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Editor's Note :

Writing is something so personal, I believe given opinions inhibit it. Like one might find oneself apologetic before an F. R. Leavis or a Leslie Fiedler.

The current issue of the Literary Journal focuses on independent working and analysis. The choice of subject - for the most part - is on rough ground unevened by established criticism. The response is individualistic and calls for discipline in analysis. I feel this encourages perception, sensibility and judgement which pattern responses and analysis into academic writing.

The realized/unrealized aim of this issue is to break in academic writing.

Ragtime - Doctorow's Melting Pot

AN AMERICA OF BIG BUSINESSMEN AND SEX SCANDALS—AN AMERICA WITH A CRUEL DISREGARD FOR ITS NEGROES AND IMMIGRANTS. Using a "set of images"[1] which to him are associated with the America of the early twentieth century Doctorow recreates for his reader a vivid mosaic of the American scene at the turn of the century. But far from reading like any social document of the era' Doctorow "has managed to seize the strands of actuality and transform them to a fabulous tale".[2] The rhythm of ragtime music he captures perfectly in the novel - a rhythm further representative of the 'tempo' of the era. He achieves this rhythm chiefly through the alternation of long and short sentences while the constant flow of images and ideas gives the novel a fluidity which heightens the quality of music in the novel. Syncopation - the essence of the rag is the chief aspect of the style of 'Ragtime'.
The author describes the plight of the immigrants in a very casual. matter ot fact manner stating that"there was no sanitation"[3] and that "children died of mild colds and rashes"[4] while the architectural furnishing he lists in great detail - "whole facades of Florentine palaces and Athenian atria, stone by marked stone, paintings, statuary, tapestries, carved and painted ceilings in crates, tiled patios, marble fountains, marble stairs and balustrades, parqueted floors and silk wall panels; cannon, pennants, suits of armour, cross bows and other ancient weaponry, beds armoires, chaises, sideboards, harpischords; barrels of glassware, silver; goldplate, porcelain and china, boxes of church ornaments; boxes of rare books, snuff boxes".[5]

The novel opens during Teddy Roosevelt's presidency when there was "no entertainment which did not involve great swarms of people"[6] and everyone wore white in summer—the time of steamers, trolleys and street cars; a time when "sex and death were barely distinguishable in America".[7] It is now that Evelyn Nesbit features prominently on the scene along with Harry Thaw and Stanford White. It is Evelyn's brief brush with Emma Goldman and the love which Younger Brother holds for this women who " had caused the death of one man and wrecked the life of another,'[8] which winds in two more of the threads the author uses to recreate the American scene. Father's departure on Peary's great expedition to the north pole ushers in at the same time the ship load of immigrants which included Tateh and the Little Girl, representing the lot of the immigrant in America. Mother's discovery of Coalhouse Jr. and Sarah introduces Coalhouse on the scene bringing yet another perennial American issue to light—the negro. It is a smooth shift in focus barely discernable and constantly maintained. This accounts for much of the easy fluidity with which the novel moves.

" With his scissors he was able to suggest not merely outlines but textures, moods, character and despair"[9] says Doctorow of Tateh's silhouettes—one is aware that this is no less true of the characters which he himself has created, characters who are more of silhouettes, than rounded portraits. Their importance lies in the fact that with subtle blend of history and fiction the author completes the mosaic that is America. With Evelyn Nesbit's involvement with Tateh the focus shifts from the rich elite to which Evelyn belongs, to the totally different life of violence, poverty and misery which was the lot of an immigrant. The author treats his reader to some "serious fun" as the New York Times Book Review calls it, for while the immigrants lived in filth, in houses with no sanitation, and their children died on beds made of kitchen chairs pushed together, the "architectural furnishings" of the rich consisted of anything from "whole facades of Florentine palaces and Athenian Atria" to "Ancient Weaponry" and "snuff boxes". The contrast between these two classes of the same American Society is almost laughable if it was not so pathetic in its contrast. It is with this same tongue-in-cheek-matter-of-factness that the author reveals that one hundred negroes a year were lynched; one hundred miners were burned alive; one hundred children mutilated almost as if there were "quotas for such things".[10] Poverty was so widespread that it even became fashionable to honour the poor resulting in

"poverty balls" for which the guests came dressed in rags.

Tateh's departure from this scene and his subsequent rise as Baron Ashkenzy is only yet another aspect of American life "Workers would strike and die but in rhe streets of cities an entrepreneur could cook sweet potatoes in a bucket of hot coals and sell them for a penny or two".[11] It is this respect which America has for the independent businesman along with Tateh's ingenuity which enables him to make his living in "movie films". Further, "the film business was at this time booming and anyone could make money"[12], a fact which enabled Tateh's quick rise on the social ladder to the position of a Baron.

In Emma Goldman, the "anarchist" as Tateh labels her, are embodied the early suffragette and women's libber, as she demands "Is our genius only in our wombs? "must our fate always be physical?"[13] It is through Goldman that Doctorow fills in the gaps on the political scene - the American labour movement, which due to the joint efforts of Goldman and her associate Berkman was set back by forty years, the innumerable strikes and the pitched battles which often concluded the strikes. Younger Brother's continued association with Goldman keeps the reader's link with the political scene dominated as it was by bloodshed resulting from assasination attempts on Presidents and Vice Presidents and events like the Mexican Revolution.

