisms. Peter is hardly worthy of Osborne's description of Nigel as " the platitude from outer space " in *Look Back in Anger* yet he does express himself in clichés and is something of a cliché himself. He is an average prosperous middle-class, middle-aged citizen with a wife and daughters, a cat and parakeets. Business and social success with an appearance of satisfaction and happiness have all come his way. We learn that Peter owns two TV sets and takes *Time* magazine (" isn't for blockheads ")[24]. One remembers Ginsburg's warning:

> I'm addressing you.
> Are you going to let your emotional life be run by *Time* magazine?
> I'm obsessed by *Time* magazine.
> I read it every week.[25]

Doubtless Peter's household boasts the statistically necessary two motor cars. Peter is cultured and in the knowledge business. On his single free day (to Jerry all days are Sundays) he strolls in the park (we suspect to escape a nagging wife, teenage daughters and chattering parakeets) and sits down to read. When asked about his literary preferences

Peter embarks hesitatingly on an assessment hedged in with qualifications and obviously culled from a periodical. He has no enthusiams and will not commit himself, yet he is the backbone of the nation. He is horrified at Jerry's attempt to speak to him and variously thinks that a homosexual pass and a confidence trick are being played on him as he cannot understand Jerry's approach, his problem or even his language from time to time. It all would be clearer if Jerry could be pigeon-holed as a Greenwich Village eccentric or a Bohemian type but Jerry has only taken a train to the Village as he lives far from the exotically acceptable weirdies. Peter is continually bewildered at this lack of communication. His established sense of balance, of order and his steady rise through life are jarred by Jerry's questioning. Jerry wishes to break up his satisfied life, to let the cat eat the parakeets. He follows up the inquiry as to whether Peter is married with the seemingly innocent statement, " and you have a wife."[26] This indicates abruptly that Peter has probably long ago stopped thinking about his wife as a living person. The exchange is as artfully innocent as Hans Andersen's opening to *The Nightingale*: " In China, you know of course, the emperor is Chinese and everyone around him is Chinese too."[27] Peter is surrrounded with the impedimenta of the successful man; carefully recommended books, the latest cars, TV sets and so on:

> back I go
> Dog, to my manger packed with doggish goods—
> Tape recorders, books, enormous fires,
> Plenty of food and drink, things in the post
> Which, dog, make me feel good.[28]

Peter, we discover, would prefer a dog and a son to the daughters his wife will not allow him to add to and to the cat she insists on. A dog would complete the picture, would give him unthinking devotion; " Affection strongest when well bought."[29] Jerry's tussle with his dog has ended in failure. Peter has simply avoided the struggle completely and is ruled by his wife.

Peter is an executive in a small publishing firm putting out a steadily profitable line of text books. Undoubtedly a skilled interviewer with his reasonable objections and ' pipemanship ' (recently learnt since the publication of

lung-cancer reports), his witty rejoinders and response to flattery however double-edged (Jerry calls him a " richly comic person "[30]), Peter has perfected his technique of non-involvement yet Jerry manages to provoke him by calling him " a vegetable." Peter has the zoo around him, his family zoo, and Jerry cannot get on terms with a dog. Jerry attacks Peter's sentimental, almost meaningless ethic of dignity respectability, honour and adult behaviour and finally taunts him to something like action which he cannot understand. Jerry's deeply felt question, " Don't you have any idea, not even the slightest what other people need?"[31] is the voice of all exiles trying to break through the barrier of the socially satisfied and the emotionally empty.

This bizarre encounter takes place in the arena of Central Park, a place free for all to stroll, sit and meet, yet it has its jungle-like significance because it is often the scene of murder, rape and, in this case, suicide. The park is a no man's land, or an everyman's land selected by Jerry for his attempt at communicating and fulfilling himself. The action has the inevitability of a Greek tragedy as Albee attempts with an ear acutely tuned to the idiom and cliché of American speech to portray the gladitorial combat between the accepted success and the acknowledged failure. The play builds up logically to its bloody climax. The theatricallity of the ending is a vital part and Jerry, the bad actor, enjoys his curtain. The meaning[32] lies not merely in the conflict between representative types with Albee firmly on the side of the angels. Like Peter, we are jarred by Jerry's provocations and shocked at his end. Forster's theme of ' only connect,' so unconvincingly illustrated in *Howard's End*, is here free of the conscious and the condescending, yet, here too, it ends in failure. The task is hopeless and the attempt can only end in stagy gesture. Yet a close examination of the two characters show the solid citizen as not necessarily a robot clambering up the ladder of success if he can only be made to feel experience, and the 'outsider' as not altogether praiseworthy. Jerry is not only the victim of a split personality but, as we feel with most ' outsiders,' he admires and wants what he despises—the unthinking compromise between success and happiness achieved by Peter. In a way Albee's two characters are the two sides of all personalities, the desire to conform and the desire to rebel. Within the limits of a brief, two-character play, Albee has sensitively explored the modern conflict between the individual and society, between man and man and between man and himself.

The Zoo Story is a study in failure and Albee must be admired for attempting an analysis of 'know thy neighbour' and 'know thyself.'

