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EDITORIAL

We regret the delay (caused by circumstances beyond our control) in the publication of this issue of the *Osmania Journal of English Studies* (*OJES*), which ought to have been brought out in Dec., 1970. We propose to bring out another issue of the *OJES* in Dec., 1971 to make good the delay. Our previous issue—a Special Number on *Indian Writing in English* has been well received in India and abroad.

S. K. K.
V. A. S.
K. V. C.
I. S.

RAJA RAO'S *THE SERPENT AND THE ROPE*: A STUDY IN *ADVAITIC* AFFIRMATION

BY

K. VENKATACHARI

In answer to Annie Brierre's question whether *The Serpent and the Rope* could be considered as an autobiographical novel, Raja Rao said:

> Everything one writes is autobiographical. But it is a *metaphysical novel*. The facts are indefinite and hazy and without great importance except for the last 10 pages : the metaphysical search.[1] (My italics)

Raja Rao's description of his work as a novel, if considered in terms of an essentialist definition of the novel, may be questioned, since " the central concerns of the western novel are absent—social relations, psychological motivation, characterisation, judgment, a passion for the concrete. . . ."[2] Indeed, Raja Rao has been " accused " by a distinguished writer and critic of becoming after his first novel, *Kanthapura*, " an anti-novel novelist, self-consciously using the philosophical essay as part of the bardic recital form ",[3] and thus of " seeking to revive the *Yoga Vasistha* method, with its pale cast of thought, obviously brooding on human destiny and exhorting men and women to seek salvation."[4] While praising Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* for absorbing " the novel form by subtly interpenetrating the narrative with character analysis,"[5] and for using " Joyce's Technique and automatic writing in long passages ",[6] the same critic finds fault with Raja Rao's attempt in *The Serpent and the Rope* to find an appropriate form in which the narrator-protagonist's " perceptions " could be caught, enlarged and qualified through his having to realise the relationships of meanings. The point of view is obviously that of autobiography that maps out the exercises of the central intelligence while giving the

otherwise delimited events of his life a transcendent meaning, which explains Raja Rao's use of diary entries (introspective in character), quotations from the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Puranas*, French poetry, etc., (that are woven into the very texture of the story), and letters in this first person singular narrative.

Whatever the view of the form of *The Serpent and the Rope*, it is indisputable that it is a metaphysical work in that its central character—Rama (Ramaswamy)—is engaged in a quest of metaphysical truth (and suggestively enough, in writing a metaphysical dissertation on the Albigensian heresy) although the categories of metaphysics in his case cannot be strictly verified by states of consciousness. The protagonist, significantly enough, is less concerned with the facts of existence than with the "luminous mystery" that envelops them and seems interested in exploring the substratum—*adhisthana*—of their significance. His striving to get at the *sat* (being) that persists in all experience (and not merely the circumstantial reality) and not to perceive the appearance of the snake in a rope is what provides the principal theme of this work, which is suggested by its very title. Rama's disquisition in the course of a long conversation with Madeline brings this out in unmistakable terms :

> The world is either real or unreal—the serpent or the rope. There is no in-between-the two—and all that's in-between is poetry, sainthood. You might go on saying all the time, "No, no, it's the rope," and stand in the serpent. And looking at the rope from the serpent is to see Paradise, saints, avataras, gods, heroes, universes. Whether you call it duality or modified duality, you invent a belvedere to heaven, you look at the rope from the posture of the serpent, you feel you are the serpent—you are—the rope is. But in true fact, with whatever eyes you see there is no serpent, there never was a serpent. You gave your own eyes to the falling evening and cried, '*Ayyo* ! Oh ! It's the serpent !' You run and roll and lament, and have compassion for fear of pain, others', and your own. You see the serpent and in fear you feel

> you are it, the serpent, the saint. One—the Guru—brings you the lantern; the road is seen, the long, white road, going with the statutory stars. 'It's only the rope.' He shows it to you. And you touch your eyes and *know* there never was a serpent. Where was it, where, I ask you? The poet who saw the rope as serpent became the serpent, and so a saint: Now, the saint is shown that his sainthood was identification, not realization. The actual, the real has no name. The rope is no rope to itself.[7]

Again, drawing on remembrance rather than deriving from any perceptible philosophical design *The Serpent and the Rope* seem to have grown into a spiritual autobiography, since the narrator-protagonist tells his own story. A South Indian Brahmin who traces his lineage back to sage Madhava and further back to sage Yagnavalkya ("my legendary and upanishadic ancestor"[8]), the protagonist—Rama—seems to "answer" to different descriptions—a Europeon Brahmin, a French Vedantin, a Pseudo-Satyavan but like a true *Advaitin* he seems to strive for the "establishment of supreme reality of a transcendantal principle of pure consciousnesss", which alone can clarify and account for the facts of one's experience.

In the unfolding of this spiritual autobiography Raja Rao communicates a Vedantic vision of India, which developing from conventional exegesis comes to encompass a considerable number and variety of correspondences. The discernible "movement" of these correspondences seems subtly influenced by moments of definitive confrontation between truth and error, appearance and reality—a "movement" that gains in meaning, if considered in terms of *Advaita*—the Non-dualistic philosophy of Shri Shankaracharya.

> The world, according to Sankara, is and is not. Its fundamental unreality can be understood only in relation to the ultimate mystical experience, the experience of an illumined soul. When the illumined soul passes into transcendental consciousness, he realizes the self (the *Atman*) as pure bliss

> and pure intelligence, the one without a second. In this state of consciousness, all perception of multiplicity ceases, there is no longer any sense of 'mine' and 'thine', the world as we ordinarily know it has vanished. Then the self shines forth as the one, the truth, the Brahman, the basis of the apparent world. *The apparent world, as it is experienced in the waking state, may be linkened, says Sankara, to an imagined snake which proves, on closer inspection, to be nothing but a coil of rope.* When the truth is known, we are no longer deluded by the appearance—appearance vanishes into the *Brahman*. . . . Thus, according to Sankara, the world of thought and matter has a phenomenal or relative existence, and is superimposed upon Brahman; the unique absolute reality . . . . When transcendental consciousness is achieved, superimposition ceases."[9] (My italics)

That the *Serpent and the Rope* tells the story of Rama's spiritual quest—a quest conditioned by *Advaitism*—is unquestionable, since its very " thematics " seems concerned with the tracing of the stages in Rama's progress towards self-realisation. Even the epigraph to the novel (" waves are nothing but water. So is the sea ")—a quotation from Sri Atmananda Guru's *Atma Darshan—At the ultimate*—is a clear pointer to the author's principal preoccupation in this work, which is to frame Rama's trials and tribulations leading to gradations of distinctions from a simple conception to a complex one, from a material to a spiritual one in terms of *Advaitism*.

"I wandered my life away, and became a holy vagabond" Rama reflects, " If Grandfather simply jumped over tigers in the jungles, how many tigers of the human jungle, how many accidents to plane or car have I passed by? And what misunderstandings and chasms of hatred have lain between me and those who first loved, and then hated, me? Left to myself, I became alone and full of love. When one is alone one always loves. In fact, it is because one loves, and one is alone, one does not die."[10] Rama's reflection suggests an *advaitin's* awareness of the continuity of life and the possibility of release from bondage to time, although it is not expressed

in the accents of the *Moksa-Shastra.* Speaking of his ancestors, Rama remarks :

> Madeline had never recovered—in fact she never did recover—from the death of Pierre.[14]
>
> .....
>
> The illness continued. Good doctor Pierre Marmoson, a specialist in child medicine—especially trained in America—gave every care available. But broncho-pneumonia is broncho-pneumonia, particularly after a severe attack of chicken-pox. *Madeline. however, believed more in my powers of healing than in the doctors.* So that when the child actually lay in my arms and steadied itself and kicked straight and lay quiet, Madeline could not believe that Pierre was dead. The child had not even cried.[15] (My italics)

Being a Christian, Madeline seemed to have been hoping against hope that her child would be miraculously saved from death and pinned her hopes on her husband who, she seemed to think, could become the agent of miraculous intervention. It was, undoubtedly, a case of naive belief which was bound to be belied by reality, since Rama could never be expected to perform a Christ-like function.

The contrast presented by Madeline's inconsolability to Rama's philosophic calm in the face of death not only emphasises the incompatibility of their respective attitudes to death but also points to the poise and equanimity with which Rama like the other Indian characters—Grandfather Kittanna and the Little Mother—can regard death, having been brought up in a tradition that considers death to be a " condition " rather than a denial of life. This traditional view of death which is responsible for Rama's refusal to personalize sorrow (as Madeline does) is brought out through the symbolism of the holy River Ganges:

> The whole of the Gangetic plain is one song of saintly sorrow, as though truth began where sorrow was accepted, and India began when truth was

> acknowledged. So sorrow is our river, sorrow our earth, but the green of our trees and the white of our mountains is the affirmation that truth is possible; that when the cycle of birth and death are over, we can proclaim ourselves the truth. *Truth is the Himalayas*, and *Ganges humanity*. That is why we throw the ashes of the dead to her. She delivers them to the sea, and the sun heats the waters so that, becoming clouds, they return to the Himalaya. *The cycle of death and birth go on eternally like the snows and the rivers.* That explains why holy Badrinath is in the Himalaya: it proclaims the truth. *Sri Sankara again came to my mind.*[16] (My italics).

Since death does not mean " a river of no return " but only a disintegration of substance and change of form which are processes to which all living beings are subject until they attain the truth-state—a state of liberation from bondage of finitude and limitation, it should not hold any terrors for anyone. It is significant that Sri Sankara comes to Rama's mind when it is engaged in this metaphysical speculation about the Ganges and the Himalay, which is indicative of its being *advaitic*. The river Ganges (having a double correspondence in sorrow and humanity) and the Himalay (standing for the truth-state) are made symbolically suggestive of the *advaitin's* conception of the eternal—a conception that bridges the gulf between the relative and the absolute.

Although Rama avers:

> I am writing the sad and uneven chronicle of a life, my life, with no art or decoration, but with the ' objectivity ', the discipline of the ' historical sciences ', for by taste and tradition I am only an historian.[17]

his account of his life is marked by philosophising which sounds out and experiments with thought. Rama's reflections on Buddhism, Christianity, Marxism, Nazism, imperialism, feminism, industrialism, etc., suggest his *advaitic* attempt to expose the ' fatal flaw ' of all thought which seems vitiated

by a mass of dialectic. Although all thought aims at knowing the truth, the Reality, or although all knowledge—conceptual or perceptual—attempts to unravel the Reality, it tends to equate the real with the unreal or 'to attribute to the real what is different from it' which is what Shri Sankara calls *Adhyasa* (*Smritirupah Paratraparavabhasah*), and which for example, occurs when a rope appears as a snake. Talking to Savitri Rama asserts:

> "No body can see at the level of your eye—and so nobody can speak the real truth—Not even the scientist.'
>
> 'No, not even the scientist?' she asked.
>
> 'No, not even the scientist, for at best sciense is an equation within an equation, two symbols, first accepted by yourself, then compared in measurement, composition and action, to see whether they coincide with each other ..... All science is tautology.'[18]

Rama's observation stems from the *advaitic* view that judgments go wrong because of the tendency to cognise the data by means of interpretation, which necessarily involves the equating of one thing with another resulting, for example, in the mistaking of a rope for a snake.

> 'To say electricity is such and such an equation, simply means electricity is electricity. It is just like saying I see a thing, or God is equal to X. When seeing goes into the make of form and form goes into the make of seeing, as the Great Sage says, " What, pray, do you see?"
>
> 'You see nothing, or you will, yourself,' answered Savitri and I wondered at her instant recognition of her own experience.
>
> 'Therefore, what is truth? I asked.
>
> .....
>
> 'Is-ness is the truth,' she answered.

'And is-ness is what'
'Who asks that question?'
'Myself,'
'Who?'
'I.'
'Of whom?'
'No one.'
'Then "I am" is.'
'Rather, I am am.'
'Tautology!' she laughed.
'Savithri says Savithri is Savithri.'
'An you say Savithri is what?' she begged.
'"I"'

.....

'There is no Savithri,' I continued after a while.
'No, there isn't. That I know.'
'There is nothing.' I persisted.
'Yes,' she said. 'Except that in the seeing of the seeing there's a seen.'
'And the seen sees what?'
'Nothing,' she answered.
'When the I is, and where the Nothing is, what is the Nothing but the "I".'
'So, when I see that tree, in that moonlight, that cypress, that pine tree, I see I—I see I—I see I.'
'Yes.'
'That is the Truth,' she said.....[19]

This conversation brings out in a striking manner the *advaitic* thesis—*Tat Twam Asi* (That art thou)—which postulates that since there is nothing in the universe except *Aham* (I) which is identical with *Sah* (He meaning *Brahman*), it is the realisation of *So'ham* (He is I) or *Aham Sah* (I am He) or *A Ham Brahmasmi* (I am *Brahman*) which is the truth:

Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma
—*Taittireya Upanishad* (II, 1, 1)

Chandogya Upanishad (VI, 14, 3), in fact, asserts, "what that Subtle Being is of which the whole universe is composed, That is the Real, That is the Soul, That art Thou," which is what underlies Shri Sankara's statement:

Brahma Twameva Tasmannaham Brahmeti Mohamatredam
Mohena Bhavati Bhedah Klesah Sarve Tanmulam
—*Swatmanand Prakas* (Verse 6)

Thou art *Brahman*. Therefore (the feeling that) 'I am not *Brahman*' is caused by delusion. Differentiation is caused by delusion, which is the root cause of all pains.

But the fundamental consciousness—the basis of all reality—must not be confused with human consciousness, since it is "the supreme principle in which there is no differentiation of knower, knowledge and known, infinite, transcendent, the essence of absolute knowledge." To realise this oneness with the fundamental consciousness, or to gain the knowledge of *Brahman* 'before which all notions of distinctions of deed, doer, fruit, etc., vanish,' *Jnana* or spiritual insight is the only means, as Shri Sankara avers, since 'the attainment of the highest is merely the removal of *avidya*' which is 'the finiteness of the finite individual impelling him to lead a life of desire and strife, consequent on the ignorance of his oneness with *Brahman*.'

It is significant that Rama experiences at the very beginning an inexplicable sense of something missing or missed in his life—the tell-tale signs of his thirsting for knowledge;

> Something has just missed me in life, some deep *absence* grew in me, like a coca-nut on a young tree, that no love or learning could fulfil. And setting sometimes, my hand against my face, I wondered where all the wandering would lead to. Life is a pilgrimage I know, but a Pilgrimage to where and of what?[20]

Although Rama seems to be facing the same problem at the end of his story and tells himself in exasperation:

> "I must leave this world, I must leave, leave this world." But Lord, where shall I go, where? How can one go anywhere? *How can one go from oneself?*[21] (My Italics)

he has now attained an enlightenment that makes him long for a Guru, not for God, because "God is an object and I cannot long for him."[22]

> "Oh Lord, My Guru, My Lord" I cried in the middle of the dreadful night.
>
> .....
>
> "Lord, Lord My Guru, come to me, tell me; give me thy touch, vouchsafe," I cried, "The vision of Truth Lord, my Lord."[23]

Rama's career through the novel is punctuated by trials and tribulations—mainly concerned with the spirit—resulting in a kind of enlargement of consciousness that makes him yearn for knowledge, which, as *advaitic* philosophy maintains, is attainable only through a Guru.

> *Karmabhireva Na Bodhah Prabhavati Guruna Vina Dayanidhina*
> *Acharyavan Hi Purvso Vedetyarthsya Vedsiddhtwat*
> —*Swatmanand Prakas* (43)
>
> Knowledge does not come through *karma* alone without having a kind Guru. Even the *Vedas* have declared that one having a Guru can alone *know*.

Although Rama has yet to meet his Guru with the light of knowledge, he has a vision:

> 'I do not know where I went, but I was happy there, for it was free and broad like a sunny day and like a broad white river it was. I had reached Benares—Benares. I had risen from the Ganges, and saw the luminous world, my home. I saw the silvery boat, and the boatman had a face I knew. I know His face, as one knows one's face in deep sleep. He called me, and said: "It is so long, so long my son. I have awaited you. Come, we go." I went, and man, I tell you, my brother, my friend, I will not return. I have gone whence there is no returning. To return you must not be. For if you are, where can you return? Do you, my brother, my friend, need a candle to show the light of the sun? Such a sun I have seen, it is more splendid than a million suns.