The "radical idealism" with which Goldman infuses Younger Brother is responsible for him being the sole white man who allies himself with Coalhouse in the negro's demand for justice. The deliberate act of vandalism on his car committed by Will Conklin wins no sympathy for his righteous anger, further inflamed by the death of his Sarah. The only emotion the authorities feel is embarrassment, for the car would offend "the sensibilities of any one who respected machines".[14] It is Younger Brother with his belief in "the right of every human being to a dignified life"[15] who assists Coalhouse in his mission against Conklin, whose behaviour more often than not was representative of the general feeling of the white population against the negro.

Father returns from the expedition only to find everywhere, even in his own home "signs of his own exclusion".[16] He is representative of the older generation gradually dying out, unable to accept the numerous changes sweeping over America. Mother no longer seemed to him as "Vigorously modest as she had been"[17] while even the maid is less "efficient" and "respectful". The difference even in a simple event like a game of baseketball which is no longer the basketball of twenty years before, when "the players addressed each other as mister and played the game avidly but as sportsmen"[18] only seems to emphasize the change.

Doctorow's portraits of the eminent personalities of the time have none of the reverence with which they are usually treated, and are blandly humorous, completing his picture of America. J. P. Morgan-the man who occupied the "lofty place"[19] atop the "business pyramid"[20] is portrayed as a man who is not above the fallacy of considering that the "disfigurement of his monstrous nose was the touch of God, the assurance of mortality".[21]To Morgan, Ford seemed a reincarnation of some Pharoah, a fact with which Ford calmly agrees with, only taking care to point out that what Morgan had "spent on scholars and travelled round the world to find out"[22] he had picked in a book with 25 cents - an observation typical of a man who allowed only "sixty seconds for sentiment".[23]

Freud's verdict that "America is a mistake, a gigantic mistake"[24] the author reduces to the piqued cry of a man venerated in America only for his age and unrecognised except by a few children whose stares he felt. Harry Houdini the "last of the great mother lovers"[25] too, loses much of the aura of mystery and magic which surrounds him. Just as Houdini systematically exposed spiritual fraud wherever he found it, Doctorow strips him of much of his glamour when he reveals that his spectacular escapes were not effected without the help of wires and pieces of metal he carried on his person.

Peary's idomitable will the author takes care to portray was chiefly responsible for the expedition reaching the north pole. Even when "he could'nt find the exact place to say this spot, here is the north pole,"[26] Peary was undaunted for "all the observations indicated

that they were there".[27] Asking the Eskimos to cheer loudly, he planted a flag and took a picture of Henson and the: "It shows five stubby figures wrapped in furs, the flag set in a paleocrystic peak behind them that might suggest a real physical pole. Because of the light the faces are indistinguishable, seen only as black blanks framed by cariboufor".[28]

It is to his credit that Doctorow leaves no loose threads untied at the end. Each person is meticulously followed to his end—father, we are told, died at the sinking of the Lusitania, while Younger Brother after a career as a revolutionary meets his end in a "skirmish with Government troops".[29] While Evelyn Nesbit having lost her looks sinks into obscurity, mother and Tateh find happiness in the bonds of marriage. It is in Tateh's idea for a film that Doctorow gives the finishing touch to his unique portrait of America as he visualises it—"A society of ragamuffins white black, fat, thin, rich, poor"[30]—the 'melting pot' America always was and is today.

PUSHPA PILLAI, I, M.A.

Notes :

1. E. L. Doctorow in an interview with Jared Lubarsky.
2. R. Z. Sheppard, *Time*, book review.
3. E. L. Doctorow, RAGTIME (New York: Bantam Books, Inc.,' 76), p. 20
4. ibid, p. 20
5. ibid, p. 21
6. ibid, p. 4
7. ibid, p. 4
8. ibid, p. 6
9. ibid, p. 51
10. ibid, p. 45
11. ibid, p 153
12. ibid, p. 297
13. ibid, p. 60
14. ibid, p. 274
15. ibid, p. 281
16. ibid, p. 123
17. ibid, p. 124
18. ibid, p. 265
19. ibid, p. 157
20. ibid, p. 157
21. ibid, p. 157
22. ibid, p. 174
23. ibid, p. 155
24. ibid, p. 44
25. ibid, p. 38
26. ibid, p. 90
27. ibid, p. 90
28. ibid, p. 90
29. ibid, p. 369
30. ibid, p. 354

The Magic of Life—My name is Aram

"My name is Aram" by William Saroyan is a delightful sequence of incidents in the lives of Aram Garoghlanian an Armenian boy born in America, and those of the other members of his tribe. The author recalls some of the pleasant memories of his hometown Fresno in California "from the time he was seven years old and was beginning to inhabit the world as a specific pers on to the time he was seventeen years old and had forsaken his native valley for some of the rest of the world". The book is beautiful, warm and vibrant with the magic of life. Saroyan confides that the writing of this book was purely enjoyable and unaccompanied by any "kinds of wretchedness" said to be experienced by writers; for the writer even as he wrote had no idea as to what was coming next and simply wrote the words while his spirit enjoyed their meaning. For the book is about boys like Aram, Mourad, and others who belong with Alan Beck-"Between the innocence of boyhood and the dignity of manhood, we find a delightful creature called a boy". Meeting Aram is like coming up with a playful little breeze, vigorous and fresh, charged with a vitality that almost brims over. Garoghlanian Aram, or, in Armenian, Aram of the dark or black sons, is an unpredictable composite; with the antics of a monkey, the sensitivity of a touch-me-not, the audacity of a steel trap, the enthusiasm of a firecracker; meeting Mourad is meeting a spirit with a zest for life whose ambition is to enjoy every minute of every hour of every day.