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1. Albee, *The Zoo Story* (New York, 1963), p. 7.
2. Written 1959 and first performed, April 21, 1960, Schlosspark Theatre, Berlin, Germany.
3. Albee, *Fam and Yam* (New York, 1963), p. 93.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
5. Albee, *The Zoo Story* (New York, 1963), p. 7-8.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
7. Ionesco, 'Experience du Theatre' (*Nouvelle Revue Francaise*), (Paris, 1958), p. 260.
8. Camus, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (Paris, 1942), p. 18.
9. Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (New York, 1961), p. xix.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 226. cf. Note 32 for Esslin's later views.
11. Albee, *The Zoo Story* (New York, 1963), p. 11.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 12-13. Defects in orientation are well-documented symptoms of schizophrenia.
13. Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (London, 1959), p. 42.
14. Albee, *The Zoo Story* (New York, 1963), p. 21.
15. Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays* (New York, 1958), p. 127.
16. Albee, *The Zoo Story* (New York, 1963), p. 15.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
18. Larkin, *The Less Deceived* (London, 1955); 'I Remember, I Remember.'
19. Albee, *The Zoo Story* (New York, 1963), p. 23.
20. Reik, *Listening with the Third Ear* (New York, 1964), p. 333.
21. Albee, *The Zoo Story* (New York, 1963), p. 36.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
25. Ginsberg, *Penguin Modern Poets* 5 (London, 1963), p. 85.
26. Albee, *The Zoo Story* (New York, 1963), p. 15.
27. Andersen, 'The Nightingale' from *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* edited by A. and M. David (New York, 1964), p. 240.
28. Hobsbaum, 'Timon Speaks to a Dog' from *The Penguin Book of Sick Verse*, edited by George MacBeth (London, 1963), p. 134.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
30. Albee, *The Zoo Story* (New York, 1963), p. 37.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
32. Recently critics have shown renewed interest in this play. Richard Kostelanetz ('Contact' October-November, 1963—"The Art of Total No") explains the conflict in purely sexual terms. This analysis

seems to me to be insensitive and oversimplifies this richly complex play into a straight homosexual approach.

Martin Esslin has again turned to this play, after his somewhat hasty and cursory dismissal of it in his standard work, *The Theatre of the Absurd.* In his 'Introduction' to 'Absurd Drama' (London, 1965) p. 22 he observes that "on the ritual and symbolic level," this play is, "an act of ritual self-immolation that has curious parallels with Christ's atonement. (Note the names Jerry–Jesus?–and Peter)."

BOOK REVIEWS

HENRY JAMES: A COLLECTION OF CRITICAL ESSAYS; Edited by Leon Edel; Prentice-Hall, Inc.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; $1.95; pp. 185.

One may write, compile or edit a whole volume on the course the James criticism has taken in England and the United States, and yet face the risk of appearing inadequate and often partisan. It is therefore no easy task to present in a handy volume of 185 pages even the principal vantage points in this vast and constantly growing field of critical and explicatory writing. Yet Leon Edel, eminently equipped as he is by virtue of his pioneering work on James, in bringing out this anthology has accomplished this task with a fair measure of success. Of course, he is selective, and ruthlessly so, in his " personal search " for the best criticism on James but this only testifies to the intrinsic difficulty of the task facing an editor before the multi-faceted achievement of James.

An anthology of James criticism should, in my view, reveal a poise, a balance between mutually contrary critical opinions reflecting not only the enthusiasm of his admirers but also the views of his detractors. For truly the James criticism over the years has been marked by an intellectual encounter between these two groups. Edel's anthology is finely discriminating in its choice of repesentatives from both groups. For while Van Wyck Brooks's essay is representative of a specific American way of looking at James—of believing that " something went wrong with his development " and that " he found the United States too barren and too crude for him and sought a more congenial environment in Europe "—the essay by Edmund Wilson offers the necessary corrective to the views expressed by Brooks. Wilson attempts to show how " Mr. Brooks allows his bitterness to overshoot its mark " and why he is out of sympathy with the Master. These two essays offer excellent perspective for judging James's achievement.

Edel has also chosen a few essays which offer concentrated criticisms of James's special modes and technique. For instance the significance of symbolic imagery in James is acutely brought out by Austin Warren, who, while calling attention to the " tension " in James between the " dialectic and the mythic," describes it as an " epistemological way of

naming that rich interplay and reconciliation of impulses which constitutes his great achievement." Adeline Tintner's "The Museum World" modifies the picture that Warren has presented of the centrality of James's creative world, by pointing out that a work of art for James "incorporates" civilization, which acts as a "protagonist" in the dramatic conflict central to his world. It also acts as a balance between material and spiritual forces and thus James's artistic effort is symptomatic of the cultured American's struggle to possess a "complex" civilization. In this context one may recall Ford Madox Ford's view of James (unhappily not included in this volume) as "essentially an unAmericanised American whose one immense mission was the civilising of America."

The political aspect of James, which seems either non-existent or insignificant to many, is emphasized by Irving Howe in terms (oddly enough) of the novelist's "remarkable insights into political personality." The contributions of Pelham Edgar and Percy Lubbock (without whose section on James from *The Craft of Fiction* no anthology of James criticism would be complete) concentrate on the technique of James, on the celebrated Jamesian point of view.