> It sits on a river bank, it sits as the formless form of Truth; it walks without walking, speaks without talking, moves without gesticulating, shows without meaning, reveals what is known. To such a Truth I was taken, and I became its servant, I kissed the perfume of its Holy Feet, and called myself a disciple.'[24]

What Rama experiences is a vision of the ineffable experience which no thought or speech can reach —an experience that seems possible only when one has a Guru to help in getting rid of the psychological barriers to the revelation of the self-evident character of truth.

Rama, being a believer in *advaitism*, invokes the principle of non-contradiction as the test of Truth in his discourses on the various systems of thought and admits—rather grudgingly at times—the distinction between *paramartha* (absolute truth) and *Vyavahara* (empirical truth), which even Shri Sankara did. Rama's quest for Truth—a search for the immanent principle in all experience—significantly enough, impels him to seek his Guru in Travancore where Shri Sankara was born: " I have no Benares now, no Ganga, no Jumna, Travancore is my country, Travancore my name."[25] Rama—presented in this novel as the metaphysical *locus* of hope and despair—discusses fundamental questions concerning faith and reason, tradition and experimentation, reverence for ancient wisdom and the claims of modern knowledge—a discussion that brings out the *advaitic* view: Man seeks his knowledge in the world but must know it is himself without him."[26] which is but an *advaitic* affirmation of what the highest knowledge is, though expressed in the accents of a modern seeker of Truth who is aware of human knowledge in the progression of Time, and of his own knowledge in the progression of his life.

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1. Annie Brierre, " An Interview with Raja Rao ", *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, (March 10, 1963), 26.

2. David McCutchion, *Indian Writing in English*, (Writers Workshop, Calcutta, 1969), p. 72.

3. Anand, Mulk Raj, *Old Myth—New Myth:* Recital Versus Novel, (a paper—unpublished—presented at the seminar on "*Indian Writing in English*", held at Mysore in January, 1968), p. 16.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Raja Rao, *The Serpent and the Rope*, (John Murray, London, 1960), p. 340.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
9. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage of India*, (London, 1962), pp. 283-286.
10. Raja Rao, *The Serpent and the Rope*, opp. cit., p. 11.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 133.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 404.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 407.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 408.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, p. 410.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 364.

GLEAMS AND GLOOMS : A READING OF *THE TURN OF THE SCREW*

BY

ADAPA RAMAKRISHNA RAO

Though Henry James considered *The Turn of the Screw* to be no more than an "irresponsible little fiction" and "rather a shameless pot-boiler,"[1] and suggested that it was the kind of story which was "least apt to be baited by earnest criticism,"[2] ever since its publication in 1898 the novelette has attracted a great deal of critical attention. In spite of the author's claim that it was but a "wanton little tale" and a "very mechanical matter," critics like Joseph Warren Beach, F. O. Matthiessen, Edmund Wilson, Allen Tate, and David Daiches have considered it aesthetically important enough to merit scrutiny and comment.

When Lady Gosford complained to Henry James that though she felt a growing sense of terror when she read *The Turn of the Screw* she really did not understand what was happening, he is said to have replied that he too shared her perplexity. He explained that he had tried to pass on to the reader the sense of mystery he felt when he heard the story from Archbishop Benson and that, as to understanding it, it was "just gleams and glooms."

The critics do not seem to have fared any better either, seeing that they have variously described it as a sophisticated hoax, a deliberate attack on authoritarianism, a case study of psychopathology, a rejection of New England Puritanism, and a projection of the obsessions of the author's own haunted mind.[3]

Some have advanced fantastic interpretations of the story with almost no internal evidence to support them.

It has been suggested, for instance, that the ghosts are not supernatural agents but real persons residing at Bly, "a mute, demented woman, possibly the insane, jealous mother of the children, and her keeper or bailiff."[4] According to another view nothing actually happened at Bly. It seems, the governess was in love with Miles, and she fabricated the entire story as a veiled expression of her feeling towards him at the time of writing it.[5]

If we ignore such incredible interpretations, there remain two plausibe explanations of the mystery at Bly: (1) the psychological theory, popularised by Edmund Wilson,[6] which considers the governess as "a neurotic case of sex repression" and the ghosts as merely a projection of her troubled mind, and (2) the conventional view which maintains that the governess is quite sound psychologically and that the ghosts are in fact supernatural agents that seek to expose the children to evil. Robert Heilman[7] links this evil specifically with the Judeo-Christian tradition of man's loss of Paradise. It would be rewarding to examine these two conflicting views in the light of what Henry James himself had said about the story on various occasions.

Though the psychological interpretation, based on the assumption that the ghosts in the story are merely figments of the governess's twisted imagination, has been presented at some length by Edna Kenton and Edmund Wilson, such a view had already been hinted at by others before them. *The Critic*, for instance, observed within a few weeks after the publication of the story that "the heroine had nothing in the least substantial upon which to base her deep and startling cognitions. She perceives what is beyond all perception, and the reader who begins by questioning whether she is supposed to be sane ends by accepting her conditions and thrilling over the horrors they involve." Henry A. Beers stated in 1919 that he had felt sometimes that "the woman who saw the phantoms was mad." Harold Goddard, likewise, suggested that possibility of hallucination

on the ground that the governess had inherited from her eccentric father a "psychologically unbalanced nature."

Edna Kenton's interpretation of the story appeared in 1924.[8] She argues that the tale is a clever hoax based on hallucination. Referring to James's description of the story as "a piece of ingenuity pure and simple, of cold, artistic calculation, an *amusette* to catch those not easily caught," she contends that James deliberately planned it as a test of the reader's attentiveness. Emphasizing the fact that nowhere had James stated that the ghosts appear to anyone but the governess, she concludes that

> the reader, persistently baffled, but persistently wondering, comes face to face at last with the little governess, and realizes, with a conscious thrill greater than that of merely automatic nerve shudders before "horror," that the guarding ghosts and children—what they are and what they do—are only exquisite dramatizations of her little personal mystery, figures for the ebb and flow of troubled thought within her mind, acting out her story.

Edmund Wilson extends this hallucination theory further by taking recourse to Freudian psychology in his essay on the ambiguity of Henry James, which appeared in 1934. He considers *The Turn of the Screw* as "simply a variation on one of James's familiar themes: the frustrated Anglo-Saxon Spinster." He maintains that the ghosts are merely imagined by the governess by pointing out that there is never any reason for supposing that anybody but she sees them. She does believe that the children see them, but there is no proof that they do. And the housekeeper insists that she does not see them. So the ghosts are imaginary, and the story is just a portrayal of a woman in love with her employer.

The governess is the daughter of a poor country parson, and she falls in love with the children's guardian, who is a

charming and eligible bachelor. While taking a stroll in the estate with her young charges, she sees the ghost of Quint, the valet, who is at that time wearing the master's clothes. Wilson argues that Quint has been " ambiguously confused " in the governess's mind " with the master and with the master's interest in her." He therefore concludes that

> when we look back in the light of these hints, we become convinced that the whole story has been primarily intended as a characterization of the governess : her visions and the way she behaves about them, as soon as we look at them from the obverse side, present a solid and unmistakable picture of the poor country parson's daughter, with her English middle-class class-consciousness, her inability to admit to herself her sexual impulses and the relentless English 'authority' which enables her to put over on inferiors even purposes which are totally deluded.

And to fit his Freudian interpretation he attaches significance to the tower on which the male ghost makes his first appearance, the lake where the female spirit is seen, and the toy boat that Flora carries in her hands as sex symbols.

Though this interpretation seems quite plausible, it conveniently ignores the fact that Mrs. Grose, the housekeeper, promptly identifies the male ghost. When the governess describes his appearance to her, Mrs. Grose is positive that the spectral visitor is Peter Quint. She does not say that she is reminded of Quint by the description. She recognizes him at once. And the governess had not heard of him upto that moment.

Edmund Wilson tries to explain away this flaw in his thesis by suggesting a possible physical resemblance between the master and his valet, though the view is at variance with the facts in the story. In fact, the governess comes across the ghost for the first time while she was thinking of

the master, and she is certain that it is neither the master nor anyone else she has seen before. Moreover, Mrs. Grose identifies the description of the ghost as that of Quint without a moment's hesitation. She would not have done so if there was some resemblance between the master and the servant.

When John Silver came up later with the view[9] that the governess has heard of Quint's description from the people in the village, Edmund Wilson endorsed this explanation in a postscript, which he added to his essay, in 1959. It is not convincing, however, as there is absolutely no evidence, not even a hint, in the story to support this view.

That the psychological theory is only an exercise in ingenious interpretation at variance with the author's intentions becomes clear when we turn to the notes left by Henry James on *The Turn of the Screw*.

Henry James states that the germ of this novelette is to be found in a little story that was told him by Archbishop Benson in January 1895, " dealing as it did with a couple of small children in an out-of-the-way place, to whom the spirits of certain ' bad ' servants, dead in the employ of the house, were believed to have appeared with the design of ' getting hold ' of them."[10]

He states his intent clearly in another passage in which he mentions that the ghosts

> would be agents in fact; there would be laid on them the dire duty of causing the situation to reek with the air of Evil. Their desire and their ability to do so, visibly measuring meanwhile their effect, together with their observed and described success —this was exactly my central idea.[11]

James is equally explicit on the subject of the characters the ghosts are intended to haunt. He explains :

> what in the last analysis had I to give the sense of ? Of their being, the haunting pair, capable, as the

> phrase is, of everything—that is of exerting, in respect to the children, the very worst action small victims so conditioned might be conceived as subject to.[12]

It is obvious from these passages that in *The Turn of the Screw* Henry James was primarily concerned with the relationship between the spirits of the corrupt servants and the children and not with the complex feelings of the governess.

Edmund Wilson's description of the governess as a version of the frustrated Anglo-Saxon spinster does not seem to agree with the author's conception of her character either. Answering a complaint by H. G. Wells that her character did not receive adequate attention in the story, Henry James wrote :

> Of course, I had, about my young woman, to take a very sharp line. The grotesque business I had to make her trace and present were, for me at least, a very difficult job, in which absolute lucidity and logic, a singleness of effect, were imperative. Therefore I had to rule out subjective complications of her own—play of tone, etc., and keep her impersonal save for the most obvious and indispensable little note of neatness, firmness and courage—without which she wouldn't have had her data.[13]

Wilson's description of the governess as a neurotic bears no resemblance to this character Henry James sought to create in the story.

Moreover, James left hints in the story itself to establish the dependability of the governess as a witness. The testimony of Douglas in the introductory framework about his acquaintance with her after the events of the story had taken place is clearly intended by the author to show that she is a reliable witness.

A serious defect in the psychological interpretation is to be found in the fact that it fails to take cognizance of

the powerful sense of evil that pervades the story and tries to explain it away as the fabrication of a mentally unsound spinster.

Robert Heilman, on the other hand, emphasizes the presence and power of Evil in the story, and interprets it in terms of the Fall of Man legend. Through a close analysis of its imagery and diction, carrying Judeo-Christian religious connotations, he argues that it parallels the Loss of Paradise myth. According to him, the light imagery in the story suggests the dawn of existence and the children indicate the childhood of the race. Bly resembles Eden, and the change of seasons from June to November trace the movement from innocence to fall. Quint, with his snake-like eyes and red hair, suggests the Devil, while Miss Jessel in her black dress bears resemblance to the fallen angel. And when the children yield to evil, they display precocious awareness, indicating that they have tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge. The governess takes upon herself the impossible task of saving the children from the forces of evil.

Heilman's interpretation appears persuasive, especially when he argues that the story continues to live and horrify new readers because it brings to mind the archetypal religious experiences, and, in particular, the Christian myth. But he is not quite convincing when he argues that the words used by the governess throughout the story suggest that James is attaching to her the quality of a saviour. He points out, for instance, that she uses words like 'atonement.' She speaks of herself as an 'expiatory victim,' of her 'pure suffering,' and, at various times, of her 'torment.' And quite early in the story she decides to 'shelter' her pupils and to 'absolutely save' them.

But, then, it must be remembered that the story is presented to us from her point of view and that the words

she employs to describe her task do not prove that James has intended her to be a Christ-like saviour. After all, she is a Hampshire parson's daughter and it is quite natural for her to draw freely from the religious imagery she has always been exposed to, when she tries to recount a story about forces of evil. Moreover, as J. A. Ward rightly points out[14], such a view ignores the irony that James achieves by the references to the governess as a saviour. For all her devotion and agony, she not only fails to save the children but actively helps to damn them. The governess is no more convincing as a redeemer than as a sexually repressed spinster.

There is no basis in James's notes for the identification of the evil in the story with the concept of the "Original Sin." If he did not claim that he was presenting a case study of neurosis in *The Turn of the Screw*, he did not suggest that he was offering us a religious parable either. He left the exact nature of the evil deliberately vague to intensify the sense of mystery it is intended to evoke.

It is true that we need not depend on what an author tells us about his work, and that ultimately the story must be its own testimony. A careful reading of *The Turn of the Screw* will show that it is a horror tale which recounts an unusual experience of a young and bewildered woman who had to fight in vain the forces of darkness to save her wards. To argue that it is no more than a projection of the troubled mind of a frustrated maid is to see less than the story has to show. And to make it out to be an elaborately conceived "morality play in modern dress" is to see much more in it than it actually presents.

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1. In a letter to F. W. H. Myers. See *Letters of Henry James*, ed. Percy Lubbock, I (New York, 1920), p. 306.
2. Henry James, *The Art of the Novel* (New York, 1934), p. 169.
3. For a representative selection of the many interpretations of this novelette, see *A Casebook on Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw,"* ed. Gerald Willen (New York, 1959).

4. John A. Clair, *The Ironic Dimension in the Fiction of Henry James* (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1965), pp. 38-39 and p. 48.

5. Gerald Willen suggests this view in his Introduction to *Casebook*.

6. Edmund Wilson, *The Triple Thinkers* (New York, 1948), pp. 88-132.

7. Robert Heilman, "The Turn of the Screw as Poem," *The University of Kansas City Review*, XIV (Summer, 1948), pp. 277-289.

8. Edna Kenton, "Henry James to the Ruminant Reader : The Turn of the Screw," *The Arts*, *VI* (November 1924), pp. 245-255.

9. "A Note on the Freudian Reading of 'The Turn of the Screw'," *American Literature*, *XXIX* (May 1957), pp. 207-211.

10. Preface to the New York Edition of *The Novels and Tales of Henry James* (New York, 1908), *XII*, p. XV.

11. *Ibid.*, p. XX.

12. *Ibid.*, p. XXI.

13. *Letters* (cited above), I, pp. 298-299.

14. *The Imagination of Disaster* (Lincoln, 1961), p. 222.