Saroyan has captured in all his stories a certain freshness and simplicity that has made his pieces delightful reading. This is portrayed in "The Summer of The Beautiful White Horse"; each day brings exciting new possibilities for Aram, who greets it with youthful fervour and enthusiasm.

"One day, back there in the good old days when I was nine and the world was full of every imaginable kind of magnificence and life was still a delightful and mysterious dream, my cousin Mourad, who was considered crazy by everybody who knew him, except me, came to my house at four in the morning and woke me up, by tapping on the window of my room.

Aram he said.

I jumped out of bed and looked out of the window. It wasn't morning yet, but it was summer, and with day break not many minutes around the corner of the world, it was light enough for me to know I wasn't dreaming.

My cousin Mourad was sitting on a beautiful white horse.

I stuck my head out of the window and rubbed my eyes......

I knew my cousin Mourad enjoyed being alive more than anybody else who had fallen into the world by mistake, but this was more than even I could believe."

Saroyan thus unfolds before us in his warm and easy manner the funny mad world of the Garoghlanian family, the members of which often have something akin to ourselves. His quaint use of comfortable, everyday language, the repetition of the "I said, he said", and the complete omission of quotation marks (all of which are trademarks of his charming style) contribute to make the book a genuine delight. The hilarious series of 'Aram stories' differs from others in that they don't follow the normal course of a short story. What makes the book come alive is the Armenian sense of humour and friendliness. It is as though Aram greets the reader with a 'Hi there Im Aram', and before one knows whats happening, he's captured one's heart. Saroyan has also this peculiar gift of narrating incidents as seen through the wondering eyes of a young boy. This lends the book a certain warmth and sesitivity which is what makes it special. In the following passage he looks at the "circus" from a boy's point of view, listing all that a boy would hold precious in his life. It only needed a "circus" in town for Aram and his pal Joey to run "hog wild" and start wondering as to what good a whole education ever did anybody. "The circus was everything else we knew wasn't. It was adventure, travel, danger, skill, grace, romance. comedy, peanuts, popcorns, chewing gum and soda water." The author understands the boys only too well, for wanting to get away occassionally from the harsh realities of life (like having to go to school), to stand gaping at the kaleidoscope of circus life and trying to seem a part of it. Even the thought of a

strapping from the headmaster do not deter them from playing truant. However all good things must end - the boys resign themselves to their fate and face the music.

"Circus? old man Dawson used to say. I see. Circus. well, bend down boy.

So first, Joey, then me, would bend and old man Dawson would get some powerful shoulder exercise, while we tried not to howl. We wouldn't howl for five or six licks, but after that we'd howl like Indians coming."

And there the matter would end till the circus came round again.

"Three Swimmers And The Grocer From Yale" is another example of Saroyan's understanding of a boy's nature. He introduces us to Joe Bettencourt. " A schoolroom made Joe stupid. It embarrassed him. But once out of school, once off the school grounds, he was as intelligent as good-natured, casual, sincere and friendly as anyone could possibly be". To quote Mourad, "Joe aint dumb ; he just doesn't want an education."

Superb logic indeed!

It is during this phase of life that a boy has to often prove to his older friends that he is 'man enough' to tag along in their exclusive company. The author understands only too well the conflict of emotions in Aram's breast, when he has to actually protect his honour by swimming the difficult, unfriendly river at Thomson Ditch.

"Joe Bettencourt said I came all the way to swim and rain or no rain I'm going to swim.

So am I, I said,

You wont, my cousin Mourad said. Me and Joe will see how it is.

If it is allright you can come in.

Can you really swim?

Aw, shut up I said.

This is what I always said when it seemed to me that somebody had unwittingly insulted me. Neither of them knew how uncertain I was to whether or not I could swim well enough to negotiate a dive and a swim across that body of cold, roaring water. If the truth were known, when I saw the dark water coming I was scared, challenged, and insulted.

Aw, shut up, I said to the water".

Children and dogs are usually the best judges of character. Perhaps it is due to the fact that their minds are uncluttered by prejudices and such like, that they are such good discriminators of the good and bad, and sane and insane. In this age, I guess people come under three groups - the sane, the insane, and those who are slowly turning crazy. Most of us belong to the third category and it would be better all round, if we weren't so hasty in classifying our fellowmen. Saroyan introduces us to a most unique person - the Grocer from Yale - considered crazy by all those who came to know him, except Aram, Joe and Mourad. People thought him mad because he acted crazy, talked funny and gave away more provisions than he sold. However the three discriminators thought him otherwise. As Aram said, "He sure was some man. Twenty years later, I decided he had been a poet and had run that grocery store in that little run-down village just for the casual poetry in it instead of the paltry cash".