In an otherwise fine collection one misses any serious consideration of James's later phase. This apart, Leon Edel's anthology offers some of the soundest criticism of James to date, criticism that has rescued James from the ranks of the uncritically accepted (and generally unread) array of authors described as "classics" and placed him instead among the great Masters of the art of fiction.

V. A. SHAHANE

THE CONTEMPORARY POET AS ARTIST AND CRITIC, Eight Symposia edited by Anthony Ostroff; Little Brown and Company, Boston and Toronto, 1964; Price $. 5.00; pp. 236.

Mr. Anthony Ostroff has edited in this book eight symposia on selected modern poems. Each symposium opens with a poem by a contemporary American poet, followed by three critical expositions of it by fellow poets and concludes with a "reply" by the author. Except Auden and Roethke, the other six poets whose work is discussed in this book also appear among the writers of critical discussions on each other's

poems. It is easy to see therefore the two lurking dangers in such a venture. On the one hand, symposia like these may easily degenerate into mutual admiration societies; on the other, in considering contemporary writers one is liable to mistake clever journalism for great literature, fads and fashions for movements and influences, topicality for the truth of life, and mental quirks and aberrations for profundity and originality.

The poems chosen for discussion in this book indicate the major philosophical pre-occupations of the present times. Richard Wilbur's *Love Calls Us to the Things of This World* pictures the light, airy grace of clothes hung to dry and billowing in the wind, and wishes:

> Oh, let there be nothing on earth but laundry
> Nothing but rosy hands in the rising steam
> And clear dances done in the sight of heaven.

Theodore Roethke's *In a Dark Time* is concerned with man's search for identity in the cosmic wilderness and shows how "A man goes far to find out what he is" and ends on a triumphant note of mystic illumination and a resolution of the problem, "Which I is *I*?" Stanley Kunitz in *Father and Son* describes the search for the lost father, the quest for certitude ending in a realization that men must look not to the past but to the future and to eternity. Robert Lowell in *Skunk Hour* bewails the decadence of the present age and sees a faint hope only in such basic and primitive virtues as a mother's love for her offspring. John Crowe Ransom in *Master's in the Garden Again* gives a half-serious portrayal of worn out conjugal love. The age-old problem of Original Sin is the theme of Richard Eberhart's *Am I My Neighbor's Keeper*. With the help of a stark and powerful image of a murdered man who says nothing except to assert his mutilated presence, Eberhart confronts the universal sense of guilt in man, the mark of Cain on his descendanats—a problem which brooks no explanation and yields no philosophical solution. W. H. Auden's *A Change of Air* is concerned with the dichotomy between the inner self and the externalized personality. Karl Shapiro's *The Bourgeois Poet* satirizes the modern poet and the society which lionizes him. It would be uncharitable to see any unconscious irony in the fact that this is the concluding poem in the book.

Dealing with such profound and complex themes, the poems are inevitably difficult and therefore require as well as deserve explication. But apart from the difficulty inherent in the subject-matter, the poems have their full share of the obscurity without which many modern poets feel *en negligee* and embarassed. This fashion of obscurity is a hangover from surrealism with its emphasis on irrational dream mechanisms and the New Apocalypse one of whose principal representatives, G. S. Fraser, described its aetiology as follows: " The obscurity of our poetry, its air of something desperately snatched from dream or woven round a chime of words, are the results of disintegration, not in ourselves, but in society" (*Apocalypse in Poetry*). It is interesting to note that Eliot who is a dominant influence in recent English American poetry has been outstripped by his contemporaries in this regard. The poet of *The Hollow Men* had declared that poetry need not be understood in order to be felt. But Marianne Moore saw a contradiction between lucidity and significance when she said " I think the most difficult thing for me is to be satisfactorily lucid, yet have enough implication in it to suit myself" (*Paris Review*, Winter, 1961). This habit of discounting precision and clarity to an excessive degree betrays an inability to get at the roots of experience and objectify it—a failure which cannot be glossed over by blaming the moral confusion of the age. The consequence, as in every other period when the poetic impulse has dried up, has been a shallowness of response, failure to impose a decisive pattern on experience and an undue emphasis on technique and prosodic detail of secondary significance. The critical essays in this book underline these aspects of modern American Poetry. May Swenson, for instance, writes about the poem by Richard Wilbur: " .....Chief emphases seem to ring out, in the first half, from words containing the vowel sounds *i*, *e*, and *a*. If my count is correct, there are, respectively, 7, 6 and 7 such words. Alliteratively, as well as within words, the l sound occurs 14 times.... In the second half of the poem, *u* is the most emphatic vowel sound, occurring as I count it, 12 times, and the *k* sound is the ruling consonant, beginning, or included in, 16 words" (p. 16). It is surprising that Miss Swenson did not see any special and private significance in the 28 *s* sounds in the first and the 25 *r* sounds in the second half of the same poem. Again Philip Booth remarks: " As Eberhart's *m* and *n* sounds compound in the last six lines, they're like cotton in the reader's mouth, as difficult to get rid of as guilt" (p. 151).