THE THEME OF COURTESY IN SPENSER'S *FAERIE QUEENE*

BY

TAQI ALI MIRZA

This paper has a limited and specific aim—the examination of the theme of courtesy as dealt with by Spenser in Book VI of the *Faerie Queene* in the light of Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*. Castiglione's *Il Libro del Cortegiano* was first published in 1528, and was translated into English by Sir Thomas Hoby, and published by him in 1561. It was popular enough to need a second edition to be published in 1588, with texts in Italian and French on the same page. One may assume, safely, that Castiglione's book was read by Spenser, both in the original Italian and in its English translation. One may also assume, equally safely, that Spenser, in trying to achieve " the generall end of all the book ", which was, in his own words, " to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline,"[1] must have drawn freely on *The Courtier*, which was probably the most important of several courtesy books available at the time. The question of determining the prototype of the knight of courtesy, whether it was Sir Philip Sidney or the Earl of Essex or some other Elizabethan nobleman, is irrelevant here. Spenser hoped "to pourtrait in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve morall vertues, as Aristotle hath devised, the which is the purpose of these first twelve bookes "[2]. The correspondence between the Aristotelian virtues and the virtues of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is not very precise, least so in Book VI. Both Miss Winstanley[3] and Prof. Jones[4] have pointed out that the virtue of courtesy has no exact parallel in Aristotle, because it is essentially a chivalric conception, and has no true equivalent in Greek. This being the case, it becomes still more clear that Spenser was indebted more to

the ethical code as laid down in the Renaissance courtesy books for his delineation of the virtue of courtesy than to classical philosophy. This question, specially Spenser's indebtedness to Castiglione, has been dealt with, at some length, by Prof. Jones in *A Spenser Handbook* (1947), and Prof. M. Bhattacherje in *Studies in Spenser* (1929). But what both have failed to note is that this indebtedness is not limited to Book VI of the *Faerie Queene*, but is co-extensive with the entire work. To cite only one example: Lord Octavian, in the course of a speech in the fourth book of *The Courtier* says, " Marvell ye not then (my Lorde Cesar) if I have said, that of temperance arise many vertues: for when a minde is in tune with this harmony, by the meane of reason he easily received afterwarde true manlinesse, which maketh him bold and safe from all danger, and (in a manner) above worldlye passions "[5]. It is easy to see the very close resemblance between this passage and the stanzas extolling the virtue of Temperance, under the guidance of Reason, in the legend of Temperance in Book II of the *Faerie Queene*. A little later, Lord Octavian remarks, with reference to the education of a gentleman, that " if he be helped forwarde with the instructions, bringing up, and the arte of the Courtier, whome these Lordes have fashioned so wise and goode, he shall be most wise, most continent, most temperate, most manly, and most juste, full of liberallitee, majesty, holinesse, and mercy: finally he shall be most glorious and most dearly beloved to God and man. "[6] This, in all probability, was what Spenser was trying to do when he said that the " generall end.....of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline "[7].

It is true, nevertheless, that Spenser's debt to Castiglione is more marked in Book VI than in the other books of the *Faerie Queene*. The knight of courtesy is the typical Renaissance hero, possessing all the qualities laid down by Castiglione for the ideal courtier. It is possible to find for every passage describing Sir Calidore, a corresponding

passage in *The Courtier*. The courtier, according to Castiglione, is a person of noble birth, handsome, but not effeminate, adept at a number of physical exercises—running, jumping, wrestling—, "a perfect horseman for every saddle"[8], a good singer and dancer, full of pity for the weak and the vanquished and always courteous towards women. And with all these accomplishments, the courtier, though far above the common run of men, is yet not vain and secluded but is ever ready to mingle with the crowd and " to keepe company pleasantly with every man, let him doe whatsoever other men doe: so he decline not at any time from commendable deedes, but governeth himselfe with that good judgement that will not suffer him to enter into any folly : but let him laugh, dally, jest, and daunce, yet in such wise that he may alwayes declare himselfe to be wittie and discreete, and every thing that he doth or speaketh, let him doe it with a grace."[9] " The principall and true profession " of the Courtier, " ought to be feates of armes, the which above all I will have him to practise lively, and to bee known among other of his hardinesse, for his atchieving of enterprises, and for his fidelitie towards whom he serveth. And hee shall purchase himself a name with these good conditions, in doing the deedes in every time and place, for it is not for him to fainte in this behalf without a wondrous reproch. And even as in women honestie once stained doth never retune againe to the former estate: so the fame of a gentleman that carrieth a weapon, if it once take a foyle in anye little point through dastardlinesse or any other reproch, doth evermore continue shamefull in the world and full of ignorance."[10]

The personality and the exploits of Sir Calidore are illustrations of the ideal of " courtesy " as drawn by Castiglione. Indeed, the virtue of courtesy is the cardinal virtue of every knight in Spenser, and it is from this virtue that other virtues emanate. In the dedicatory verses addressed

to Queen Elizabeth, at the beginning of Book VI Spenser writes :

> Amongst them all growes not a fayrer flower,
> Then is the bloosme of comely courtesie,
>
> Which though it on lowly stalke doe bowre
> Yet brancheth forthe in brave nobilitie,
> And spreds it selfe through all civilitie.[11]

Spenser's Sir Calidore is "full stout and tall", "of comely guize", and of noble birth. He is "fierce in war", but when among the shepherds, "lowly, sober and circumspect, fleeing above all things bragging and unshamefull praising himself". Sir Calidore's behaviour while among the rustics would win the approval of Castiglione because his "lowliness is much to be commended".[12] He proves his skill in dancing and music, in wrestling and hunting, and shows, in contrast to Coridon, his courage in time of danger, and his magnanimity in the hour of victory. He would not hurt an enemy lying on the ground :

> Whiles yet his foe lay fast in sencelesse sound,
> Yet would he not him not hurt, although he might :

For shame he weend a sleeping wight to wound.[13] He approves the action of young Tristram in killing the discourteous knight, guilty of "knightlesse shame:"

> For knights and all men this by nature have
> Towards all womenkind them kindly to behave.[14]

He instructs Coridon in the ways of courtly love

> So well he woo'd her, and so well he wrought her,
> With humble service, and with daily suit,
> That at the last unto his will be brought her.[15]

The emphasis here, as in the system of courtly love, is on the principle of humility. The lover's sense of lowliness

makes him humblei n his attitude towards his mistress. Sir Calidore's life during his soujourn with Meliboe would appear to be an illustration of the principle enunciated in the second book of *The Courtier*. When Sir Frederick remarks, "He ought to have a great consideration in presence of whom he sheweth himselfe, and who be his matches. For it were not meete that a gentlemen should be present in person and a doer in such a matter in the countrey, where the lookers on and the doers were of a base sort", Lord Gaspar Pallavacin replies : "In our countrey of Lumbardy, these matters are not passed upon, for you shall see the young gentlemen upon the holy days come daunce all the day long in the sunne with them of the countrey, and pass the time with them in casting the barre, in wrestling, running and leaping. And I believe, it is not ill done. For no comparison is there made of noblenesse of birth, but of force and sleight, in which thinges many times the men of the countrey are not a whit inferiour to gentlemen, and it seemeth this familiar conversation conteyneth in it a certaine lovely freeness."[16] Sir Calidore does precisely this, and though he proves himself superior to Coridon in physical prowess, he is always unselfish and good humoured, in contrast to the latter's envious and surly behaviour.

Castiglione lays down : "The Courtier, therefore, besides noblenesse of birth, I will have him to be fortunate in this behalfe and by nature to have not only a wit and comely shape of person and countenance, but also a certaine grace, and (as they say) a hewe, that shall make him at first sight acceptable and loving unto who so beholdeth him.....Likewise in companie with men and women of all degrees, in sporting, in laughing, and in jesting, he hath in him certaine sweetness, and so comely demeanours, that who so speaketh with him, or yet beholdeth him, must needs beare him an affection for ever."[17] Spenser's portrait of Sir Calidore corresponds very closely to the above description of the ideal courtier :

> But mongst them all, was none more courteous knight,
> Then Calidore, beloved over all,
> In whom it seemes, that gentleness of spright
> And manners mylde were planted naturall,
> To which adding comely guize withall,
> And gracious speach, did steale men's heart away.[18]

And lastly, Spenser's Sir Calidore, like Castiglione's courtier, is free from sensuosness in love. Bembo says :

"Let him lay aside therefore the blinde judgement of the sense, and enjoy with his eyes the brightnesse, the comelinesse, the loving sparkles, laughters, gestures, and all the other pleasant furnitures of beautie : especially with hearing the sweetness of her voice, the tunablenesse of her wordes, the melody of her singing and playing on instruments, and so shall he with most daintie foode feede the soul through the meanes of these two senses which have little bodily substance in them ".[19] This is precisely the nature of Sir Calidore's relationship with Pastorella, and his love, like that of the courtier, is free from the pangs of jealousy. "In this wise shall our not yong courtier bee out of all bitternesse and wrtechednesse that young men feele (in a manner) continuously, as jealousie, suspition, disdaines, angers, desperatious, and certaine rages full of madnesse, whereby many times they be ledde into so great errour, that some doe not onely beate the woman whome they love, but ridde themselves out of their life."[20] This passage has great relevance to the Calidore—Coridon episode.

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1. *The Faerie Queene*, Prefatory letter to Sir Walter Raleigh.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Introduction to Book II of *The Faerie Queene*, (Cambridge, 1949), p. lviii.
4. H. S. V. Jones: *A Spenser Handbook*, (F. S. Crofts and Co., New York, 1947), p. 281.
5. Castiglione: *The Courtier*, tr. by Sir Thomas Hoby, (Everyman's Library, London, 1966), p. 272.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 276.

7. cf. I and 2 *supra.*
8. Castiglione: *The Courtier, op. cit.*, p. 47.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 35 and 36.
11. *The Faerie Queene*, VI.i.2.
12. Castiglione: *The Courtier*, op. cit., p. 95.
13. *The Faerie Queene*, VI, i, 34.
14. *Ibid.*, VI, ii. 14.
15. *Ibid.*, VI. x. 38.
16. Castiglione: *The Courtier*, op. cit., pp. 97 and 98.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
18. *The Faerie Queene*, VI.i.2.
19. Castiglione: *The Courtier*, op. cit., p. 313.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 317.

FROM WINESBURG TO SALINAS VALLEY IN SEARCH OF LOVE

BY

M. R. SATYANARAYANA

In his introduction to *Winesburg, Ohio* Malcolm Cowley describes Sherwood Anderson as a "writer's writer, the only writer of his generation who left his mark on the style and vision of the generation that followed."[1] Like many others of this later generation, John Steinbeck came under the spell of Anderson. Steinbeck himself tells us how "Sherwood Anderson made the modern novel and it has not gone much beyond him. I think I am going beyond him."[2] Whether Steinbeck went beyond him or not, it is obvious that he thought of Anderson as his model. Malcolm Cowley, Maxwell Geismar and Joseph Fontenrose have remarked that Steinbeck's *The Pastures of Heaven* and *Tortilla Flat* resemble, *Winesburg, Ohio* structurally. An attempt is made in this paper to show that a fruitful comparison can be made between *Winesburg* and Steinbeck's *The Long Valley*, although there is no structural resemblance between them. *The Long Valley* is in fact, a collection of independant short stories without a unifying character like George Willard in *Winesburg*. But the striking common features—the theme of loneliness, an atmosphere of melancholy, and a complete absence of humour—make the comparison worthwhile.[3] If *Winesburg* deals with a midwestern small-town culture, *The Long Valley* deals with a rural society farther West. And in both these worlds frustrated, lonely souls grope in vain for a sense of identity, understanding, and love. Almost every critic who has written on Anderson has spoken of his preoccupation with the theme of human loneliness. As S.K. Winther has suggested, "it may very well be that loneliness more than any other aspect of life marks the quality that is Anderson."[4] Although such a remark cannot be made

regarding the entire work of Steinbeck, it would apply to *The Long Valley*, which is so fully devoted to the theme of loneliness that it may well have been named "The Lonely Valley."

In *Winesburg* and *The Long Valley* loneliness takes on a sexual manifestation, as a rule. Kate Swift, the Rev. Hartman, Mrs. Willard, Alice Handman and many others are sexually frustrated people haunting Winesburg. They are vaguely aware of their need of love, but are unable to express it. Kate and Alice have no lovers, and the Rev. Hartman needs more passion from his wife. The sexually frustrated men and women of *The Long Valley*, however, do not seem to be aware of what they miss. Married to a practically anti-sex woman, Harry Teller ("The White Quail") hardly realises the cause of his loneliness. Elisa Ellen's ("Chrysanthemums") beauty and feminine charms are not appreciated by her dull husband. Peter Randall ("The Harness") and Mike ("The Vigilante") are condemned to be the henpecked husbands of sexually inadequate wives. Only two women, Amy Hawkins ("Johnny Bear") and Jelka ("The Murder") make an attempt to break through their misery. Miss Hawkins is driven to suicide as her adventure leads to pregnancy,[5] and Jelka's adultery ends in the murder of her lover. Apart from these two women, no other character makes an effort to get out of the prison of gloom. They plod on their lonely ways, unable to understand themselves or others.

With the exception of Amy Hawkins all the other frustrated characters of *The Long Valley* are married people. Their counterparts are found in *Winesburg* too: Elisa Allen, Harry Teller, Peter Randall, and Mike from the former; Mrs. Willard, Wash Williams, Louise Bentley, the Rev. Hartman, and Ray Pearson from the latter. Though unhappily married all of them are faithful to their spouses. Only one woman is guilty of adultery (as already pointed out), and Mrs. Willard is saved from it by a for-

tuitous noise in the corridor of Doctor Reefy's office. The husbands, in particular, are exceptionally good husbands, though deep in their hearts they know that they have been trapped into lonesome marriages. Ray Pearson ("The Untold Lie") would have liked to advise Hal Winters against marriage, but he realises the futility of such advice, knowing that young men will get married, and will wear out their lives just like him.

There is a difference in Steinbeck's treatment of the married people—all of them are childless. Childlessness is at once the cause of their sorrow and a symbol of it. Elisa Allen's maternal instincts find expression in the tending of the chrysanthemums. Cut off from the outside world, with no man or woman to admire her beauty, she is doomed to blush unseen like her own chrysanthemums. If she had a child to care for she would have, like Mrs. Tiflin, been able to bear the solitude of the farm and the simplicity of her husband. Mike and Jim actually express their regret that they have no children. Mrs. Teller's symbolic garden has no fruitbearing tree. Children would have brought joy into the lives of Elisa, Mike, Harry Teller and Jim Moore. Their sterility symbolises the lack of a satisfactory sex life and the resulting frustration.

But in Anderson's stories loneliness hangs over all, married or unmarried. The people of Winesburg are always in quest of some type of recognition, acceptance and love. Quite often this need gets mixed up with sexual frustration. The Rev. Hartman wants to shout the name of God in the streets like other holy men, but lacks inspiration. When after a prolonged vigil he sees Kate Swift kneeling naked in prayer, the strength of God comes to him. He had been waiting to see her and give free rein to sinful thoughts. On seeing the woman weep and pray Hartman is released from the lustful thoughts and gains the much needed strength of God. The irony of the story is that the instru-

ment of his release—is a person who herself was praying for a strength to face the problem of her love for young Willard.[6] The frustrated love of Willard for Belle Carpenter, and of Seth Richmond for Helen is, similarly, linked with the struggle of the youths in their attempt to identify themselves with the adult world.

If in *The Long Valley* the typical picture of loneliness is suggested by husbands and wives, in *Winesburg* the significant pairs are sons and mothers. Most of the young men like Joe Welling ("A Man of Ideas"), Seth Richmond ("The Thinker"), and Tom Foster ("Drink") live alone with their mothers. Enoch Robinson ("Loneliness") lived with his grandmother when he was young. Though his father was there George Willard lived entirely under the mother's protective affection. Having missed the paternal guidance these young men become tentative and uncertain in their attitudes, specially towards women.

Although Anderson did not write under the influence of Freud, as Fredrick Hoffman assures us,[7] there is evidence in *Winesburg* of an interest in the type of psychoanalysis associated with his name. Mrs. Willard's hatred for her husband, and her son's fancy that his dead mother was a lady who might at any time spring out of the bed, are instances of such studies. In "Hands" there is a suggestion of homosexuality in the characterization of Wing Biddlebaum, whose hands sought to convey what his words could not. But there is no hint of homosexuality in Steinbeck's stories of lonely men, with or without women. And the only example of a perverse sexuality is that of a nameless woman ("Snake"), who identifies herself with a rattle snake in the act of swallowing a rat, much to the disgust of the young doctor. The doctor is puzzled by her behaviour, which could not be explained by the theory of the psychological sex symbol. He wonders whether he is "too much *alone*. Maybe I should kill the snake. If I knew—no, I can't pray to anything."[8]

The woman only serves as an instrument in reminding the doctor of his loneliness. The young man's puzzled and painful reflections remind us of young Willard of Winesburg, sadly asking whatever is wrong with himself and others.

Anderson's scheme in *Winesburg* lends him a freedom to suggest depths of loneliness by a mere hint. There is no separate story of Abner Groff, the town baker, in the book. Yet we get as vivid a picture of this grotesque as of Elmer Cowley. Through the window of the New Willard House we see the baker hurling sticks, pieces of glass and even the tools of his trade at a cat which has vanished long since. In his futile contest with the cat Mrs. Willard sees the futility of her own lost dream of freedom. Seth Richmond (" The Thinker "), who finds it hard to interest himself in anything in Winesburg, envies the baker's capacity for sullen anger. The reaction of Mrs. Willard and Seth Richmond highlights not merely the loneliness of the woman and the boy, but also emphasises the deep and hidden sorrow behind Abner Groff's crazy acts.