Another of Saroyan's characters subjected to this kind of discrimination is a young Indian of the Ojibway tribe called Locomotive 38. Everyone in Fresno believed he had escaped from an asylum. He came to town on a donkey (which died a few days later) bought a Packard automobile, let Aram, who had never driven an automobile before, drive him where Aram pleased to drive, and one day quit the town as suddenly as he had arrived; only this time it was Locomotive 38 who was expertly driving the Packard. Aram who believes in 'living and let live' has his own explanation—"On the way home I figured he'd just wanted me to believe he

couldn't drive, so I could drive all the time, and feel good. He was just a young man who'd come to town on a donkey, bored to death or something, who'd taken advantage of the chance to be entertained by a small - town kid who was bored to death too. That's the only way I could figure it out without accepting the general theory that he was crazy".

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of Saroyan is his terrific sense of humour. One feels good after reading 'My Name is Aram'. It is as though a fresh breeze is let into the chambers of the mind, sweeping away musty cobwebs. Every page is just plain funny. You settle down with the book, before long Aram gets to you, and you start doing funny things yourself. It may start with a twitching of the lips, a grin that spreads slowly from ear to ear, a chuckle or a helpless fit of laughter; it's obvious anyway that you can't resist Aram.

"A Nice Old Fashioned Romance With Love Lyrics and Everything" is a delightful story where Aram is trapped in the intricacies of a nervous romance. It all begins with cousin Arak writing a poem on the blackboard which says Miss Daffney is in love with the headmaster, Mr. Derrlnger, and that she is very ugly. Aram is sent to the headmaster's office while cousin Arak sits serenely, admiring Alice Bovard's curls.

"Mr. Derringer received me with no delight. He read the message, made six or seven faces, smiled, snapped his suspenders, coughed, and said.

What made you write this little poem,

I didn't, I said.

Naturally, he said, you'd say, you didn't, but why did you?

I didn't write it, I said.

Now don't be headstrong Mr. Derringer said. How do you know Miss Daffney's in love with me?

What gave you that impression? Have you noticed her looking at me with admiration or something?

I haven't noticed her looking at you with anything, I said.

You could have written that poem, Mr. Derringer said.

Not that one, I said. I could have written a good one.

What do you mean good? Mr. Derringer said.

I mean beautiful, I said, only it wouldn't be about Miss Daffney.

I am convinced you wrote it. Therefore I must punish you said Mr. Derringer.

You give me a strapping for something I didn't do, I said and you'll hear about it.

So he gave me a strapping and the whole school heard about it. I went back to class limping".

Humour is also conveyed through the colourful language that Saroyan uses to make his characters come alive; for example, the Grocer from Yale—"Well, I'll be harrowed, he said, cultivated, pruned, gathered into a pile, burned, picked off a tree and let me see what else? Thrown into a box, I think it was, cut off a vine and eaten grape by grape by a girl in her teens. Yes Sir, all them things, if this doesn't beat everything."

In Locomotive 38 the Ojibway, Saroyan makes the American his object of amusement. The Indian says, "Youre an Armenian, born in America. Indians are born with an instinct for riding, rowing, hunting, fishing and swimming. Americans are born with an instinct for fooling around with machines". Sure enough Aram who has never driven a car before, gets behind the wheel:

"Do you know anything about the gear shifts? Jim said.

I don't know anything about anything yet, I said but I'll soon find out.

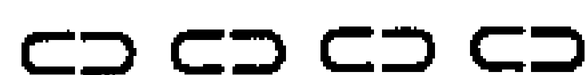
Well, Jim said lets see. My God son, your feet don't reach the pedals. Never mind that I said. You just explain the gear shift...

The Indian wasn't at all excited even though I was throwing him around a good deal.

Youre an excellent driver, Willie he said. It's like I said youre an American and you were born with an instinct for mechanical contraptions like this."

Perhaps as he wrote 'My Name is Aram' Saroyan laughed remembering his youthful dissipations and enjoying himself as much as his readers, but in a special way, for the author is never sure if he is Aram Garoghlanian himself, although he will not say that he is not Aram Garoghlanian. Having had a glimpse of Aram's genuine facetious world one cannot help agreeing with Samuel Crichton that "Life's a pretty precious and wonderful thing. You can't sit down and let it lap around you...You have to plunge into it, dive through it! And you can't save it, you can't store it up; youve got to taste it; youve got to use it. The more you use, the more you have...that's the miracle of it".

SUSAN ZACHARIAH,
I B.A.



To Kill a Mocking Bird — A Tribute to the Human Spirit

'To Kill a Mocking Bird' is a tender human drama of two children caught in a whirlpool of human cruelties and prejudices. It's a child's perspective on a perennial American problem - that of the Negro. From this seemingly narrowed vision the issue is stripped of its external trappings and what remains is the core - the ultimate humanism in question. The uncanny perception of Jem and Scout jolts the reader from his smug complacency and makes him aware of the basic human values at stake - values that make man a civilized animal. "So it took an eight-year-old child to bring them to their senses, didn't?" said Atticus. "That proves something - that a gang of wild animals can be stopped, simply because they're still human."