Such pointless subjective excesses appear to be essential to the critique of minor verse. But it is well to remember Theodore Roethke's rhyme:

> O Mother Mary, what do I mean
> That poet's fallen into the latrine,
> And no amount of grace or art
> Can change what happens after that.
> (*Poetry* Magazine, Nov., 1964)

Technical virtuosity is hardly a substitute for the poetic vision.

Mr. Ostroff's book, quite unintentionally, leads one to conclude that many of our modern poets are sensitive to the major moral concerns of the age but have not thought deeply enough about them to give clarity and order to their utterances. Instead of the visionary gleam, there is a tentative, hesitant experimentation with ideas and a pious hope that something might turn up in the process. On page 45, I find Stanley Kunitz saying :" There is a kind of poetry that, in its creative excess, insists on pushing itself to the edge of the absurd, as to the edge of a cliff, at which point only two eventualities remain conceivable: disaster or miracle. The real and beautiful absurdity, as every artist knows, is that the miracle sometimes occurs." Karl Shapiro goes still further to say that " The vocation of poet in America has about it a delicious absurdity.... Our poetry should be as crude, vulgar, thick-skinned, lumpish, arrogant, immature, and sado-masochistic as These States themselves" (p. 216). The exasperation this kind of poetry causes even to the initiated is confessed to by Stephen Spender who says about Auden's poem in this book: " The uncomfortableness I feel after reading the poem twenty times or more is that all the same the amount of poetry we are given is a bit stingy " (p. 181). And Mr. Auden complains about the three poet-critics who have discussed his poem in this book that " none of them seems to have spotted the kind of poem it is." Nothing could be more salutary for the morale of the confused common reader.

Along with the shortcomings of contemporary poetry, Mr. Ostroff's book highlights the fierce courage with which the modern poet is confronting the panorama of disintegration around him and his steadfast refusal to come to terms with it through any process of oversimplification or self-delusion.

The Contemporary Poet as Artist and Critic is a significant document on the present day poetic scene and an invaluable help to understanding the tortured spirit of modern poetry.

HARI SINGH

E. E. CUMMINGS by Barry A. Marks; Twayne United States Authors Series, No. 46; Twayne Publishers, New York; 1964; $ 3.50 (Rupees 17.50); pp. 156.

E. E. Cummings, perhaps because of his withering contempt for the parasitic tribe of critics, has been accorded a good deal of critical scorn and neglect. R. P. Blackmur in an unusually insensitive paper, ' Notes on E. E. Cummings' Language ' (published 1930), regarded Cummings as anti-intellectual and unintelligible. Poets have naturally been kinder and more understanding. Laura Riding and Robert Graves in *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* (1929) treated Cummings and Eliot as the two key poets of modernism. Louise Bogan has best defined Cummings' achievement as ' an alert and sensitive sensuality, a freshness of apprehension demanding a new technique.' The recent Penguin selection of Cummings' poetry, published since his death in 1962, has attracted large numbers of new readers.

Critics, like Blackmur, have dissected the poems, taking a line here and an image or phrase there to build up a case against the poet. The poem, however, is an experience and not an idea, and Cummings must be judged by his success in communicating that experience. Cummings' technical innovations, the typographical daring, his private punctuation all succeed brilliantly in many poems. The printing tricks act in much the same way as Hopkins' diction to achieve ' inscape.' The odd thing is that Cummings was as good and as bad a poet in ' Tulips and Chimneys ' (1923) as in poetry published in 1954 and later.

Dr. Marks' new book is best when elucidating (always a precarious business) Cummings' poetry. His method is to analyze in detail about twenty poems and not isolated stanzas or lines. He is to be admired for his thoroughness, perception, and his willingness to commit himself. The dangers of his method are, of course, over-ingenuity and prosiness; four pages of critical appreciation, however significant and illustrative of technique, of a four-word poem may well strike

the reader as excessive. These chapters do help the reader to appreciate more fully, by close analysis of imagery, punctuation, rhythm and language the experience Cummings is trying to convey. The success of these opening chapters is clear when we again turn to the poems and participate in the incident, story or emotion the poet wished us to share.

The last three chapters are of a more general nature and are less satisfactory. The book would have been better if wholly devoted to the poetry. Far more is learnt from the poem itself about Cummings' views, his role in society etc., as Dr. Marks proves, than from voyages into the shallows of modernism, realism, naturalism, and Americanism.

Cummings, to me, is the supreme lyric writer of the twentieth century. His best verse possesses a unique music, vitality and striking effect. Dr. Marks' book is to be welcomed as it will surely initiate many into sharing the stimulatting experience Cummings attempted to convey in his poetry.

KEITH WILSON

THE AMERICAN VISION: ACTUAL AND IDEAL SOCIETY IN NINETEENTH CENTURY FICTION by A. N. Kaul; published by Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1963; Price 52/6 net; pp. 340.

A. N. Kaul's incisive analysis of the work of four nineteenth century American novelists—James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain—illumines an aspect of the clasical age in American literature that has not received its meed of the scholar's attention. For this notable work of scholarship and historical research, undertaken as a doctoral dissertation, the author, a former Rhodes Scholar and at present Lecturer in English at the University of Delhi, was awarded the John Addison Porter Prize for Literature, and the Egleston History Prize at the Graduate School of Yale University.