Steinbeck does not have this advantage in his scheme of finished stories in *The Long Valley*. Characters do not weave in and out, as in *Winesburg*, lending a sense of unity to the picture of loneliness. There is, however, a common *locale* for all the stories. Only " The Red Pony," which is in four parts, offers a resilience. The central character, Jody, comes into contact with all aspects of life that a lonely ranch can offer—loneliness and old age in particular. Old Gitano and Jody's grandfather are unable to communicate with the younger generation. Gitano, who was born on the ranch long before Tifflin bought it, wants to spend his last days there. On Tiflin's refusal to permit him to stay the old man goes away into the Western Mountains in search of peace and quiet. Old Gitano's coming and departure are symbolic. He comes from the Eastern mountain range (the hero's symbol for life) and goes, like King Arthur, towards the Western range (the symbol for death) beyond

which only the ocean lay. Jody's grandfather also realises that he has outlived his time. The great movement to the West he led as a young man is finished, and he must accept loneliness as a companion, since he cannot communicate his memories to any one. To both these old men death is only a continuation of their present loneliness.

Anderson rightly called his characters grotesques. They are always puzzled and bemused. They grope like lost souls for recognition and love. And they are so used to their lot that they react strangely when confronted with the very object of their seeking. When Willard embraces Kate, for which token of love she has been pining, she hits him in the face and runs home to weep, as though she is robbed of her loneliness. Enoch Robinson (" Loneliness ") is so used to his lonely room in New York that he dislikes any intrusion into his privacy, much as he desires the company of a woman. He flees New York to preserve in tact, as it were, the sanctity of his bleak room, the macrocosm of his very existence. Small wonder he returns to Winesburg, the haven of all lost souls. Thus Anderson's characters seem deliberately to alienate themselves, and " cannot choose. But weep to have that which they fear to lose." In *The Long Valley* men and women are not called upon to accept or reject love, because they do not find it. Like true existentialists they accept loneliness as a condition of life.

The trouble with these grotesques is their inarticulateness to which Hoffman attributes all their misery. Elmer Cowley (" Queer ") resents being considered queer, and in his attempt to disprove the charge, he actually becomes one. Unable to communicate his feelings to Willard (and through him to the town), he becomes angry and showers blows on the young reporter. Even the most educated of them, Dr. Parcival and Miss Kate Swift, lack the proper expression when they most need it. The doctor's incoherent lectures

to Willard are interspersed with the refrain : " That's the object of all this," as though he were clinching a point. Nor does Kate understand what she means by warning her pupil that he should not become " a mere pedlar of words."

The arrogance of the inarticulate lends an irony to their misery. They fancy that if only the listner makes an effort they need not have so much trouble in explaining. In their desparate attempts at communication they even become patronizing. Dr. Reefy, Enoch Robinson, the stranger in " Tandy," and Elmer are all arrogant towards the listner, who is usually Willard. The despair of communication reaches a ridiculous point when Elmer tries to convey his sense of shame and of isolation to a half-wit, who in turn gives his opinion to a cow. So well is the inarticulateness blended with the style that Anderson gives the impression that the narrative itself is inarticulate. This is one reason why his people speak more in gestures than in words. Their gestures in moments of sorrow or anger recall to one's mind the curious admixture of the sad and the comic of the silent films.

In *The Long Valley* there is inarticulateness with a difference. The characters are quite communicative, even voluble with strangers. But in the company of those responsible for their sorrow (as the reader knows them to be) they are withdrawn and taciturn. Elisa Ellen goes to ecstasies in describing " planting hands " for the benefit of the tinker; Harry Teller is a keen, successful businessman once out of home; Peter Randall pours forth his sorrow into Ed Chappel's ears, but is speechless in the presence of his puritanical wife; and Mike voluntarily tells his personal story to a complete stranger. Yet it never occurs to any one of them to break the ice between themselves and their partners in life. Either some inhibition or a sense of foregone doom rises like a wall between them and a possible relief from loneliness.

More than any thing else the aura of loneliness in *Winesburg* is suggested by the atmosphere of "twilight and darkness, its backgrounds heavily shaded with gloomy blacks and marshy grays—as is proper for a world of withered men who shattered by night reach out for that sentient life they dimly recall as the racial inheritance that has been squandered away."[9] Steinbeck would, have probably called them so many gophers, retreating into their holes after a brief excursion outside. In *The Long Valley*, too, the stories are set against dark backgrounds. The action almost always takes place in the evening or night; the scene of action is usually a swampy village, or an old run down castle among the rocks, or lonely farm houses. Gloom and a sense of helplessness pervade *The Long Valley* and *Winesburg*.

The gloom and the human misery seen in these stories are by no means a sign of negation of life. Both Anderson and Steinbeck have a tenderness for the men and women who have either missed happiness or have come close to it only to miss it, as often is the case with the former's characters. It is this tragic aspect in their lives that is mistaken by Lionel Trilling to be a sign of a lack of love on the part of Anderson for his own creatures.[10] A clue to understand his technique is found in "The Book of the Grotesque." The writer (in the story) sees in his dream a long procession of grotesques—some of them amusing, some pitiful and some even *beautiful*. To say that perhaps Anderson did not love his characters, or to complain with C. B. Chase that Anderson has no concept of other phases in the lives of these grotesques,[11] is to miss the meaning of this dream. For a writer who wishes to show the deadening and stultifying effects of loneliness other phases of life become irrelevant. Anderson's method is one method. There could be other methods. To show Herzog writing imaginary letters as an indication of his neurosis is one method, and to show Dr. Reefy write down his ideas on bits of paper, twist them into pills, and

scatter them is another. It is for the same reason, that is to eliminate the unessential, that both Anderson and Steinbeck exclude humour from these stories. The absence of humour is all the more remarkable considering how much of it both of them are capable of. The exclusion of humour illumines the unrelieved monotomy and hopelessness of life in the remote Ohio town and the Salinas Valley. The two writers are deeply concerned with the lot of the people trapped in the encircling gloom of the existential sorrow. Both seem to believe that the business of the short story itself to be a preoccupation with " an intense awareness of human loneliness,"[12] and that in comparison with the novel " it is a lonely art, personal art; the lyric cry in the face of human destiny."[13]

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1. *Winesburg, Ohio* (New York, 1963), p. 1. Subsequent references are to this edition.

2. Steinbeck, *The Journey of a Novel* (New York, 1969), p. 124.

3. There is, of course, the burlesque " Saint Katy the Virgin." The inclusion of this story in the collection is an outrage to the mood of *The Long Valley*.

4. " The Aura of Loneliness in Sherwood Anderson," *Modern Fiction Studies* (Summer 1959), p. 145.

5. Miss Hawkins actually appears on the scene only once, when she goes to church with her sister. But her misery and her struggle to get out of it are made known to us through Johnny Bear's accurate reproductions of her dialogue with her sister.

6. Though she was instrumental in the Reverend's getting the strength of God, she herself finds no hope, and is forced like Alice Handman " to face bravely the fact that many people must live and die alone, even in Winesburg " (120).

7. *The Achievement of Sherwood Anderson*, ed. Ray Lewis White (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1966), p. 192.

8. *The Long Valley* (New York, 1963), p. 86. The italics are mine.

9. *The Achievement*, pp. 94-95.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 219. Theodore Dreiser writes that Anderson's " reactions to the mystery of our being and doings here....involved tenderness, love and beauty, delight in the strangeness of our will-less reactions as well as pity, sympathy and love for all things both big and small " (*Story*, 91, Sep.-Oct., 1941, p. 4).

11. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
12. Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice* (London, 1965), p. 19.
13. O'Connor, *Literary Types and Themes*, eds. M. B. MacNamee *et al* (New York, 1960), p. 15.

A NOTE ON THE INFLUENCE OF DREISER'S TROPISTIC THEORY OF LIFE ON HIS NATURALISTIC FICTION

BY

ISAAC SEQUEIRA

" Man is more led or pushed than he is leading or pushing.[1] In his deterministic view of life this is how Dreiser saw man. Like most other literary naturalists he felt that man was just another phenomenon of nature and all his actions the result of certain ' chemic compulsions ' in him. Man's existence was without form or morality, and man himself was the victim of the inscrutable complexities of heredity and environment. This view of life was based on the theories of evolution, and social Darwinism which Dreiser imbibed from Spencer, and the mechanistic determinists and materialistic monists.[2] These theories had such a profound influence on Dreiser that they pervade the whole of his work, his fiction and non fiction, with perhaps, the exception of *The Bulwark*.

As Dreiser saw it, man did not have a will of his own, that is, a will in the metaphysical sense of the word. Man's actions were just responses to stimuli around him :

> all we can say is that Nature has supplied us with certain forces or chemic tendencies and responses, and has also provided (rather roughly in certain instances) the checks and balances which govern the same;[3]

There are numerous references to the chemic responses in man, in his various novels also, and one is led to believe that he had some idea of a mechanistic psychology of man. There is no doubt that his reading of the monists and mechanistic biologists made him modify his social Darwinism slightly and

place some emphasis on what might be called his tropistic theory of life.

Of all the mechanistic biologists, the man whose work had the most significant impact on Dreiser's mind was Jacques Loeb, the brilliant German scientist who settled down in the United States of America and worked at the Rockefeller Institute in 1910. Loeb had conducted extensive researches in heliotropism in animals and had published many papers on the subject. According to a recently published biography, Dreiser had, while recuperating from an illness at Iroki, read the following monographs of Loeb : "Forced Movements, Tropisms and Animal Conduct," "The Organism as a Whole," "The Dynamics of Living Matter."[4] As a matter of fact after exchanging a brief correspondence, in which Loeb intimated his pleasure at Dreiser's interest in his work, the two men met in New York.[5] Loeb's findings on animal tropism had led him to some conclusions about the human animal too :

> the sum of all life phenomena, can be unequivocally explained in physio-chemical terms. If on the basis of a serious survey this question can be answered in the affirmative our social and ethical life will have to be put on a scientific basis and our rules of conduct must be brought into harmony with the results of scientific biology.[6]

Loeb's experiments, combined with his reading of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann, 'the philosophers of the will'[7] had led him to certain conclusions about a mechanistic psychology of man :

> Our wishes and hopes, disappointments and sufferings have their source in instincts which are comparable to the light instinct of the heliotropic animals. The need of and the struggle for food, the sexual instinct with its poetry and its chain of consequences, the maternal instincts with the felicity and the suffering caused by them, the

> instinct of workmanship, and some other instincts are the roots from which our inner life develops. For some of these instincts the chemical basis is at least sufficiently indicated to arouse the hope that their analysis, from the mechanistic point of view, is only a question of time.[8]

Loeb felt that man's actions stemmed from instinct and tropistic response rather than will and that instinct was something essentially chemical. Instinct, not will nor social conventions, led us to eat drink and reproduce. Even our ethical impulses could be explained by instinct :

> We seek and enjoy the fellowship of human beings because hereditary conditions compel us to do so. We struggle for justice and truth since we are instinctively compelled to see our fellow beings happy ....Not only is the mechanistic conception of life compatible with ethics : it seems the only conception of life which can lead to an understanding of the source of ethics.[9]

Loeb's influence on Dreiser's tropistic theory of life is fairly obvious from the above, and from Dreiser's own creative work. In Dreiser's fiction we see that man is reducible to physiochemical analysis and that he is more or less the slave of his tropisms and chemisms. His novels abound in tropistic images, and men and women are seen as victims of forces and circumstances over which they have no control. In his very first novel *Sister Carrie* the principal character Carrie, is portrayed as a helpless person on whom all sorts of forces act, taking her, strangely enough, higher and higher up the social and economic ladder, almost in spite of herself. The first chapter is entitled "The Magnet Attracting : A Waif amid forces." Carrie is the waif who like an iron filing is attracted to the magnet of Chicago. Dreiser sums up her aspirations at the end in the following words :

> Chicago dawning, she saw the city offering more of loveliness than she had ever known, and instinctively, by force of her moods alone, clung to

> it. In fine rainment and elegant surroundings, men seemed to be contented. Hence, she drew near these things. Chicago, New York; Drouet, Hurstwood; the world of fashion and the world of stage—these were but incidents. Not them, but that which they represented, she longed for.[10]

Drouet is presented as a man who is strongly attracted to women and the good life. He and his friends meet frequently at Fitzgerald and Moy's where came " the moths, in endless procession, to bask in the light of the flame."[11] In another passage he is described as follows :

> He could not help what he was going to do. He could not see clearly enough to wish to do differently. He was drawn by his innate desire to act the old pursuing part. He would need to delight himself with Carrie as surely as he would need to eat his heavy breakfast.[12]

Hurstwood, the third important character, is portrayed as a successful man whose chemic compulsions in the area of sexuality lead him to destruction. His infatuation for Carrie leads him to steal, to lose his fine position in Chicago society and ultimately to suicide in New York.

> His passion had gotten to that stage now where it was no longer coloured with reason. He did not trouble over little barriers of this sort in the face of so much loveliness. He would accept the situation with all its difficulties; he would not try to answer the objections which cold truth thrust upon him. He would promise anything, everything, and trust to fortune to disentagle him. He would make a try for paradise, whatever might be the result. He would be happy, by the Lord, if it cost all honesty of statement, all abandonment of truth.[13]

Hurstwood's career takes a downward plunge while that of Carrie rises. Hurstwood's mental and physical deteriora-

tion is described in some what dubious physio-chemical terms :

> Now, it has been shown experimentally that a constantly subdued frame of mind produces certain poisons in the blood, called katastates, just as virtous feelings of pleasure and delight produce helpful chemicals called anastates. The poisons generated by remorse inveigh against the system, and eventually produce marked physicl deterioration. To these Hurstwood was subject.[14].

In *The Financier*, the first novel of Dreiser's 'Trilogy of Desire', Frank Cowperwood's strong predilection for financial power and women leads him into two marriages and innumerable illicit affairs. His first illicit affair is with Aileen, the daughter of the political boss of Philadelphia. Like the heliotropic aphids[15] who cannot help moving towards light, he cannot help himself:

> For by now he was intensely drawn to her, as he could feelsome thing chemic and hence dynamic was uppermost in him now and clamoring for expression.[16]

Aileen's response to him is similarly tropistic :

> It was not his body—great passion is never that, exactly. The flavor of his spirit was what attracted and compelled, like the glow of a flame to a moth. There was a light of romance in his eyes, which, however governed and controlled—was directive and almost all-powerful to her.[17]

Clyde Griffiths, the protagonist of *An American Tragedy*, in his climb towards the light of success gets singed and is finally killed. Here again we see that he cannot help himself; the chemisms and tropisms in his physical make-up are too strong for him. His sister Esta is also shown to be a victim of her chemisms. Children of itinerant street preachers, they are bought up in an atmosphere of religion

and strict morality. Nevertheless, in the grip of "that chemistry and urge towards mating which lies back of all youthful thought and action", they feel "a stirring, a nerve plasm palpitation that spoke loudly for all the seemingly material things of life, not for the thin pleasantries of heaven".[18] Esta runs away with an actor who is "all clothes and airs, but no morals (no taste, no courtesy or real tenderness even), but of compelling *magnetism*,...."[19]

Dreiser was not enough of a scientist to understand the advanced work of Loeb and the other mechanists. Hence he could not embody all the aspects of animal tropism in his work and formulate a clear tropistic theory of life. Here and there, in his fiction, he does succeed in showing that man's actions are tropistic. But the over-all picture one gets is that of man who is not merely a heliotropic, galvanotropic or geotropic animal. He behaves like one sometimes, but there is much more to him than that. Dreiser the artist proves superior to Dreiser the scientist or Dreiser the philosopher. It is probable that he projects this picture of man in spite of himself and in spite of his deterministic and tropistic theory of life. There is something of the Hurstwood in every man but there is also something of the Cowperwood in him, especially that part which refuses to take defeat lying down, which exerts every nerve and fibre in the body, towards achievement and success. Man is not a mere pawn in the game of life but is often the player.

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1. Quoted by F. O. Matthiessen, *Theodore Dreiser* (New York, 1951), p. 188.