But 'To Kill A Mocking Bird' is more than just a social document on the Negro problem. It's the courageous struggle of a gentleman widower to endow his children, with an awareness of basic human values. It's the story of Atticus Finch, a man of honour and self-respect, pitted against the violent racial prejudice of the conservative Maycomb County. And more appealingly it's the story of Jem and Scout's journey through a painful adolescence. Their unconscious cruelty to Boo Radley, the adventures with Dill and the drama of Tom Robinson's case are their faltering steps towards the reality of adult awareness. What began as a simple human drama becomes an absorbing tale of two intensely human kids, wanting, waiting. seeking.

Atticus Finch a white lawyer in a conservative American town has to take up the challenge of defending a Negro, Tom Robinson accused of having raped the white girl Mayella Ewell. The case evokes a violent response in the community. Atticus loses his case but retains his honour and self-respect and helps his children emerge unscathed from the overwhelming scandal. The novel also probes the impact of the case on the hard-headed Maycomb community and on Finch's mysterious neighbour Boo Radley.

The two sensitive intelligent and totally unselfconscious kids, Jem and Scout are pulled up against the grim realities of the adult world. Jem's advantage of a few years makes him the more vulnerable. A brooding, introspective boy, he is an agonisingly easy target for the town's cruel lashings and heartless sniggerings. Poised on the threshold of adolescence he is an endearing mixture of raging emotions and childlike simplicity. He can ruthlessly destroy Mrs. Dubose's camellias and still look upon the first hairs on his chest with naive pride. Innocence and awareness make him question - " If there's just one kind of folks, why can't they get along with each other? If they're all alike, why do they go out of their way to despise each other ?"[2]

More matter-of-fact, less volatile but with an equally sensitive perception Scout is a perfect foil to Jem. From the shelter of her loving secure family she can look upon the world with a less jaundiced eye. A girl who could " take being called a coward "[3] for her beloved Atticus and her fiercely protective instincts can make her challenge even Aunt Alexandra. She can appreciate the sincerity of a Negro church service and quietly put the painfully shy Boo Radley at ease. With a sensitive imagination she can go to the heart of the matter. Atticus' desire to protect Boo Radley's shy withdrawal evokes Scout's response, "It'd be sort of like shooting a mocking bird, would'nt it ?"[4]

Jem jubilianrly declares " Atticus is a gentleman, just like me." [5] A kind, shrewd old gentleman, Atticus Finch holds our interest with the compelling force of his personality. His words reveal the depth and sincerity that makes him the fine figure he is. " Before Jem looks at anyone else he looks at me, and I've tried to live so I can look squarely back at him "[6] He accepts the challenge of Tom Robinson's case with a simple humility. His argument of the case underlines the intense humanism of the man - a masterpiece of logical, lucid expression of the true values of humanity.

Other captivating figures in this human drama are the mischievous Dill, the irrepressible but dignified Maudie Atkinson and Atticus' coloured housekeeper, the devoted Cal. To the more seamy, contemptible side belong Bob Ewell, the confused neurotic Mayella Ewell, the malicious gossip Miss Stephanie Crawford. Keeping the balance between the two sides are the family conscious Aunt Alexandra, the conscientious Sheriff Mr. Tate and the eccentric old Mrs. Dubose — a galaxy of characters each with their individual eccentricities. Miss Lee takes us on an eye-opening journey through this typical Southern town with its share of resigned Blacks, discreet genteel whites and sickening low-grade-Bob Ewell-white men.

Humour, :pathos, and bitter realism are subtly interwoven into the realistic narration. Tom Robinson's case and its dramatic overtones blend with the tale even while retaining a special significance. After the tense surcharged atmosphere of the courtroom, Boo Radley's appearance comes as a quiet climax. But the very fact of his appearance seems to restore the author's faith in yumanity.

'To Kill A Mocking Bird' is a restatement of human values. Maycomb county

seen through the children's eyes emerges as a town with deep racial prejudice and petty snobberies but a town which has its share of mocking birds. The irrepressible, bubbling vitality of Jem and Scout makes the novel what it is - a tribute to the human spirit.

"There are nettles every where
But smooth green grasses are more
common still,
The blue of heaven is larger than
a cloud."

—Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Notes :

1. Harper Lee, To Kill a Mocking Bird.

(Grt. Britain : Penguin Books - in Association with William Heinemann Ltd., 1963). P 161

2. ibid, p 231
3. Ibid, p 82
4. ibid, p 280
5. ibid, p 104
6. ibid, p 277

VINODHA R.
I M.A.

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"Flush" — A Consideration

"Everything is the proper stuff of fiction."[1] Virginia Woolf proves this with the publication of "Flush" the delightful and immediately successful reconstruction of the life of Flush, Elizabeth Barret Browning's spaniel. Flush, a lively sensitive spaniel enters the pages with a bound and trots steadily, soul searchingly, to the end.