This book views the common theme of the " separation from an established society in search of a more satisfying community life" in two perspectives, relating it on one hand to the fundamental cultural tradition, and examining on the other its shaping influence on the novelist's craftsmanship.

In developing his thesis, Kaul postulates that these novelists manifested the dialectic of their times, or, in the words of Lionel Trilling (whom he often quotes approvingly), " they contained the yes and the no of their culture." He analyses the meaning of each of their works and suggests that the main theme of American fiction is not so much concerned with physical isolation as with moral alienation that has led these novelists " to project in their distinctive ways, the image of an ideal community or an ideal social order."

In expounding the history and myth of America, Kaul cites Copper's *Littlepage* trilogy and the *Leatherstocking* tales as examples of " the juxtaposition of the ideal archetype and historical reality " and shows how history and myth, the actual and the ideal " function in a mutual crtitique."

The Scarlet Letter which sprung from Hawthorne's deepest concerns and abiding insights " is, in the author's view, revealing of the tension set up between Hester's flagrant feminism and her Puritan milieu. But Kaul's attempt to equate Hester's assertion of her emotional freedom with Hawthorne's ideal is to dub Hawthorne a feminist. Any such identification tends to abridge Hawthorne's vision of an imbalance in which the shapes of moral and natural evil loom so large as to make it difficult to discern the reality of moral goodness or redemption.

The author's exploration of the Melvillian canon highlights the achievements of a writer whose genius could transmute artistically and exploit on a grand scale " the problems and possibilities implicit in his culture." In *Typee*, as in other works, Kaul discerns that " sense of significance " which the nineteenth century epic poet " felt operating ' as the accepted unconscious metaphysic of his age " and traces " a dialectical movement between a corrupt civilization and an ideal community." Thus Kaul, in his treatment of *Moby Dick* relates its theme to the national spirit of the century, regarding it as " the tragic evaluation of that exuberant and pervasive spirit in whose name so many dubious activities—from military expansionism to the building of personal empires—were justified as the earthly revelation of providential design."

Notwithstanding its unsatisfactory ending, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* furnishes undeniably, as Kaul observes,

a telling criticism of " the familiar structural and moral polarization of civilization and community." The theme is heightened (in Leo Marx's words) " by the juxtaposition of sharp images of contrasting social orders: the microcosmic community Huck and Jim establish aboard the raft and the actual society which exists along the Mississippi's banks, and is rightly placed by the author in the larger cultural picture of nineteenth century America.

The book is a valuable addition to the growing number of scholarly studies of the nineteenth century American novelists which seek to appraise these writers in terms of twentieth century perspectives.

K. VENKATACHARI

ROBERT FROST: THE AIM WAS SONG by Jean Gould.; Dodd, Mead and Company, New York; 1964, $ 4.50; pp. 302.

To the general Indian reader Robert Frost has come to be known chiefly through poems like *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, which was a favourite both of Jawaharlal Nehru and President Kennedy, and *The Gift Outright*, which was recited by Frost at the inauguration of Preisident Kennedy. The present biography by Miss Gould, which she calls " a labour of love," is a fascinating account of Frost's life and his rise, in the face of great difficulties, to recognition as a poet and a teacher. Out of Miss Gould's excellent book emerges the personality of a man of great courage who, in spite of early failure and a series of personal tragedies, pursued his poetic aim with characteristic stubbornness. In this he was helped not a little by his beloved and understanding wife, Elinor, who was a constant source of intellectual inspiration. In his " lovers' quarrel with the world," Frost never became bitter nor lost his joyous approach to life. A trait of Frost's personality which becomes very clear as one reads the book is his great love of Nature, and, although Frost himself hated to be called a Nature poet, he may be said to have done for New England what Wordsworth did for the Lake District. Frost was at once a traditionalist and a nonconformist, a peasant and a sophisticated man of letters; in fact, it is this contrariness of Frost's personality which is emphasised a great deal by Miss Gould. Despite his position and reputation as a poet and a teacher, Frost

resolutely kept himself aloof from the literary controversies of the time, for " his aim was song, not the noise of publicized schools of poetry."

Miss Gould's book is not only a biography of Frost but a critical commentary on his poems, beginning with *La Noche Triste*, published in his school magazine in 1890, and culminating in *The Gift Outright*. Words from Frost's poems have been closely woven into the narrative and help reveal his personality. Surprisingly for an American publication, the book is not free from misprints.

TAQI ALI MIRZA

CARL SANDBURG by Richard Crowder; Twayne United States Authors Series, No 47; Twayne Publishers, Inc., New York; Price $ 3.50; pp. 176.

Good biocritical books are always in demand. Here is another welcome, though rather belated, addition to the Twayne United States Authors Series: a concise, yet complete picture of Carl Sandburg, the most individual of American writers. The book which has a chronology of useful dates at the beginning and a select bibliography at the end is intended for the general reader and scholar alike.