2. Theodore Dreiser, "Equation Inevitable," *Hey, Rub-A-Dub-Dub!* (London: Constable and Co., 1931), pp. 162-187.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

4. W. A. Swanberg, *Dreiser* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 340.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

6. Jacques Loeb, "The Mechanistic Conception of Life," *The Mechanistic Conception of Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 5.

7. *Ibid.*, p. xii (Editor, Donald Fleming's introduction).

8. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
10. Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (New York: Random House, 1927), p. 555.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 362.
15. Loeb, "The Significance of Tropisms for Psychology," *The Mechanistic Conception of Life*, p. 37.
16. Theodore Dreiser, *The Financier* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1961), p. 156.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
18. Theodore Dreiser, *An American Tragedy* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1948), p. 29.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 30, (Italics mine).

THE PROBLEM OF 'THE WILL TO BELIEVE' IN SCOTT FITZGERALD'S *THIS SIDE OF PARADISE* AND *THE GREAT GATSBY**

BY

M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA

I

The aim of this paper is to examine Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* and *The Great Gatsby* in terms of the concept of 'the will to believe' postulated by William James. I am aware of the fact that the attempt to find parallels between Fitzgerald, the alleged playboy of the Jazz Age and William James, the doyen of American philosophers, appears as a critical heresy. They function, it is true, in totally dissimilar universes of discourse. It is also true that we do not seem to have any evidence whether Fitzgerald ever read William James or was familiar with the implications of his thought. But the interesting analogies we do find between the tragic sense of life with which Fitzgerald imaginatively ordered his experience and the Jamesian concept show that, far from turning out 'chic versions of elegant despair,' Fitzgerald was preoccupied with the same problems that the great American novelists dealt with. Moreover, the major premises of this concept offer a novel and refreshingly different point of view to assess Fitzgerald's work.

To begin with, the apparent lack of intellectual and technical virtuosity in the American novel, particularly of the twenties, might lead us to think that it is just a painstaking record of the minutiae of social life without the presence of what Richard Chase has called "a contemplative centrality of vision." It has been pointed out that at the heart of the American consciousness is the irrevocable faith that every idea and concept should have an immediate

bearing on life's problems. It is from this, it is stated, that the apparently predominant tendency in American life to be wary of 'ideas' and to be uneasy in the presence of 'theories,' emerges. This might be accepted with certain reservations. But still it is one of those untested cliches which exist plentifully in literary criticism. For we find in American literature—particularly in the great tradition of the American novel—little to support this view. On the contrary, American novel has always shown a vital concern with the essentially philosophic problem of the "re-distribution of the major metaphors of life" : belief, tradition, self and freedom. As Gustav E. Mueller has pointed out, "this search for values, the critique of their failures and their mutual limitations is known by the name of philosophy. There is more significant philosophy in the American novel than there is in the output of our philosophy departments."[1] It is from this larger perspective that one has to examine the nature of the problem tackled by the American novelist. To lose sight of this is to miss the peculiar achievement of American fiction.

"You *must*," said D. H. Lawrence, "look through the surface of American art and see the inner diabolism of the symbolic meaning. Otherwise it is all mere childishness."[2] Any attempt in this direction has to take cognizance of the fact that American literature has as its *differentia* a striving for the reconciliation of the felt sense of experience which is tragic and the quest for innocence stemming from an incurably romantic sense of illimitable achievement. This belief is the literary counterpart of the basic feature of American consciousness : that nature itself can be transformed by man's ingenuity. A yearning for the illimitable and the infinite and a seduction to the small and finite is central to the vision of life projected in American fiction. Ultimately this is implicit, as Arthur Mizener has suggested, in Western life and thought for "ever since the seventeenth century imposed on Western culture . . . the Descartian dualism

the Western world has had to live with a discontinuity between thought and nature, between the inner life of the consciousness and the outer life of the physical and social world."[3] In American society this discontinuity is marked and the American novelist is faced with the problem of resolving this. He has to bridge the "gap between the hero's heightened sense of the promises of life and the actualities of the society in which this heightened sensitivity was developed and had to realize itself."[4] In doing this American fiction has tended to root itself either in unrelieved nihilism or extreme romanticism. Either it has accentuated the absence of any exit out of a severely nihilistic world-view stressing the felt sense of alienation, despair and meaninglessness. Or it has sought to oppose this nihilism by romanticism, by what Allen Tate has called 'positive Platonism' which postulates "a cheerful confidence in the limitless possibilities of man." These writers—notably Hemingway in his later work, and Fitzgerald himself—impose their individual sets of meanings, purposes and plans on 'the rich disorganization' of modern existence. They portray characters who believe in transforming life in accordance with aspirations which spring from, to use William James's phrase, "our passional nature." This ultimately leads to a sort of humanistic idealism where the moral freedom and the rational responsibility of the individual is stressed.

II

Comparable to this tendency we find in American philosophy a similar attempt to fuse into a totality of organic vision two disparate elements—the pragmatic and the idealistic. Among the philosophers who gave a new dimension to this problem William James has a distinct place. James tried to postulate a world-view which satisfies the desire for order, predictability and rationality and which at the same time is "pliable enough to be responsive to our efforts." In the exposition of this point of view James's concept of 'the will to believe' is a significant step forward and it has

implications which touch all major aspects of American life and thought. Central to James's notion is the self which is not a passive spectator but an active participant, "a self endowed with purposes and plans." "The hall mark of James's pragmatism," says John E. Smith, "is its uncompromising belief in each person's right, and even duty, to take his own experience seriously and use it as a touchstone for thought and action."[5]

James's concept of belief is thus linked up with the free choice a person makes on his own. We disbelieve, James holds, all hypotheses and theories for which we have no use. Any hypothesis becomes a *live* one only when it "appeals as a real possibility to him to whom it is proposed."[6] "The maximum of liveness in an hypothesis means willingness to act irrevocably."[7] But our beliefs and convictions are moulded not only by logic or the intellect but more primarily by our non-intellectual nature. "There are passional tendencies and volitions which run before and which come after belief...," says James, and adds that "pure insight and logic whatever they might do ideally, are not the only things that really do produce our creeds."[8] Therefore in matters of belief our life "is a mixed up state of affairs." Since logical and objectively valid reasons are hard to come by on this "moonlit and dream-visited planet", a belief has to be judged by its outcome. As empiricists we might find it hard to sustain a belief except on purely rational grounds but if it leads to an integrated effort where will and thought are fused into a totality then that belief is not only valid but in such cases, i.e., in truths dependent on our personal action, faith "based on our passional nature is a lawful and possibly an indispensable thing."[9] Therefore, man has to choose between two things : either to believe fully and to that extent bring into existence the operative factors which reinforce it fully; or not to believe and wait to believe until objective certitude confirms our belief. But —and here is the essence of James's concept—"in either

case we *act*, taking life in our hands."[10] The efficacy of man's belief depends on the efforts to achieve and concretize this belief even against heavy odds. Thus there is an integral link between thought and action. Every belief shall have a tangible form, shall have "a cash value". Therefore, "believing is not the same as *saying* that one believes; believing means willingness to act, especially under conditions of risk, in ways dictated by the meaning of the belief in question."[11]

James never meant this to imply a veiled acceptance of action at all costs, of ruthless competition and amoralism. When James exhorted, "Be not afraid of life. Believe that life *is* worth living and your faith in a fact will help create the fact,"[12] he was appealing to the younger generation to take life meaningfully and with a positive will to achieve.

III

It is in assessing the deeper implications of this belief that Scott Fitzgerald exercised his creative imagination. His overall outlook stemmed from a comparable belief in the worth and validity of one's aspirations even when the process of actualizing them is fraught with tragic consequences. Fitzgerald asserted in his heroes a similar will to believe—in their own capacity, in their uniqueness, and finally in their achievements. But they are not able to assert this will at crucial junctures and allow themselves to be buffeted about and conditioned by objective phenomena. It is in defining the contours of the nature of belief projected by Fitzgerald that James's concept is most relevant and illuminating.

Coming, as he does, into his own in the disillusioned postwar scene Fitzgerald's initial response to the call for faith and belief in man's ability to transform reality was a negative one. Released from all inhibitions and limitations, Americans went in for all the richness of experience. The world depicted by Fitzgerald in Amory Blaine in *This Side of*

Paradise shows the cleavage between the old and the new generation. The war had left this generation dislodged from its traditional moorings, uprooted and betrayed. But it was also searching for new modes of meaning, new metaphors of belief. They too wanted to believe, as James had exhorted earlier, but "how did one learn to believe? What was there to believe in ?"[13] Probably Fitzgerald was not seriously committed to know the answers for these questions, as Alfred Kazin had suggested. But in his own way he tried to come to grips with these problems. In dealing with the problem of the psychological redefinition and rediscovery of the self, Fitzgerald was underscoring that Frederick Hoffmann has called "the fact of useful innocence." He "had both to see a world as it frankly was and to reestablish that world in his literary formulations."[14] Now, James's efforts, particularly in his concept of the will to believe, was directed towards asserting the value of a pragmatic approach to life and at the same time leave room for our passional nature to determine and mould our action.

In his really enduring work Fitzgerald goes to the very crux of this problem of American consciousness in trying to unravel the forces of disruption imbedded in its heart. Torn between the yearning for innocence and the seduction to the objective world in and through which this innocence had to realize itself, his heroes embody the schizophrenic tendencies of American consciousness. In other words, his heroes try to effect a transition from what Morse Peckham has called "nagative" to "positive romanticism." It is a movement from a period of doubt and despair to one of belief and affirmation. Not all his heroes are able to effect this. But they do perceive, some dimly and some more distinctly, the need for the assertion of a positive belief—in themselves, in their ideals and in their ability to achieve them. But they also often show an immense capacity self-deception.

From this point of view the importance of Fitzgerald's first novel *This Side of Paradise* is not one of mere chronology.

It is admittedly immature and has an obvious lack of tone. But its enduring quality to-day is not the atmosphere of blase sophistication and decadance which it exhibits but the groping of the protagonist for ideals, dreams and ambitions in his quest for freedom, to free himself from the general lack of purpose and direction. To approach *This Side of Paradise* from this perspective is to look out for Fitzgerald's preoccupations with the problem of belief. What are the beliefs and traditions, he seems to ask in this novel, which rescue his generation from the lack of faith, from disillusionment.

Fitzgerald made Amory Blaine a representative figure of the twenties, a converging point of conflicting and confusing traditions. Amory's talk about disillusionment in the novel is not just a decorative framework, a literary artifice to give the novel a spurious thematic importance. This phenomenon was one of which Fitzgerald's generation had ample experience. 'Disillusionment' had a peculiar connotation and it never meant a neutralization of one's beliefs whatever they are. As Malcolm Cowley has pointed out, Fitzgerald's generation lost faith only in " the possibility of social progress through concerted action." But it was not disillusioned about, it did not sustain a loss of belief in, "various personal goals—success in business, or escape from business into the world of art, or achieving grace under pressure, or acquiring a wealth of experience or simply having a good time—in the same desperate fashion that youngmen of other generations have committed themselves to social or religious or political ideals. In a sense, they too were living in an age of faith."[15]

In this period of social and political disillusionment it is no wonder that Amory has basic doubts about the purpose of life itself. But he has his own crop of beliefs, a number of " slides with which he starts the spluttering magic-lantern show of life."[16] It centres round his belief in himself as a uniquely gifted being, " the eternal hero, one with, the Sea-rover on the prow of a Norse galley, one with Roland

and Horatius, Sir Nigel and Ted Coy...." This enormous sense of self-importance is administered a series of shocks by the equally effective egotism of the girls who enter Amory's life. His encounters with the girls of his generation—Clara, Isabelle,Rosalind, and Eleanor—induce in him a sense of repulsion and disillusionment with sex. They reject him as being dreamy and drifting, as being incapable of taking care of them.

Amory's aspirations to exercise his imagination, to live a life of ease and aesthetic grace are blunted out of shape by war. Though, as Amory makes it plain, war by itself means nothing to this generation, it has one decisive effect : the death of individualism. The *milieu* of the twenties, Amory feels, was unsuited for the emergence of the heroic potentialities in man. Finally he reaches the stage when the several pillars—love, success, being a 'personage', and wealth—which hold the edifice of his sense of belief in himself as a uniquely gifted being crack and almost collapse around him. He is left without a firm basis for his aspirations. Feeling an unmistakable sense of deterioration Amory raises the fundamental question : "What am I for?....not for propagation, for war, for writing, for love."[17] Thus Amory reaches an absolute dead-end from which there there is no exit.

For all his idealism there is a basic discrepancy between Amory's thought and action. All his hypotheses are just cliches; they are not *live* hypotheses. He has beliefs but these are not concretised by any positive act of the will. We do not find in his case "the intimate connection between knowing and believing on the one hand and effort and the discharge of energy on the other,"[18] which is the *sine qua non* of the will to believe. Amory's ideas and beliefs are relatively powerless for they have lost all connection with a will. He does not have "the willing and practical and thorough-going devotion....to a cause" which charac-

terizes, according to Royce, the spirit of loyalty. He is " a mere meeting place of conflicting and unrelated loyalties he is a collection of fragmentary selves."[19] Therefore Amory's deterioration has its origin in the peculiarly modern malaise : the incapacity to choose and be oneself with its concomitant of 'sickness unto death'" Amory does not actually find " all gods dead, all wars fought and all faiths in man shaken."[20] This belief is only a pleasant subtrefuge for his incapacity to act.

IV

If in *This Side of Paradise* Fitzgerald wrote the story of mere belief and conflicting and confusing loyalties, in *The Great Gatsby* he tackled the much more interesting aspects of the will to believe : the limitations and pitfalls implicit in its exercise. Fitzgerald was writing not only the universal fable of the quest for romantic wonder and its inevitable failure, the quest " which is universally seductive and perpetually damned "; he was also exploring the handicaps, the conditions of risk under which a man's loyalties and aspirations operate. James himself made it plain that the exercise of one's belief is hedged in by unpredictable phenomena and the risk of failure is always a possibility even when there is a perfect coordination between belief and action. Fitzgerald attempted to pinpoint the weaknesses of an extremely pragmatic attitude to life by making his hero loyal to what Josiah Royce has called " lost causes".

Gatsby is a perfect specimen of James's pragmatism in the sense that he is an epitome of exertion and commitment. It Gatsby's character is marked by anything it is his intense conviction in not only believing and aspiring but in doing all that is apparently necessary to fulfil these aspirations. If Amory Blaine has an innate aversion to exertion Gatsby is his polar opposite—intensely inspired by such self-made figures as Benjamin Franklin. His schedule of work, pathetic and moving, which his father discovers on the fly leaf of a

book is symptomatic of the pragmatic attitude which Gatsby brought to bear on his life. It is this attitude of total commitment to the realization of a personal ideal here and now which distinguishes him from Amory Blaine. Gatsby does what is apparently necessary for realising one's ideal and still he meets with a tragic end. For all his "heightened sensitivity to the promises of life" he suffers a cruel disillusionment. His romantic affirmation has no meaningful frame and is dislocated and destroyed. Fitzgerald thus gives a further and novel dimension to his exploration of romantic beliefs. The inevitable disaster to which these beliefs lead is caused by neither lassitude nor flabbiness of intellect. It is rooted neither exclusively in Gatsby's nature nor in his overwhelming desire to repeat his romantic past with Daisy. There is a core of objectivity in the deleneation of his character which points to the fact that the will to believe is, to use James's own words, "hedged in by... so many restrictions and signboards of dangers."[21]

Gatsby's career has invariably been taken to mean a critique of the American dream of success : the belief that you can succeed even in the teeth of opposition if only your will is powerful. As Marius Bewley has suggested, *The Great Gatsby* embodies "a criticism of American experience not of manners but of a basic, historic attitude to life. The theme of Gatsby is the withering of the American dream."[22] 'American dream' is an elusive phrase but essentially it stood for an illimitable enlargement of life's possibilities, for something analogous to James's conception of the self with its inexhaustible "purposes and plans." While James never meant this to be disfigured to include all wishful thinking, similarly American dream never meant action at any cost. But the very concept contained within itself the possibility of mistaking what James has termed "the piecemeal purposes of life" and the major values. As John E. Smith has pointed out, "there are times when James in referring to the success or failure of a plan of action, meant no more than success or failure with respect to some particular aim

or project . At other times he meant the success or failure of the self as a whole in the quest for self-understanding and a purposeful life. In the latter case success or failure has to do with itself, with the total destiny of the individual."[23]

There is thus the possibility of inextricably confusing the material and the spiritual, the illusion and reality. It is this incapacity to distinguish which Fitzgerald's heroes show. They correlate their longings and aspirations with the negative features of the American dream without any positive, valid frame. The beliefs and aspirations are measured by the " materials which American experience offers as objects and criteria of passion." Gatsby pursues romantic wonder and tries to assert his will in an atmosphere dominated by the dream of success with the twin objects of the quest for enternal youth and money. A major weakness in Gatsby's belief about recapturing his romantic past with Daisy is that he comes by his love for her through the peculiarly American obsession : the glamour and gorgeousness of riches. Gatsby's dream is shaped by the very forces which spell disaster to it. For so far as his dream transcends the specific American *milieu* it attains universal validity and in so far as it is shaped by that *milieu* it is vulnerable.