Virgina Woolf explores not only the mind of Flush but also makes a mark in her use of images and symbols. She writes about Flush conquering his jealousy — " He swore to love Mr. Browning." He was instantly rewarded spiritually. Like an iron bar corroding and festering and killing all natural life beneath it, hatred had laid all these months across his soul. Now by the cutting of sharp knife and painful surgery, the iron had been excised. Now the blood ran once more, the nerves shot and tingled; flesh formed; Nature rejoiced."[2]

Humour - Characteristically Virginia Woolf-with its moments of mock seriousness and pretended gravity is delightful:

"Providence has ordained there shall be dogs, there is nothing in this that calls for questions or comment. The third school maintains that spaniards call their pets spaniel i.e. crooked or cragged out of excessive love. That is too fanciful a conjecture to be seriously entertained",[3] the sotto

voice is heard in sheer absurdities — "The Herald's college is the nearest approach we have to the spaniel club";[4] and with it the masterly strokes of subtle tones - the tone of awed reverence: "While Corinth has fallen and Messina has tumbled while crowns have blown down the wind and old empires have gone up in flames, Wimpole street has remained unmoved "[5]
The Novel moves from a mere narrative to a refreshing romance.

Simplicity of style and an unpretentious way of expression is evident. The first moment of meeting between Elizabeth Barret Browning and Flush, a dog who was to have inspired her to poetry, is simple, naive and touching. It goes— "Oh Flush, said Miss Barret for the first time. Flush looked at the lady lying on the sofa.........then with one bound Flush sprung on to the sofa and laid himself where he was to lie for ever after-on the rug at Miss Barret's feet."[6] Virginia Woolf divulges the important facts with a simplicity that is effective. Again the phenomenal insight into the canine world, the studied scrupulous build-up of the relationship between the two principal characters: "Between them Flush felt more and more strongly was a bond, an uncomfortable yet thrilling tightness."[7] Flush's mind is thoroughly entered into without self-conscious reservations.

Virginia Woolf " most clearly knew that what she wanted to do was to record what life felt like to living beings "[8] This she more than succeeds in, in "Flush ". Her awareness which also sees the pivoting point amidst the riot of events, with a right perspective and balance-these are Virginia Woolf's strong points. We have " Flushie " stolen by the wicked Mr. Taylor, Miss Barett's pursuit of her dog exposing her to Manning Street— "A world where cows are herded under bedroom floors, where whole families sleep in rooms with broken windows". Virginia Woolf's graphic description of the "world that Miss Barret had never seen, had never guessed at"[9] is alive and teeming with details, but the biographer's peculiar ability "to see in the turmoil of events, the point of rest, the still centre which gives meaning and brings understanding"[10] is beautifully evident. Thus all the time that we, along with Miss Barett are avidly drinking in our first impressions of the seamy side of London, we are intensely conscious of Flush's plight, in the secret places of our heart—"Wilson was of opinion that "we had escaped with our lives barely". Her mind teemed with thoughts, her eyes were full of picutres. This, then, was what lay on the other side of WimpoleStreet—these faces, these houses, where Flush lay panting in his dark corner of the teeming floor"[11]

She has the extraordinary ability to move on two planes, always keeping both balanced, conveying the surface movement and the movement of things beneath it - the free movement of emotion, thought and insight; so difficult when the subject is a dog ! For instance we have Flush's soul-searching moments of acute agony seething beneath his wooly face; his reaching, after a painful long dog - thought the conclusion that "Hatred is not hatred, hatred is also love". But all this little known and only vaguely guessed at by the unobservant human world is little appreciated. This is also an instance revealing Virginia Woolf's understanding of human insufficiency. Mr. Barret's obtuseness about the visits of the yellow gloved man is another good illustration of this fact. With all this objectivity there is a subtle thread of sympathy which draws the reader towards this quaint dog and his intense mistress who writes—"Flushie is my friend, my companion and loves me better than he loves the sunshine without". The novelist however is on the alert never to cloy the reader witn an excess of sentiment and hence immediately follows that characteristic twist:

"and yet there were vast gaps in their understanding."

The novel glimpses a poignancy which moves with an exquisite smoothness to a fairy-tale-world. "Miss Barret was lying, thinking, and her thoughts were so sad that tears fell upon the pillow. Then suddenly a hairy head was pressed against her, large bright eyes shone in hers and she started. Was it Flush or was it Pan? Was she no longer an invalid in Wimpole Street but a Greek nymph in some divine grove in Arcady and did the bearded God Himself press his lips to hers?"; and then the typical "But suppose Flush had been able to speak would he not have said something sensible about the potato disease in Ireland?"[12]

Virginia Woolf has an uncanny knack of leading us unawares to find ourselves suddenly and completely inhabiting the canine world. Flushie's world of sound, light or smell are all unerringly projected. For Flush when someone entered the room, "How strongly the furniture changed its look! What extraordinary eddies of sound and smell were at once set in circulation! How they washed round the legs of tables and impiged on the sharp edges of the wardrobe!"[13]

To express exactly and immediately the impact of life upon the personality is the one thing which Virginia Woolf aims at. And "Flush" is no exception to this. At the birth of Master Browning, Flushie was profoundly and adversely affected. The baby to him was" a live animal". The horrid thing waved and mewed by his beloved mistress side. Flush was "Torn with rage and jealousy and some deep disgust he could not hide. For a whole fortnight he fell into a deep melancholy". Thus for Flushie "unpleasant" incidents take their toll on his happiness and leave a permanent mark on his mind. The author's genius lies in the fact that she makes these shadowy dog-reservations in Flushies mind so tangible to ours that even a newborn child associated with all that is good in life—"Pity like a naked new born babe"[14]—can be revolting. Only then do we realize how deeply we have entered Flush's personality.