The reason why Sandburg was neglected by critics and biographers alike was because they were in two minds about him. For some, he was tiresome and unreadable as a poet while for others his prose did not meet the standards of imaginative writing adequately enough to qualify as literature. In his book, Crowder has sought to establish Sandburg as a major literary figure who, through his life and writings, stands out as a true embodiment of Whitman's idea of a truly democratic poet.

Sandburg's excursions into biography and his novel *The People-Yes*, besides his practice as a poet are all very ably discussed by Crowder in seven well-knit chapters. This, one feels, is an achievement, but in his enthusiasm to prove Sandburg's greatness as " a profoundly sincere American, who has contributed something permanent to American literature," the author either ignores his feelings or brushes them aside as " partly a matter of individual predilections and partly a matter of fashion." He even goes to the extent

of justifying Sandburg's verbal anarchy, vagueness and repetitiousness—faults for which he has rightly been accused by critics like Paul Rosenburg.

Sandburg was a prolific writer, although one wishes that he had written less and revised his work more. Crowder is right in saying that " a great deal of good could be distilled from his work." A carefully compiled anthology of his prose and poetry will in fact show that, at his best, Sandburg had not only emotional range but considerable variety of content.

SABIHA N. H. JAFRI

WHITMAN IN THE LIGHT OF VEDANTIC MYSTICISM by V. K. Chari; University of Nebraska Press, 1964; $ 4.50; pp. 176.

Even though one hundred and ten years have elapsed since Whitman published his masterpiece, he continues to be ardently praised by some and vehemently denounced by others. Dr. V. K. Chari, adopting the role of a dispassionate critic, has brought out a stimulating volume which carries an appreciative introduction by G. W. Allen. With a thorough grasp of the mystical concepts of the Advaita School of Indian Philosophy, Dr. Chari examines the different aspects of Whitman's work and personality and seeks to explain some of the baffling contradictions which abound there. He does not subscribe to the view that Whitman's was a split personality and remarks that there is no cleavage in him between his inner aspirations and outer environment. He emphatically asserts that Whitman's self is not the Freudian unconscious but it is the self " transmuted and exalted to the superliminal level."

While acknowledging Whitman's debt to the German brand of transcendentalism, Dr. Chari disagrees with the current critical opinions in America that seek to represent Whitman as a Hegelian and points out that the poet's approach is not dialectical but synthetic and mystical. Dr. Chari supports Muriel Rukseyer's view that the inclusive personality which the poet created from his own inner conflicts is the heroic proof of a life in which apparent antagonisms have been resolved into art through poetic vision.

Dr. Chari examines Whitman's views of Space and Time against the background of Bergson's concept of duration and Croce's view of ' historie.' According to Dr. Chari

Whitman's is not a time-philosophy but a time-negating philosophy because unlike Bergson, Whitman definitely assumes the existence of an unchanging ego running through all the changing states of existence.

Dr. Chari does full justice to the poetic technique of Whitman whose forte lies in the presentation of consciousness in a succession of visual patterns and what Milton Hindus calls the flash of revelation in the individual phrase and word. He aptly remarks that Whitman's poems have a movement though not a formal structure.

Dr. Chari's book touches on every vital aspect of Whitman's work and enables the reader to respond to the pulse and power of America's foremost poet.

C. NARASIMHA SASTRY

WILLIAM FAULKNER: THE YOKNAPATAWPHA COUNTRY by Cleanth Brooks; Yale University Press, 1963; Price $ 8.50; pp. 499.

As Cleanth Brooks suggests, the present volume (the first of two intended volumes on Faulkner) seeks to deal with " William Faulkner's characteristic world, the world of Yoknapatawpha Country.... [It is] no more than a possible way to explore Faulkner's world." In this task he is more than successful. For the 499 pages of the book are not only full of information and understanding, but bear the stamp of consummate scholarship, sympathetic analysis and insight that one has come to expect of Brooks.

The first three chapters concentrate on the relationship of Faulkner's world to that of man. In addition they offer a sympathetic account of the " plain people," especially the poor whites in the novels. Of particular interest in these chapters are the remarks that warn the reader of the usual pitfalls to an understanding of Faulkner. Brooks rightly pleads for a discrimination between Faulkner the interpreter of Southern life and Faulkner the artist: "Faulkner's novels and stories, properly read, can doubtless tell a great deal about the South, but Faulkner is primarily an artist.... [His] novels are neither case studies nor moral treatises. They are works of art and have to be

treated as such." The remaining thirteen chapters constitute separate studies of the novels and short stories set in Yoknapatawpha Country. With a characteristic dislike of a new critic for chronology, Brooks refuses to discuss the novels in the order in which they were written and begins instead with *Light in August.*

The general method is to comment on and analyse the numerous episodes and characters in each novel, often throwing fresh light on a situation. Many earlier misreadings are, in the process, pointed out and rectified. Thus Brooks points out that Joe Christmas is murdered and not lynched as was hitherto suggested by various critics of *Light in August.* Likewise it is Ruby and not Temple Drake who interposes between Frank and her father in *Sanctuary*, as was argued by Olga Vickery and Elma Howell. The earlier view was not only a misreading of the text but led to a distortion in the interpretation of Temple's character.