But the unique distinction of the novel lies in the supreme truth that it is not in terms of success or failure that a man's greatness emerges but it is implicit in the intensity of the commitment itself, the stakes for which a man defies destiny. It is the same capacity, the same stubborn faith in the ability to actualize one's aspirations, of a Faustus or a Barabbas that we find embodied in Gatsby. Gatsby himself does not know the precise object towards which his imagination directs itself. " No amount of fire or freshness " says Fitzgerald, "can challenge what a man can store up in his ghostly heart ".[24] The enormity of his aspiration defines itself through and materialises round his desire to repeat his romantic past with Daisy. But it is difficult to know what lay at the heart of his illusion. For Fitzgerald makes it

clear that "there must have been moments....when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams not through her own fault but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way."[25] In the light of this it is obvious that Gatsby's dream is no longer analysable in terms offered by contemporary mores —though it takes off from them. Therefore, it is not in the disllusioned sophomoric America that the action of the novel is played out. It is the very substance that lies submerged at the heart of every man of imagination which Fitzgerald made the theme of critical enquiry in the novel. Gatsby's belief that he could recapture the exact feel of a romantic moment is not an erratic, isolated one. It has its precedents. Gatsby's faith in the enormity of his visions is not merely an off shoot of the American dream. It is the latest in a long series of romantic postulates regarding beauty and truth. Gatsby on this count symbolizes the eternal quest for perfection and what Richard Chase has called "the divine insanity we find in Hamlet or Julien Sorel or Don Quixote."[26] Gatsby is possible not only in the opulent, American *milieu*, he is possible wherever a romantic streak in the human mind gilds an object with incomparable glory.

Fitzgerald not only invested Gatsby with unbounded imagination he also underlines its essential weakness. While Gatsby has "an extraordinary gift for hope" he is also exceptionally vulnerable to self-deception. It is precisely this that makes him believe—almost forces him to believe—even in the teeth of valid proof to the contrary, that Daisy far from being what she is—just a careless representative of easy money—is an iconic manifestation of his romance. He makes Daisy the nucleus round which to crystallize "the constant, turbulent riot of his imagination." But this emotion does not exact a contributory emotion from

anyone not even Daisy, except Nick Carraway, the narrator. Gatsby is destroyed by this incapacity to find a meaningful frame for his beliefs and he is an " absurd " figure for his hypothesis is a *live* one for him alone. It is a pity not enough people responded to his ardor for, as Wright Morris has put it, " nothing is ever *absurd* if enough clever people seem to believe in it."[27] The very thing " which gives him his spiritual status and stature " destroys him. As Josaiah Royce would say Gatsby's loyalty to his ideal is directed towards people who are not selves for they are not themselves loyal—they are only fragmented selves nibbling at the edge of stale ideas. Therefore, Gatsby's quest in terms proposed by contemporary social reality can only have seduction by those very forces as the inevitable outcome.

In making Gatsby throw away life itself for an ideal of the self Fitzgerald offers a critique of the world represented by Tom and Daisy and Jordan Baker : its lack of imagination, its incapacity to deliver anything worthwhile from " the womb " of " its purposeless splendour ". It is not oriented towards anything worthwhile. For as William James has put it, " the strength of the will to believe is in the outcome, the upshot....Not where it comes from but what it leads to is to decide. It matters not to an empiricist from what quarter an hypothesis may come to him, he may have acquired it by fair means or by foul; passion may have whispered or accident suggested it; but if the total drift of thinking continues to confirm it, that is what he means by its being true."[28] Its interesting that Gatsby finds himself in Daisy's house by " a colossal accident "[29]

Gatsby thus represents the supreme exercise of the will to believe under conditions of risk. But his loyalty to an ideal is what Royce has termed " loyalty to lost causes ". The lost causes suffer earthly defeat. But " in the very loss its devotees....identify it with a larger cause, eternally valid, not of this world, to which their devotion....turned

....It is precisely in such cases that the world's most fruitful loyalties have been born, loyalties that have led men to seek a city out of sight, to see that their destiny never could be fulfilled in the temporal flux of earthly experience.'.[30] It is this loyalty that Gatsby has and he beats on oars against the current always ceaselessly driven back into the past.

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BROWNING'S *THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES*, 'ACTION IN CHARACTER' Versus 'CHARACTER IN ACTION'

BY

K. P. SARADHI

Of all Browning's plays *The Return of the Druses* achieves in an eminent degree both theatrical effectiveness and psychological complexity, and blends them in proper proportions. It is a perfect example of 'action in character' balanced by 'character in action'. Though critics have generally found the play approaching "more nearly to a true drama than its predecessors,"[1] a number of them condemned the intense psychologizing by the characters. Betty Miller is of the opinion that it is "an involuted drama" at times as obscure as *Sordello*[2]. According to Cohen the chief weakness of the play lies in "its author's sheer inability to construct a play or write a dialogue."[3] It is likeiy that these critics and Macready were repulsed by the intense psychologizing of the asides which abound in at least one half of the play. Browning might have seemed to have stretched this device to an extreme limit. From the point of view of the naturalistic stage these would seem absurd, though even the realistic drama of the time did employ this device. But there is a dramatic justification for these 'asides' in Browning's play. He employs them as a successful character revealing technique and invests them with a semblance of psychological realism. While the asides and the soliloquies during the initial stages of the drama reveal the action in the characters—portray the subtle motions of their minds, the dramatic reversals and the movement of the plot through them to its climactic end invest the play with sufficient action interest. Though some of the asides are used in a more conventional fashion, as direct addresses, the best of them follow the motions of minds in the characters and seem

entirely natural to the character and the situation. The dramatist, on the whole, shows himself in perfect control of his material.

It is surprising that Macready did not appreciate the theatrical effectiveness of the drama. One would get the impression that Djabal's character is heroic in conception and theatrical in gesture. When Macready refused to accept the play for presentation, Browning wrote to him with sarcasm :

> So once again, dear Macready, I have failed to please you ! The Druses (*Sic*) / return, in another sense than I had hoped, for though, to confess a truth, I have worked from the beginning somewhat in the spirit of the cucumber-dresser in the old story.... spite of this, I *did* rather fancy that you would have 'sympathized' with Djabert (*Sic*) in the main scenes of my play : and your failing to do so is the more decisive against it, that I really had you *here*, in this little room of mine, while I wrote bravely away—*here* were you, propping the weak, pushing the strong parts....'

Khalil and Loys passionately dedicate themselves to the cause of the Druses. Loys bears the burden of Djabal's mission and leads the Druses back to their homeland. Both these characters are simple in their motivation. They have no doubts, no qualms, but pursue a single purpose to its end. In contrast, the characters of Djabal and Anael are treated with the greatest psychological complexity. The central action of the drama is a study of " the incidents in the development of (their) souls." The dramatic irony of the situation in the play derives from the central conflict between Djabal's painful sense of his imposture and hollowness and the exaltation of his person by Anael chiefly, and by Khalil. The difference between Djabal's inner conflict and Anael's complete acceptance of him as the prophet gives rise to irony in the drama.

Though thus the interest of the play is centered round the character of Djabal, the dramatist for the most part

follows the method of revealing the character from within, the play has a prodigality of action—action of a theatrical kind. The interest is just as much directed on the expected event of Djabal's exaltation and the return of the Druses. From the beginning to the end there is incident, bustle, and excitement. As De Vane observes, "the violent action and the melodramatic nature of the play show, perhaps, the effect of the plays of Bulwer-Lytton, whose *Lady of Lyons*, *Richelieu*, and *Money* swept the boards between 1838 and 1840."[5] In fact, Browning has written a regular theatrical piece, yet without sacrificing complexity of motive and psychological subtlety. Nowhere does Browning seem to have achieved a greater harmony of the dual principles of character in action and action in character than in *The Druses*. The play achieves a proper balance of theatrical action and character psychology.

Dowden has criticized the many asides in the play because " even the imagination of a reader resents a construction of scenes which require these duets of soliloquies, these long sequences of the audible-inaudible.[6] But these asides become necessary for the revelation of the characters' inner reactions. It is significant that most of these soliloquies or asides appear to reveal Djabal and Anael mostly, as these are the characters who develop psychological interest. The first soliloquy of Djabal (opening Act II) comes near to Browning's maturer monologues in its presentation of inner facts.

It is Djabal's personal secret combined with his painful awareness of the falsehood of his role which occasions so much self-reflection in him. Djabal is caught in the Hamlet like predicament of whether he should confess himself or whether he should continue the lie. He is pursuaded both by private and public causes to choose the latter course, as much as he is compelled by an inner feeling of guilt and shame to expose himself. This is Djabal's dilemma :

> Were her brow brighter, her eye richer, still
> Would I confess ! On the gulf 'verge I pause.
> How could I slay the prefect, thus and thus? (II.)

Anael's predicament is not very different from Djabal's. Her present devotion to Djabal is a ritual dedication to the Hakeem would-be, and she is disturbed by inner doubts. Her former attachment to Loys made her lose her faith in the Druse destiny and she must expiate herself now in order that she might be perfected and prepared for the exaltation of the prophet.

The Second Act is managed entirely in terms of the method of the monologue and it externalizes the inner dilemma of the two central characters, Djabal and Anael. The Act is, more than the others in the play, in the words of Dowden "a duet of soliloquies, long sequences of the audible-inaudible,

The solus of Loys that ends the First Act is in sharp contrast to Djabal's at the opening of the Second Act. Djabal's speech has a reference to inner incidents of the soul and records the motions of the mind; whereas Loys' soliloquy is purely a narrative speech meant for the audience. Djabal's is a regular dramatic monologue. The difference is distinct :

> *Loys.* *Tu Dieu*! How happy I shall make these Druses!
> Was't not surpassingly contrived of me
> To get the long list of their wrongs by heart,....(I.)

and Djabal :

> That a strong man should think himself a God !
> I——Hakeem?
> I walked the world, asked help at every hand;
> Came help or no? Not this and this?....

Khalil hastily enters to acquaint Djabal of the situation, and both indulge in a series of 'asides'. The first two 'asides' of Djabal are dramatically appropriate as Djabal's remarks

in these asides simply bring out the irony of the character's predicament.

> Adored !—but I renounce it utterly!
> I adjure it! (II.)

> 'Tis not mine—not for me ! (II.)

Whereas the next 'aside' of Djabal,

> Ay, Anael, Anael—is that said at last?
> Louder than all, that would be said, I knew !
> What does abjuring mean, confessing mean,
> To the people?....
> I saw her, and I first saw too myself,
> And slackened pace : 'if I should prove indeed
> Hakeem—with Anael by'.

is purely an interior monologue, a muttering within the mind tending inward. But it, besides revealing the mind, is an eloquent gesture, too,—a gesture expressing the character's mental doubt, but ironically understood by Khalil as the inspired self-absorption of the prophet :

> Ah, he is rapt !
> Dare I at such a moment break on him
> Even to do my sister's bidding? Yes !
> The eyes are Djabal's, and not Hakeem's yet !

It is a perfectly normal mental reaction on the part of the character. Djabal then follows up with another aside like the preceding one :

> *Dja.* (*Aside*). To yearn to tell her, and yet have no one
> Great heart's word that will tell her !
> I could grasp
> Doubtless one such word out and die !
> (*Aloud.*) You said
> That Anael...

The 'aloud' marks a temporary resolution of the inner doubt and the half finished utterance "you said that Anael...." is an effective gesture of hesitancy. In the following 'half

apart' of Djabal the words seem wrenched out of an inner state of conflict and ambiguity :

> My nation—all my Druses—how fare they?
> Those I must save, and suffer thus to save,
> Hold they their posts? Wait they their Khalif too?

Khalil's words,

> All at the signal pant to flock around
> That banner of a brow !

only intensify his anguish. Djabal says :

> And when they flock,
> Confess them this—and after, for rewards,
> Be chased with howlings to her feet perchance?
> .....
> I need the veriest child—why not this child?
> (*Turning abruptly to* Khalil)
> You are a Druse too, Khalil; you were nourished
> Like Anael with our mysteries;....
> Does he come, you say,
> This Prefect? All's in readiness? (II.)

Djabal's abrupt break into utterance (turning abruptly to Khalil), and his equally abrupt break from the tone of a passionate outburst to one of resignation are effective gestures that register subtle reactions of the mind. Djabal has at first thought of Khalil as the fittest man to take on him his role and save him from his predicament. But finally he lapses into a quiet resignation to what is inescapable; for him there is no escape from his predicament. The end of the dialogue with Khalil marks a tentative resolution of Djabal's self-conflict and the tentative choice of a course of action.

> Go say, I come to her.
> Haste ! I will follow you. (II.)

The soliloquy at the end of the scene once again focuses the inner mind of the character. Djabal decides not to confess to the people but confess only to Anael. But still he is poised on the verge of a decision—his conflict is by no means ended.

The confrontation towards the end of the Second Act between Djabal and Anael brings out with redoubled force the inner ambiguity of Djabal and Anael. Anael remarks,

> Tis the Man's hand
> Eye, voice ! Oh, do you veil there to our people,
> Or but to me? To them, I think, to them!

in fraught with intense dramatic irony. Anael's adoration only intensifies Djabal's sense of his weakness and brings home to him the sense of falsehood involved in his role. Anael's 'aside' now;

> Oh must I then—since Loys leaves us
> Never to come again, renew in me
> These doubts so near effaced already—must
> I needs confess them now to Djabal?....

reveals her state of mind—her sense of sin and inadequacy on the advent of Djabal's transformation. The thought of her past attachment to Loys fills her with doubt and compunction—that she had betrayed the Druse cause. Now she must confess and expiate, so she may deserve to become Djabal's bride :

> Doubt
> Is fading fast : shall I reveal it now?
> How can I be rewarded presently
> With doubt unexpiated, undissolved? (II.)

Djabal's 'aside' that follows is in the style of a perfect monologue. He again finds himself in the terrible anguish of irresolution. Should he confess to Anael now,

> Avow the truth? I cannot ! In what words
> Avow that all she loves in me is false? (II)

Anael's love has climbed up "like the clinging gourd" on the prop work of an illusion. Should he take down the support "the beautious fabric crushes too" (II.) Djabal hates to destroy Anael's beautiful world and for her sake at least he must preserve her illusion and escape from her without

at the same time shattering her dreams. He thinks of a way of escaping from his predicament. He would avoid the duty imposed on him of slaying the prefect and quickly make his exit from the Druses. He would live in Anael's memory "keeping her sublime above the world" (III). She cannot even know what he truly is since he has safely disposed Loys.

The announcement by Khalil at this point that Loys has arrived comes as a stunning shock to both Djabal and Anael. Their reactions to this news are recorded in 'asides' which are more in the nature of a direct address :

An. (*Aside*) Loys ! Ah, doubt may not be stifled so !

Dja. (*Aside*). Shame winds me with her tether round and round !

An. (*Aside*). Loys? I take the trial !

Dja. (*Aside*) Before, there were so few deceived, and now
There's doubtless not one least Druse in the Isle

But, having learned my superhuman claims.
And calling me his Khalif-God, will clash
The whole truth out from Loys at first word !

An. (*Aside*) As I divined; he bids me save myself,
Offers me a probation—I accept !
Let me see Loys !

Dja. (*Aside*). 'Tis his voice.
The smooth Frank trifler with our people's wrongs,
The self-complacent boy-inquirer.....
.....Let my self.
Probe this delusion to the core ! (II).