" Flush is interesting because it is a work of self revelation"[15] Flush was one of the routes which Virginia Woolf used, or at least examined in order to escape from her own human corporeal existence. Certain autobiographical elements are quite in evidence in the work. Elizabeth Barret Browning's deep sensitivity to Flush, an almost human kinship of spirit, one feels, definitely reflects Virginia Woolf's own awareness of a dog's rapport with his master. And a need to probe into this kinship of spirits is more than a mere clause for the writing of this novel. Again the biographer's innate sensitivity binds the reader's thoughts, emotions and feelings irrevocably to the delightful pages.

Virginia Woolf shows the world of modern fiction the need " to annihilate the clear line between narrator and character; creating mind and created scene. She works so as to take the frame from the picture and leave it painted not clear-edged to fade on the hard grain of canvas, but shimmering for ever vivid in the infinitely receding depth of air"[16]

"She was growing old now and so was Flush. She bent down over him for a moment. Her face with its wide mouth and its great eyes and its heavy curls was still oddly like his. Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould, each perhaps, completed what was dormant in the other. An extraordianary change had come over him. "Flush! she cried. But he was silent. He had been alive; he was now dead. That was all. The drawing-room table, [17] strangely enough stood perfectly still "[18]

Notes :

1. Virginia Woolf, 'Flush' (Great Britain: Nicholls & Co., Ltd., 1977), back cover.

2. Virginia Woolf, :'Flush"
3. Ibid, p. 8
4. Ibid, p. 9
5. Ibid, p. 15
6. Ibid, p. 20
7. Ibid, p. 26
8. Joan Bennet, "VIRGINIA WOOLF - HER ART AS A NOVELIST."
9. Virginia Woolf "Flush", p. 61
10. Bernard Black Stone "Virginia Woolf"
11. Virginia Woolf, "Flush", p. 62
12. Ibid, p. 28
13. Ibid, p. 29
14. William Shakespeare, MACBETH, 1.7
15. Quentin Bell, "Virginia Woolf, A Biography"
16. B. R. Mullik, "Studies in Lditerature-Virginia Woolf"
17. The drawing room table was originally a spinning table, used in a seance.
18. Virginia Woolf, "Flush", p. 102

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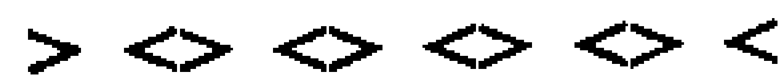

The World Of Jane Austen

Jane Austen's field is a narrow and limited one which she cultivates with perfect ease - as a result of which her novels are characterised by an exquisite perfection. Her delineation of the life of the smallar English gentry, enslaved by convention and unaffected by what happens in the outside world is among the best in English fiction. It is characteristic of her art that she always makes her characters conform to the rigid code of behaviour fixed by their society, however unreasonable it may seem to our modern standards. Though she deliberately ignores the major historical events of her time, the reality of the world she portrays is by no means lessened by it. Jane Austen is always concerned with composing a straight forward love story inspired by generous affection for individual human beings and passionate hatred of all meanness and hypocrisy. Scott observes, " keeping close to common incidents, and to such characters as occupy the ordinary walks of life she has produced sketches of such spirit and orginality that we never miss the excitation which depends upon a narrative of uncommon events; arising from the consideration of minds, manners and sentiments, greatly above our own."

Jane Austen's novels see recurrent themes which are given individual treatment in the particular novels. The business of getting people engaged and married is a major preoccupation with Jane Austen. In fact her

interest in young people and in their lives and courtship is never exhausted. There is about her protrayal of love and lovers a kind of charming reticence. The lovers walk off the pages into a sort of cloud where it would be indecent on our part to follow. The love and marriage of the main pair is made the theme of the story, and the story of the other lovers serves to complete the interest of character and plot.

Jane Austen's deep convictions about love, courtship and marriage are depicted in her novels with great success. She believed that a young woman should marry for love, certainly, but in satisfactory conditions. None of her heroines marry entirely for love, but their inclinations are tempered with prudence and controlled by common sense. In "Persuasion" Anne Elliot falls deeply in love with Captain Wentworth, but with the interfering snob lady Russell persuading her that it would be imprudent to marry a poor naval officer who might be killed in the war, she breaks off her engagement. In fact a mercenary view of marriage is proclaimed by many of her characters. In "Pride and Prejudice" Charlotte Lucas accepts the notorious Collins for purely practical considerations although Elizabeth Bennet is sceptical about this. The only way a woman could live in comfort and security was by marrying a man who could provide a home for her. Emma hints at these usual inducements for women to marry, when she asserts there in no need for her to marry because she is rich, contented and comfortable enough. Lord David Cecil precisely comprehends Jane Austen's views on love and marriage—'It was wrong to marry merely for money, but it was silly to marry without it"

The other recurrent theme is the shattering of illusion and the painful discovery of truth. "Emma" centres around the faults of the heroine who is always wrong in her conclusion about people. In the course of the novel through the frustrations of her self-confident efforts to play God, she learns to know herself and other people better. The novel is considered a drawing-room comedy of self-deception. The gradual disclosure of the heroine's illusions is as amusing as it is instructive. In "Pride and Prejudice" the hero and heroine are labouring under delusions. Their delusions are the result of excessive pride on the one hand and undue prejudice on the other. Their eyes are gradually opened to each other's worth by the turn of events.