Examples of fine and sensitive critical assessment are found in the chapters dealing with *Light in August* and *As I Lay Dying.* In *Light in August*, the various themes of isolation and alienation, the role of the community, the tension between the masculine and the feminine are analysed with penetrating insight. Individual characters are reassessed with sympathy. Thus Percy Grimm is not the brutal fanatic we think him to be but " the emotionally starved, lonely, terrified little boy." Anse " is not contemptible.... He represents a force probably necessary to the survival of the human animal though it is terrifying when seen in such simple purity." Each argument is supported by great clarity of thought and explanation. A similar treatment is given to Stupen and Flem Snopes in later chapters. The chapter on *The Town* contains a perceptive analysis of Gavin Stevens, linking him to the old tradition of Tristanism and and the Romantic Man. At the same time one is disappointed to find the hurried brushing aside of *Requeim For a Nun* in two and a half pages with the brief concludng remark: " ... under the circumstances, Faulkner has done very well indeed." Equally disappointing is the scanty attention given to Faulkner's treatment of the Negro.

Still the book represents a landmark in Faulkner criticism. Reviewing the book for *New York Herald Tribune*, Reynolds Price has called it the " Baedeker of Faulkner guides, all that reason can give and money can buy." And

truly, Brooks's book (with its eighty pages of notes and geneologies at the end) will remain an impressive monument amidst the growing welter of critical and scholarly work on William Faulkner.

ZEBA BASHIRUDDIN

THE RECOGNITION OF EMILY DICKINSON: SELECTED CRITICISM SINCE 1890, Edited by Caesar R. Blake and Carlton F. Wells; Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1964; $ 7.50; pp. 314.

This volume is a collection of over forty essays on the poetry of Emily Dickinson and attempts to trace the growth of her recognition since the posthumous publication of her first poems in 1890. The critical response which immediately followed is a striking study in contradiction. Ranging from the enthusiastic admiration of William Dean Howells, and the patronising appreciation of Arlo Bates, the poems evoked outraged abuse as 'bad poetry, divorced from meaning, from music, from grammar, from rhyme.' There was another spate of criticism in the twenties and Emily was hailed almost as a fresh discovery, and a 'modern' poet. Her steadily growing reputation procured her notice in the *Cambridge History of American Literature* (1921), where Norman Foerster staked out for her an 'inconspicuous but secure' place in American letters. In the *Literary History of the United States* (1948), Stanley T. Williams affirmed that Emily Dickinson has garnered 'an immortality which is now assuredly hers.' Both these extracts are included in this volume. Williams' remark that she has passed beyond the 'applause' of a cult into established 'acceptance' is significant. The pendulum has stopped swinging, and recent criticism does not concern itself either with the offence or defence of Emily Dickinson, but with discussing her poetry itself; as in the studies by Yvor Winters, R. P. Blackmur and Mark Van Doren. F. O. Matthiessen's appraisal of her position in 1945 cogently summarizes Dickinsonian criticism in the past and includes pointers for the future.

In the first essay of this volume T. W. Higginson expresses a 'misgiving' in publishing this 'Poetry of the Portfolio,' though he himself admires her verses. In the final essay, in 1960, Archibald Macleish writes that these poems were 'never written to herself. The voice is never over-

heard,' and finds in this tonal urgency the greatness of Emily Dickinson.

This collection is thus interesting not only because it illustrates the major phases of a poet's fame, but also because it traces the major trends in critical thought over the past seven decades. The note prefixed to every essay is helpful as it places the essay in some critical perspective in the volume.

However, it should be noted that some essays may be ahead of the general trend, or behind it. To take one example, the problem of her prosody and versification, though dealt with in greater detail by G. W. Allen in 1935, had been studied by Susan Miles ten years earlier, and the approaches of F. H. Stoddard and Bliss Carman to prosody are remarkably ' modern,' though belonging to the nineties. As such one may come to feel that the classification of the book into three periods—1890-1900; 1901-1930; 1931 to the Present—is not really necessary.

The value of this selection lies rather in the numerous viewpoints presented, regardless of the time factor. The questions they pose are important. Is poetry a ' playmate ' with Emily Dickinson (S. T. Williams), or is it a ' psychic pressure ' (C. R. Anderson)? Is she great being a " deep mind writing from a deep culture ' (Allen Tate), or does she fall short, not being the artist ' for whom self expression is also the expression of the society of which he is part ' (Granville Hicks)? Is her use of language ' unfailingly meditated and precise ' (Austin Warren), or is it' always hit or miss with her ' (Percy Lubbock)?

These are some points of view from this anthology, set down here not as a game in juxtaposition, but to indicate the complexity of Emily Dickinson. Herein lies the real purpose of this volume.

SARA NOORUL HUQ

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: A COLLECTION OF CRITICAL ESSAYS, Edited by Arthur Mizener; Prentice-Hall, 1963; Price $ 1.95; pp. 174.