In the Third Act, Anael meets Loys, and the meeting has restored her faith in Djabal, and she finally offers herself to the person of Djabal. Similarly Djabal's conflict is also resolved. He accepts the task that has been imposed on him as there is no escaping it :

I slay—'tis forced on me ! As I began
I must conclude—so be it ! (II).

He decides to slay the prefect. The slight complexity of motivation of Loys that is introduced in his 'asides' in the earlier part of the Third Act is resolved towards the end of the act. He feels that he is one of the Druses, and goes to seek Djabal.

Djabal's opening soliloquy in the Fourth Act reveals him on the eve of a great event. He is going to fulfil his final task by slaying the prefect. As he is getting ready for it, he discovers Anael behind the arras, quite unexpectedly—this is a perfect stage situation. Anael's slaying of the prefect is an act of inspiration and sacrifice. She is possessed by the spirit of Djabal, the would-be Hakeem. But the performing of the deed has shaken up her feminine nature. She now needs Djabal's support and reassurance and demands of Djabal to reveal himself, to bestow on her a new life. But Djabal reveals his real weaker self :

No Hakeem, and scarce Djabal !
I have spoken falsely, and this woe is come.
No—hear me ere scorn blasts me! once and ever,
The deed is mind! Oh think upon the Past! (IV).

He tells her the whole story of his false role, but Anael refuses to believe in his falsehood; but when a conviction of the truth is forced upon her, Anael is in a rage. Her illusion is shattered. She needed to be saved from the pressure of a bloody murder by being exalted by the Hakeem. But now Djabal lies before her bowed to the dust; so do her dreams of the prefect lie before her like a heap of ruins. But Anael refuses to drive him from her heart. Though the vision of Djabal the exalted Hakeem has been shattered, Anael accepts him as a mortal lover.

In the suddenness of the disillusionment caused by Djabal's failure to exalt himself into Hakeem, Anael rushes

out to confess her guilt. Djabal is completely disarmed. He submits to Anael as to a superior force of destiny. But even in this submission he rises to a heroic stature :

> See fate ! By thee I was seduced ; by thee
> I perish; yet do I—can I repent?
> I, with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever
> By my Frank policy,—and with, in turn,
> My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab heart—(V.)

There is in Djabal an exaltation if not as a prophet, as a heroic man and chiefly as a lover. Out of his self-destruction has risen a better nature.

> A third and better nature rises up
> My mere Man's nature ! And I yield to it ;
> I lover thee—I—who did not love before ! (V).

Djabal feels a sense of exaltation, his supreme fulfilness in meeting with his punishment at the hands of his beloved one.

> Oh, luxury to worship, to submit,
> Transcended, doomed to death by thee ! (V).

Djabal forces Anael to give her testimony, to expose him to the Druses. Now, Anael's love for Djabal rises in her in a gush and she hails him 'Hakeem' and falls dead. The incident leaves Djabal stupefied, but it has an electrifying effect on the Druses who are convinced of Djabal's exaltation. Djabal once again faces a challenge when the Druses at the instigation of the Nuncio urge him to exalt himself; and he is compelled at this point to make his confession and is on the verge of it when he hears the trumpet of the Venetians.

> I can confess now all from first to last.
> There is no longer shame for me. I am. . . .
> (*Here the Venetian trumpet—sounds the* Druses *Shout*)
> —Am I *not* Hakeem? And ye would have crawled
> But yesterday within these impure courts
> Where now ye stand erect!—Not grand enough? (V).

He rises equal to the challenge of the situation and speaks to his Druses, not as the Hakeem, but as a man who is no less inspired than a prophet, as a leader of his people. Djabal does sustain and fulfil in a sense, if not in actuality, his self-appointed role of the Hakeem and achieves his life-mission of sending his people to their home, and he is spiritually exalted in his love and death. Djabal's impersonation of the prophet's role does bring about the exaltation (the ennoblement) of his character. The heroic man has conquered the God.

Thus Browning succeeds eminently in preparing for the supreme dramatic climax of the Fifth Act, and in building the maximum tension and suspense. The climax itself is a consummately managed dramatic event and produces a great impact. The final scene is theatrically conceived and is the grand finale of a powerful drama. The characters of Anael and Djabal are sustained and elevated; the dramatic power of the story is fully realized. The final heroic gesture of Djabal when he leads on his people towards their home before he collapses,

On to the Mountain! At the Mountain, Druses!

is an unforgettable moment in the drama (like the previous moment of Anael's hailing him as Hakeem) and leads the drama to a grand finale.

"The long sequences of the audible-inaudible" that Dowden disapproves are required by the nature of the character in their peculiar predicaments, and seem entirely natural. How else would Browning have presented the inner reactions of two characters to each other with such directness and force than by these sequences of the audible and the inaudible? A complete duet of asides would have seemed absurd on the stage, but in Browning's play the characters' inner reflections invariably lead to an utterance *aloud*, and when the character does break into utterance its elo-

quence is intensified on account of the light that is shed on the inner background of the speaker's mind. It is significant that most of the asides and soliloquies occur in the Second and the Third Acts which are marked by doubt and irresolution on the part of the three protagonists: Djabal, Anael and Loys. In these Acts they are employed primarily to present each character's hesitancy; but in the Fourth and the Fifth Acts when the hesitancy is at an end and the characters burst into action there are no asides and soliloquies. There is only external action and outward behaviour. This is to say that the asides are used to great advantage when they are required and with dramatic appropriateness. The 'aside' is a stage convention and is accepted as such without the violation of dramatic illusion. But Browning's use of the asides in this play is *expressionistic* and even revolutionary, and is dictated by fidelity to the laws of thinking.

It would be wrong to say with McCormick that Browning does not try to "dramatize the mental action of his characters"[7]. Some of the 'asides' and soliloquies approach the form of his developed monologues, but the play is yet a conventional theatre piece, and one that is unlike, say *Richelieu*, invested with great complexity of character motivation. Browning has chosen wisely in writing about a romantic theme.

The charge that dramatic development is lacking in this play and that it is static is ununderstandable. Cohen suggests[8] that it is possible to read Act V immediately after Act I without missing anything of importance. The fast pace of events in the Fourth and the Fifth Acts acquire their meaning only in the light of the intense psychologizing of Acts II and III. In a very genuine sense the play is a drama of character, not of incident, and the mental analyses of the middle two acts is a necessary preparation for the heroic action of the Fourth and the Fifth Acts. Cohen further charges that Browning "was interested not in the clash of personalities, but in complexities of motive. His characters,

therefore, when compelled to confront one another, habitually perform what might be called a soliloquy *a'duex.*"[9] The charge does not take into account the peculiar problem of the play. The action of *the Druses* does not result from any external clash of personalities, but arrives from the inner, private predicament of its two main characters, out of their extraordinary subtlety and sensitivity of nature. The action proper is in the opposing motives of the characters, in the heroic situations and sudden dramatic catastrophies, in the character's complex states of feeling, and the eloquence and verbal luxury. As Honan observes,[10] there is a dramatic propriety in the diction, image and rhythm of the play.

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1. Stopford A. Brooke, *The Poetry of Robert Browning*, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1926), P. 230.

2. *Robert Browning: A Portrait*, (London: John Murrary, 1952), pp. 51-52.

3. J. M. Cohen, *Robert Browning* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), p. 31.

4. *New Letters of Robert Browning*, ed., William Clyde DeVane and K. L. Knickbocker, (London: John Murray, 1951), pp. 20-22.

5. William Clyde DeVane, *A Browning Handbook*, (New York, Appleton Century Crofts, Inc., 1955), p. 136.

6. *The Life of Robert Browning*, (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd.) p. 69.

7. "Robert Browning and the Experimental Drama" PMLA, LXVIII (1953), p. 982-91.

8. *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

10. *Browning's Characters: A Study in Poetic Technique*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 67.

THE PURPLE-BRAIDED PEOPLE, A POEM-PLAY by Shree Devi; Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1970; 44 pp. Rs. 10/-.

This poem-play is intended by the playwright to be a closet drama because the emphasis is on the poetry alone, and also because little or no attention has been given to plot and characterization. The play, then, is not the thing; the poetry is.

It deals with " India's lost aristocracy ", a very contemporary though hardly urgent theme. The plight of the dispossessed princes in present day India is considered in terms of the internal domestic tensions in the family of a " fictitious lot of State people " with the help of " recurrent dream images of forests, out-worn stone, lost laughter, or the redundant sparkle of diamonds....."

The dialogue which constitutes the bulk of the play is both poetic and theatrically realistic. The problems of the younger generation of derecognized Rajahs are presented in a sympathetic yet ironic manner. The daughter of the Maharajah of Snehgarh, Reena, the character that comes across most vividly, attempts to run " from tradition but an old fisherwoman / casts her weedy net from aged waters to / stifle her. " The conversation between the Rajah and his son Vikram is one of the few weak spots in the dialogue. It is shot through with incongruous bursts of candour intermingled with reticence:

Raja: I have never had a moment with you——

Vikram: I cannot give you that. It's what I fear Most.

Raja: I do too. Having too much to say to you. Fearing my heart would come to my mouth.

There is one serious printer's omission—one of the characters, Milly, is not included in the list of *dramatis personae* printed after the Playwright's Note.

The poetry on the whole is typical of the modern poetry of imaginative awareness that the Writers Workshop has been encouraging for the past decade.

ISAAC SEQUEIRA

THE CONCEPT OF AN INDIAN LITERATURE, by P. Lal; Writers Workshop, 162/92, Lake Gardens, Calcutta; pp. 50; price Rs. 10/-.

Professor P. Lal needs no introduction to students of Indo-Anglian writing. He has established himself not only as a major Indo-Anglian poet and 'transcreator', but also as a critic of unusual perception and sensitivity. In this book he attempts to formulate the concept of an Indian literature. Consisting of six essays, this book in fact attempts to diagnose the peculiar malaise which, according to Professor Lal, corrodes modern Indian writing: its lack of a myth.

Professor Lal makes things rather easy for himself—as he points out—by bypassing the question of distinguishing between what is Indian and what is un-Indian. But his major contention is clearly stated and convincingly argued: the essential difference between ancient and modern literature is that "the former embodies a myth,....while the latter is entirely mythless." This postulate may not appear strikingly original to those who are familiar with the modern trends in criticisim. But it has important implications for assessing modern Indian writing. For as Professor Lal says, modern Indian writing is characterised by the absence of a meaningful myth or is not yet capable of recreating available myths. It is on this assumption that Professor Lal proceeds to criticise Sanskrit Drama, Tagore, Contemporary Hindi writing and Indian Writing in English.

There are, however, some related issues which could have been discussed in this volume. For instance, is myth the *differentia* of a concept of Indian writing or it is one of the elements? If it is the only distinctive feature (if, as Professor Lal says, " all the point is in the myth ", (p. 40)) why should Aurobindo's *Savitri* be described as " a Pyrrhic victory " (p. 46)? What exactly are the standards which should be adopted in judging Indian writing—for instance, in evaluating a book like G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr?* These issues ought to have to been taken up for discussion and clarification in this work, since they are central to any discussion on the concept of an Indian literature.

* * * *

THE COMPLETE POEMS OF SAMAR SEN, translated by Pritish Nandy; Writers Workshop, Calcutta: pp. 191; price Rs. 35/-.

Samar Sen, as the translator Pritish Nandy says, " was one of the youngest and most original Bengali poets of the 1940s," and Professor Lal (in his " Letter from Calcutta," *London Magazine*, October, 1970) calls him " the most memorable of Bengal's striking ' Lyric Left ' poets. . . . " Anyone who dips into the pages of this excellently produced volume is sure to feel that this is the barest truth. Even in translation, Samar Sen's poems have a robust intellectuality which is in striking contrast to the romantic gush and pseudo-alienation which mark much of contemporary Indian poetry.

Though Samar Sen's stature as a poet is incontrovertible it is likely to receive only the qualified approval of the " purists." This is due to the fact that poerty, for Samar Sen, is an instrument of social regeneration. His poetry stems

obviously from his dialectic of communication. " Poetry ", says Mr. Sen, " is not pure imagination, but is dependent on changing class structure, on time, place and *personal*, and even though dependent, assists in the business of changing the face of society." But this overt aim, miraculously, does not seem to affect the core of Samar Sen's poetry, though, it must be conceded, some of his poems read like the manifesto of a new social awareness. Samar Sen is too good an artist to ignore the fact that, as Mallarme has put it, " poetry is made out of words, not out of ideas." His leftist bias does not in any sense interpose a barrier between his poetry and the reader.

As Prof. Amalendu Bose has pointed out in his invaluable introduction to the book, Samar Sen's poetry has a touch of the prosaic—or, to put it differently, his intellectuality leads to a distrust of emotion with the inevitable consequence of making " all his poems. . . . prose poems." Whether this is accepted completely or not, the compulsive urge behind Samar Sen's poems is far too complex to fit a ready-made categorization. This, I think, becomes clear when we consider a poem like " The Funeral Procession." Here there are different levels blended and not juxtaposed with the result that the poem becomes a complex mosaic of meanings. There is the evocation of the Great City which easily compares favourably with many such passages in English poetry. There is also, at the back of the poet's mind, a pronounced consciousness of the exploitation and the misery of the peasant. Apparently this is the theme which functions as the lever but it is so muted and subduded that it does not, by overflowing the *bounds* of *poetic* utterance, become a positive distraction. This is entirely different from such a poem as " The Intellectual " where the imagery is full of naive cliches (" the sun of affluence spread/shadows of nightmare in city slums," p.23 and also " will you excite our bourgeois blood " p.73, " I have roamed for long behind the rich. But they do not care to talk to the poor " p.183).

A comparable sense of agony minus its overtly Marxian dialectic, is discernible in " Revision " (p. 163) which, to me, is easily one of the most interesting poems in the collection.

But, what is frequently held up to Samar Sen's mockery is Calcutta, " a city," as Prof. Lal says, " which shouldn't be but is, " surviving mysteriously " like a half-crushed cockroach." In evoking the nightmarish terror of this city, Samar Sen, we are told, has few equals. But the lyric impulse remains essentially the same—throbbing, pulsing with a vivid imagination.

In short, this book, which forms part of a projected series of reliable translations sponsored by Writers Workshop, gives us an insight into the fascinating world of modern Bengali poetry. We must be grateful to Pritish Nandy for making available to us these, (to quote Prof. Lal once again,) " extra-ordinary, time-haunted, passion-stricken flights of lyric agony in which Calcutta, the Cosmos and Communism meet in a delicate, tense balance."

ICONOGRAPHY OF TIME; poems by Dr. Narmadeshwar Prasad; Writers Workshop, Calcutta, pp. 42; Price Rs. 8/-.

In his study of some poets of the Writers Workshop, Prof. Amalendu Bose has drawn attention to a tendency which has been the bane of most Indo-Anglian poets: " A self-conscious attempt to exhibit the verbal sensibility, although deep down there is no real sensibility...." Reading Dr. Prasad's poems is a refreshing experience for his poems, by and large, seem to be remarkably free from this tendency. They are, as Prof. Lal calls them, in his preface, " experimental poems," " plastic feelers," exploring " areas of twilight consciousness and subtle, perhaps, ineffable insights." They can be communicated, as Prof. Lal feels, only by an entirely " re-crafted " word-system.

Though, " A poem should not mean/but be", the temptation to find thematic patterns is irresistible to a reviewer. The title itself is suggestive of the major ideas which give a semblance of unity to these " Imagist mantras ". The basic assumption seems to be the (Vedantic?) concept of the oneness of existence (" all cities are alike/all cultures are alike "). But there is also an awareness of duality (" I have two minds/in time and out of it. . . . "). However, to look for continuity and permanence is futile for " continuity is a tragic concept ". Above all, out of this maze of dualism there is only one alternative: " What counts is living/Virginal, sensual. . . . ".

No analysis of themes however does justice to the fine verbal and visual sensibility which Dr. Prasad's poems present. They are poems and not apologies for pretentious intellectual faking.

CRUCIFIXIONS; Poems by Sujatha Modayil; Writers Workshop, Calcutta; pp. 31; Price Rs. 10/-.

SUJATHA MODAYIL's poems are wide ranging in their attitudes and exploration. The themes are all those which plague the twentieth century writer: loneliness, time and death; longing for certainty in a world of flux and change and loss of innocence. Above all, Miss Modayil tries to articulate the peculiar nuances of feminine sensibility in such poems as " Waiting," and " Women's Loneliness." There is an unmistakable sense of nostalgia, of regret at the loss of innocence (" Lost innocence I mourn.") But there is also resurrection of hope and certainty (No need / For innocence never dies / only sleeps).

" Crucifixion " which gives the title to the book is easily the best in the collection. There is an economy and tautness of structure which seems to be lacking in her other poems. But one feels that with a little more care she

could have avoided such banalities as " I wonder why in this land of Ahimsa / There is no peace " and " I am a well-adjusted individual ". By and large, however, Miss Modayil's poems do show promise.

DEATH'S EPICURE; Poems by Suresh Kohli; Writers Workshop, Calcutta; pp. 45; Price Rs. 10/-.

MR. SURESH KOHLI's poems are informed, to be fair, by a modern consciousness at odds with itself. He has the attitudes and themes which one has come to expect in any poet aspiring to write in English. There is ' spiritual ' anguish (" Eurpoe's dead, Asia in dying / we are alone to watch the dying dead "); doubt (" where is God? Where is He?"); and the futility of war (" Victory is nothing but some man's tune / which he plays with the nails of the dead / on the guitar of time ".). There is also some sort of affirmation (" In this world heart never breaks. . . . ").

But recognition of the modern predicament is only half the story. For Mr. Kohli's poems do not show apparently either technical interest or even verbal brilliance. Barring a few—notably, " Above the Lake " and " Death's Epicure " —we find very little of ' creativity ' and linguistic maturity which should (or usually) inform all poetry worth the name. For sheer banality " Examinations ", " Taj Mahal ", " The Existence of God " and " Stephen Spender " are hard to beat. (But I was sad there was no woman with me ". " His hair stands over his wisdom " and " I wondered what went on / In that resplendent mind "). Frequently, Mr. Kohli's queer juxtaposition lands him in ridiculous bathos: as when describing an auto accident: " The boy lost half of his leg, he cried though/Pain he could not feel / Pellucidity of reality he failed to conceive ". But Kohil does, however, show considerable capacity for juxtaposing images and ideas (" Vodka flows to humiliate the Ganges ").

" Could I be a poet of his kind?" asks Mr. Kohli in his poem on Stephen Spender. Not, one is tempted to add, until he give up his prolixity and over eagerness to use " poetic diction ".

DECLARATIONS; Poems by Lalitha Venkateswaran; Writers Workshop, Calcutta; pp. 18; Price Rs. 8/-.

In this slender, and presumably first, volume of poems, Miss Lalitha Venkateswaran shows a certain amount of sensibility and concern for craft which are sadly lacking in many of our younger writers aspiring to write in English. Relatively free from the all too frequent tendency of writing for effect, this volume is fittingly called DECLARATIONS. For there is a persistent tendency in the poems to regert the inadequacy—and even insincerity—of all attempts to communicate essentially incommunicable things. As she says (in " Fictions ") " ....words are swords as well as nets / For catching as for cutting through ". This becomes a major thematic concern in many of the poems: " Is it not enough that I cannot live / Except through you! but have not / Rich words to say so? / How much is speech when I am powerless / To trumpet it and lose / The only truth I know." A similar idea pervades such poems as " Swinging " (" Each thought becomes a lie in words, / A still-born thing for others: but a poem for myself",) and " Moderation " (" ....when I whisper something, why can't they hear me?").

In short, there seems to be enough evidence in this first volume to show that here is a talent on the threshold of discovering in poetry its metier.

NO EXIT; Poems by C. Raju; Writers Workshop, Calcutta; pp. 30; Price Rs. 10/-.

In his exremely perceptive study of Indo-Anglian writing, Prof. David McCutchion has pointed out that " the

majority of Indian poets in English in fact continue the romanticicism of their predecessors by Imagist techniques and Andenesque attitudes ". But even those, as in Mr. Raju's case, who reject this romanticism, do not seem to show any comparable thematic or technical virtuosity. Mr. Raju's poems have all the themes which one can expect in any poet writing in the seventies; loss of a meaningful world-view (" No Exit "), the futile quest for certainty, (" The Chain ") the sterility of mere intellect (" I cannot comprehend "). There are also light-hearted pems about what " poetry " should be (" How should a Poem be ", " A Poem ").

But intellectural awareness is not the only ingredient in poetry. Barring a few (I would prefer " The Hindu ", " The Raven Days ", " The Naked Runner " and " Liberty"), Mr. Raju's poems show promise but no fulfilment. There are embarrassingly naive overtones of Frost (" the moon is lovely / calm and free / but I have / hands to clasp / and dreams to spill / . . . .") and Eliot (" Do I dare to glance at you / do I dare to hold your hands "). Occasionally, however, there is evidence of a fine gift for phrasing and juxtaposition ("give her hopes on the instalment plan", "stumbled on a dead analogy ", " uncork and axion ").

THE PEACOCK SMILES; Poems by Mary Ann Dasgupta; Writers Workshop, Calcutta; pp. 30; Price Rs. 8/-.

In her poem entitled " An Episode ", Mary Ann Dasgupta relates how she bought a "fine, new sketch book" in a little book-shop near the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, on which she " could hardly dare to mark ", for, " The perfection of a clean white slate / Is not the proper surface for an amateur ". This is a clue to the range and variety of moods, subjects and verbal patterns which show that the writer is not an amateur in that sense. For, this volume is an assortment of poems on a variety of themes (Calcutta, in-

variably, gets two or three) which do not as yet betray any predictable pattern. But Miss Dasgupta is at her best in poems which deal with specifically Indian situations (" Ma Kali ", " Calcutta: Kali, Kali "). Here there is freshness, objectivity and stylistic brilliance. There is also a pervasive sense of curiosity—and even rapport—which make these poems memorable. In "Ma Kali", for instance, the atmosphere of fervent devotion is slightly neutralised by sly but very muted references to " the bands playing cinema tunes ", and to " the men with market bags ", pausing, in " mid-foot step ". A similar pattern marks the poem " Calcutta Kali, Kali " where the " birds like us are / None of them unblemished ".

By and large, the poems show an unmistakable concern for craft and are refreshingly free from banal common places.

LARINS SAHIB: A PLAY IN THREE ACTS by Gurcharan Das; Oxford University Press, Bombay; pp. 88 Price 10 S.

In spite of valiant efforts by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Asif Currimboy, Bharati Sarabhai and others, Indo-Anglian drama continues to be poor in quality. *LARINS SAHIB* by Mr. Gurcharan Das, therefore, comes as a welcome piece of extremely effective dramatic writing. Based on the life and legends of Henry Lawrence, the Resident of Punjab in 1846, it is characterised by overall economy of theme and structure. Mr. Gurcharan Das shows an unusual talent for the dramtic mode and his ability to present characters and establish motives is unerring. Moreover, *Larins Sahib* is free from stilted dialogue which has marred much of Indo-Anglian dramatic writing. The paucity of actable drama in English is due, as Prof. Srinivasa Iyengar pointed out, to this failure from which *Larins Sahib* is relatively free. Though there are occasional lapses (particularly where there

is a tendency to make the characters speak in proverbs—however vital this is to evoke the necessary atmosphere) the dialogue is crisp and functions effectively).

By all standards, the play is one of the best in the field of Indo-Anglian drama and richly deserves the award of the Sultan Padmasee Prize by the Theatre Group of Bombay in 1968.

KINGS, LORDS AND COMMONS; ANTHOLOGY OF IRISH POETRY; translated by Frank O'Connor; Macmillan, 1970; pp. 167; Price 14s.

HERE is an anthology of Irish poetry from the seventh to the nineteenth century. These translations done by Frank O'Connor have earned high tributes from competent poets and critics. While the Celtic scholar D. A. Binchy described these poems as " superb translations ", *The Times Literary Supplement* says that " Mr. O'Connor's translations are astonishingly faithful, but his English is melodious, vivid and direct ". The book also carries very perceptive introductory notices and preface which serves as an excellent introduction to the world of Irish poetry.

For students of English poetry—particularly those interested in W. B. Yeats—the volume should prove to be of absorbing interest.

PENGUIN MODERN POETS 15; (Poems by Alan Bold, Edward Brathwaite and Edwin Morgan). Distributed by Orient Longmans Ltd., Madras; pp. 175; Price Rs. 5/-.

THE well-known publishing firm ' Penguins ' is to be congratulated for making available a well-chosen, excellently produced series of contemporary poems. This, volume no 15, contains poems by Alan Bold, Edward Brathwaite and Edwin

Morgan. Alan Bold, who had edited the *Penguin Book of Socialist Verse*, ranges from " An Epitaph on W.B. Yeats " to "Sonnets on the Two Cultures." But his most interesting poem, to me, " A Memory of Death ". This seems to be structurally and thematically one of the best long poems written by him. Alternating between the nostalgic past and the prosaic present, it shows a remarkable flair for phrasing and a keen sense of verbal economy. There are also poems such as " Academic Angst " and " In a Second hand City Book Shop " which make fascinating reading.

Edward Brahtwaite's poems are marked by a different sensibility—a visual, and verbally, extremely constricted one. Among his poems " The Emigrants ", " South " and " Wings of a Dove " seem to be typical of his style: a concern to distill the quintessence of experience into the minimum of verbal expression.

Edwin Morgan, as the biodata informs us, is interested in concrete poetry and has had his "concrete and visual poems included in various international exhibitions and anthologies." Besides his concrete poems, Morgan's " An Addition to the Family ", " The Death of Marylyn Monroe " and " The Old Man and the Sea " seem to me Typical of his style.

By all standards, this book is invaluable for all those interested in contemporary British poetry.

INGESTION OF ICE-CREAM; Poems by Geoffrey Grigson; Macmillan Ltd.,; pp. 72; Price 12s. 6d.

CONTEMPORARY British and American poetry seems, by and large, to be stricken with what Jonathan Rabam has called " the vocabulary of the nervous breakdown and the concentration camp ". But Geoffrey Grigson's poems steer clear of this and are instinct with a joyous, affirmative attitude to experience. There are, apparently, no regrets, no nostalgic

evocation of lost innocence but only an unbounded zest and enthusiasm. Whether it is on " Red Dahlias " or " Mass Media's Media ", on " Wystan Auden " (one of the best in the collection) or " Travelling at Night " —the same sense of delight informs his poetry. (" I think I love the human race / Queer though its ways and queer its face "). But this is not just a naive delight; for mingled with this there is a pervasive irony which comprehends that in contemporary civilisation " mist things, decencies included / are priced, and pushed by salesman, / and are mostly sold ". (p. 28).

Indeed, Grigson's poems are poised on a delicate balance between an ironic contemplation and an unqualified affirmation.

PENGUIN MODERN POETS 16; Penguin Books; supplied by M/s Orient Longmans Ltd., Mount Road, Madras; pp. 144; Price 5s.

This volume, No. 16 in the Penguin Modern Poets series, carries poems by Jack Beeching, Harry Guest and Matthew Mead. Beeching's poems seem to be characterised by a fine quality of wit and an unmistakable gift for phrasing. Thematically he ranges wide: there are poems on 'Love' (at least his version of it) on " Grey Hairs " and on such themes as the 'sterility' of modern life : ("This Yark Night"). But what is relatively impressive is his gift for imagery (" The perforating pain was like a dream / More luminous than love, more brilliant / Than hellish chocolate masking white ice-cream ");

But, technically, Harry Guest's poems are the best in the collection. Not only is imagery more markedly individual (" The dark nerve of sin lay like lightning / on the pavements "; " her loins prove as elusive as the sky ") there is also a surer mastery over the genre of the long poem. But his most interesting poems are " About Baudelaire " and

"Montage" and his long poem "Metamorphoses". Of Matthew Mead's poems, the most interesting is "A Poem in Nine Parts". This is marked by verbal brilliance and a sure knack for curious juxtaposition. Even short poems like "A Greeting for Sphie Elizabeth" show this pervasive quality.

By all standards, this volume will be of absorbing interest to students of contemporary British poerty.

M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA

ARTICULATE SILENCES: Poems by Shiv K. Kumar; Published by the Writers Workshop, Calcutta; Price Rs. 10/-.

Although for over a hundred years Indians have been writing poetry in English, the "poems" are for the most part formless gollops of unassimilated emotion or flawed "gems" of gnomic wisdom. The Indo-Anglian poems, especially those written prior to the post-war period, are in general marred by a wordiness, which accounts for their lacking in concrete immediacy. It is, therefore, a pleasure to review a collection of poems suggestive of a poetic sensibility that does not lose itself in verbiage and connotative of enough sheer poeticism to warrant serious critical attention. In point of control and power of expression, if not command of metaphor or range of subject, Dr. S.K. Kumar's *Articulate Silences* is a first book of exceptional promise—unsurpassed in Indo-Anglian poetry of its kind and only rarely surpassed in contemporary British or American poetry—to which the snap judgment of review does scant justice.

At a cursory reading one may conclude that Dr. Kumar's poems are subtle traps for catching the nuances of the meaning of modern life or wittily serious ones catering for the modernist wish not to be taken in by any experience or ideal or ideology. But they exemplify the modern "tough'

poetry in which the verbal twist is adroit as well as symbolically suggestive, relying as it does on 'a consistent range of suggestion and a coherent symbolic or metaphoric dimension' rather than on a sequential development; and hence they call for "close readings". *Waiting*, for example, does not articulate merely a lover's illusion of being able to take " philosophically " even faithlessness, which seems endemic in modern times, but expresses the anguished loneliness and forlorn hope of a lover waiting (or lying in wait?) for his mistress, not to speak of his repressed psychological content, which is brought out by his seemingly peevish action of not letting the fly out into freedom. Again, his poem, *The Rickshaw-walla*, does project the piteous, though ironic, predicament of the rickshaw-walla " pulling his cross on a bellyful of questions " free of any kind of gimmickry in the first eight lines; but its relationship in meaning with the picture of a mother-hen gagging her chicks with a few grains of rice in the next four lines is only implied by the first and the last lines—"Pulling his cross" and "Their last supper"—thereby suggesting that the poem has a compositional logic of its own. *Epitaph On An Indian Politician* satirises the puerile practices of a popular (and successful) politician who " Vasectomized of all genital urges / for love and beauty, / . . . . often crossed floors / as his wife leaped across beds." Despite its unpromising subject the poem stands out because of the unobtrusive employment of irony and antithetical balances to reinforce the astringent satire; " All his life he shambled around / in homespun yarn / socializing his soul / while his sons flourished / in the private sectors of big business." *Poet Laureate* is yet another poem written in the satirical vein in which concrete particularity (" while on the Coffee table / lies a medley of *Poetry Northwest*, / *New Yorker*, *Quest*, *Poet Lore*, / half revealing his recent poetic wares / And he smiles plastically / inhaling the incense / of homage from his admirers ") does the double duty of imparting vividness to the portrayal and of bringing out the sickening self-complacency and the bland self-assurance of a " successful " middle-aged poet of middling merit.

In the *Coordinates of Pain* the poet relies on convoluted and introverted verse to communicate the coefficients of excruciating pain through metaphorical description: " the saw of pain / piercing through the tendons of my heart;" " the eyes hearing the convulsive rumble / that spirals from the navel / to the agonised throat."

An Encounter with Death vividly describes how " before my arm (the poet's) could reach out to her, / she (the poet's mother) slumped into oblivion "—a description, though based on a personal bereavement, rules out shock and self-pity in favour of a true vision of death. The poems—*The Face*, *Doubt*, *Genesis*, *Revelation*, and *Renunciation*, despite their familiar titles answer to the concepts of modernism—simultaneity, dislocation, and abstraction—poems in which it is the totality which hits the reader first while the details assert themselves afterwards, often not in the familiar order.

This book of twenty five poems, some of which are geared to a deeply felt concern about the duplicity of human behaviour, brings out the poet's ability to transform ideas into art and to found his poems on a concentration of many awarenesses, and show him to be a witty, irreverent, and irrepressible critic of life in spite of his being an administrator

—Dean, Faculty of Arts and Principal of College of Arts and Commerce, Osmania University.

K. VENKATACHARI

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