The Fitzgerald revival, marked by the publication of three books about him a decade after his death (the most

notable of them being Mizener's biography. *The Far Side of Paradise*), has now finally conceded him an important position in the tradition of American letters. The present collection of critical essays edited by Arthur Mizener forms the very essence of the Fitzgerald criticism in the twentieth century. Lionel Trilling, Edmund Wilson, John Aldridge, Wright Morris and Malcolm Cowley are but a few of the eminent critics who have contributed articles to this collection. The final impression that the book gives is an almost complete picture of Fitzgerald's career as a writer. I say 'almost,' because one important factor contributing to a better understanding of our author is left out. Mizener himself gives an introductory note of warning that Fitzgerald (of all the writers) cannot be understood without sensitive awareness of the age in which he lived, because the twenties has been the period most viciously exploited and vulgarised by popular magazines. An article on the twenties vis-a-vis our author would have proved valuable.

Reading through the book, one immediately senses the very contrary reactions that Fitzgerald's work provoked. A very stern note of dissent, amounting almost to resentment is struck by Leslie Fiedler who finds almost nothing to praise in Fitzgerald's work. Attributing his revival to a change of taste in our time, the critic seems to think that the case of Fitzgerald has become more and more like that of the " girl we left behind " and he speaks with an iconoclastic zeal of Fitzgerald's " weak gift for construction " and his " second-rate sensitive mind."

There is something in Fiedler's charge that Fitzgerald " willed " his role as a failure in novel after novel. But it is doubtful whether this hidden motivation has anything to do with the assessment of Fitzgerald as an author.

There is a tendency in modern criticism to say something new about a writer, a striving for effect. In no other light can one explain Edwin Fussel's statement that " both from a moral and from a highly personal and idiosyncratic Marxist standpoint, Fitzgerald examines and condemns the plutocratic ambitions of American life and the ruinous price exacted by their lure." To connect Fitzgerald with any Marxist standpoint no matter how idiosyncratic or personal, seems to be rather fanciful. D. S. Savage talks of the " incest motive " in all Fitzgerald's novels—even " Gatsby seeks to go back to happiness and innocence through an impossible union

with the maternal-image, Daisy,..."—while conceding that a neo-Freudian analysis has become fashionable since the mid-fifties. It is hard to discern the logic which the critic employs and the evidence he finds in *The Great Gatsby* to arrive at such a conclusion. For the most part, the essays make very valuable reading. Special mention must be made of Donald Ogden Stewart's parody a la Fitzgerald which is delightful and provides a humorous diversion amidst the otherwise erudite views.

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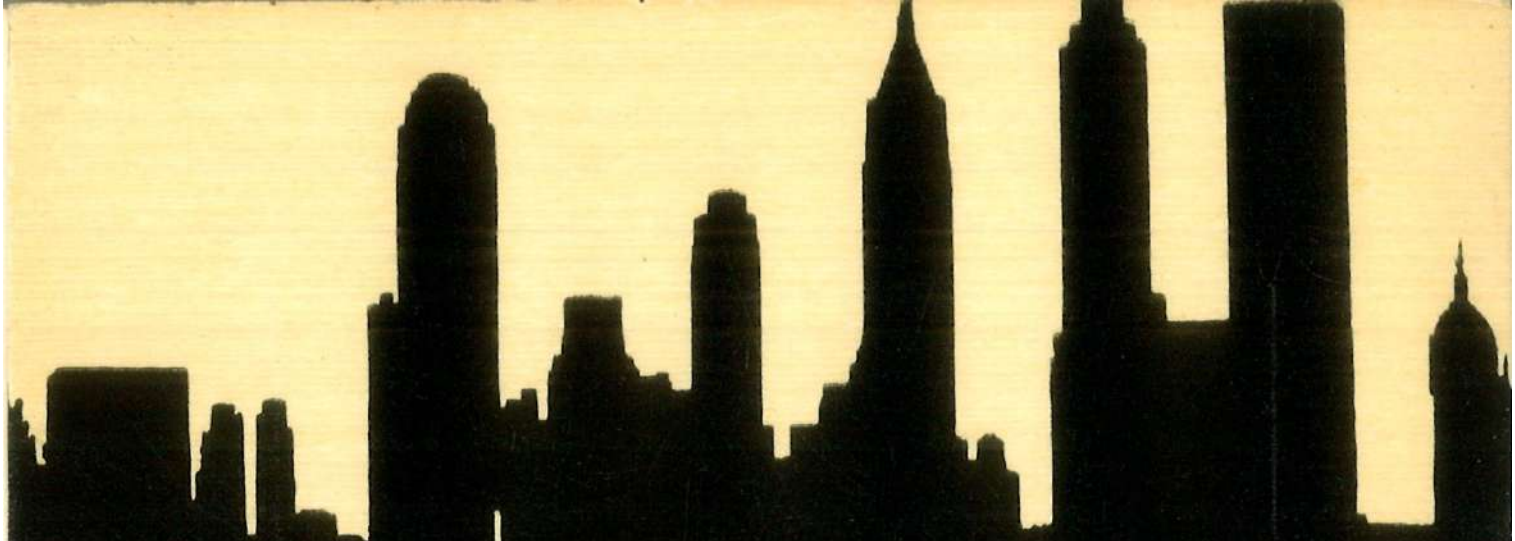

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