Self-restraint and self-recognition are two virtues which Jane Austen extols in her novels. In "Pride and Prejudice" the virtue of self-restraint is taught by the ridicule to which the heady and reckless conduct of Lydia Bennet is subjected to. In contrast, there is the intelligent, self-controlled Elizabeth who is always mistress of her own self, never losing her balance. In "Emma" the heroine is awakened to self-recognition and the realization that she has always been in love with Mr. Knightely. In "Persuasion" Anne Elliot is a model of self-restraint, who while realising the claims of her warm human heart, is nevertheless detetmined to place duty and prudence above the aspiration of her youthful love.

Jane Austen has given us a multitude of characters, all in a certain sense commonplace, all such as we meet everyday. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings. The heroines of her novels are all eminently attractive young women who are carefully distinguished from one another. There is much that is pleasing and lovable in each one of them, but there the comparison ends. Each has a vitality, brilliance and individuality of her own. On the one hand there is Catherine Morland—"Her heart was affectionate, her disposition cheerful and open, without conceit or affection of any kind, her person pleasing and when in good looks, pretty, and her mind

about as ignorant and uninformed as the female mind at seventeen usually is. Youth, beauty and natural credulousness make her a very lovable heroine. On the other hand is Elizabeth Bennet, the cleverest, wittiest, and liveliest of the Austen heroines. She is an attractive, intelligent, high spirited and self-respecting girl. We have Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse the sort of women who can take care of themselves. We have Fanny Price and Anne Elliot, the sort of helpless women who become the victims of men and fortune. Her eligible young bachelors are also equally well individualised. The proud Darcy with his aristocratic contempt for country girls has nothing in common with Knightely, the kindly, sensible squire, with his more democratic sympathies and courteous behaviour. Among the subsidiary characters we find that her fools, flirts, bores, and snobs are well distinguished from one another: Mrs. Bennet, unbelievably silly, Miss Bates a garrulous woman, herself not witty, but the cause of wit in other, Mrs. Elton, an insolent and snobbish lady, more despicable and comic than odious.

Jane Austen portrays men and women as they are in their private lives, which reveals their true nature and temperament better than their behaviour in public. She reveals her characters to us not in moments of crisis, but in the trivial incidents of everyday life. Jane Austen's young gentlemen presented in a woman's world and seen through a woman's eye, men like Darcy, Knightely and Edmund Bertram invariably have good incomes and are either seeking or ought to be seeking wives. The pretty young women not always well provided for, have to be married off and match making mothers and aunts are busy about it while the girls themselves are quite ready to be led to the altar. The men, including the clergy, have no occupation except dining out, attending balls, participating in private theatricals, talking about their horses, going up to London and travelling from one estate to another. The young ladies occupy themselves with reading romances, collecting and transcribing charades, thumbing their harps, playing whist, knitting, stitching, riding, picking strawberries, and visiting the estates of their future husbands. With her faculty for discernment Jane Austen knew how a picnic or a party could reveal jealousy, selfishness, kindness, arrogance, vanity and sincerity. Every little incident and a description is carefully introduced to throw new light upon characters. The conversation at breakfast, the morning walk, the village balls and parties, are all meant to make us better acquainted with the characters. For example at the Cole's party, Emma feels sudden pangs of jealousy as she thinks Mr. Knightely is attracted towards Jane Fairfax, and also because she cannot sing as well as Jane. Mr. Elton refuses to dance with Harriet. This incident throws light on his kind and gentle nature. Jane Austen could visualise the outward idiosyncracies of her characters and project their nature through their manners and ways of speech. She makes the unhappiness of the unselfish and high minded Fanny Price in her home in Portsmouth speak badly for Fanny.

A stern realist, she attributes to the best men and women their share of human failings, weaknesses and vices. Thus she abstains from portraying them as models of unalloyed virtue. Through a most delicate use of irony, a keen wit and lively humour, the novelist provides capital entertainment by representing the finer shades of folly among her nicely distinguished characters. In "Emma" Frank Churchill requests the party to entertain Emma by either saying a witty thing or three dull things. Emma with mock seriousness tells Mrs. Bates to limit herself to three dull things. For this Emma comes under reproach from Mr. Knightely. Interestingly Jane Austen's warm human sympathy is extended to the objects of her ridicule and disapproval.

Characters of folly or simplicity like that of Mr. Woodhouse and Mr. Bates are presented in such a way, that while we laugh at them, we also bear with them.

The comprehensive and searching view of human nature in Jane Austen's portraits of men and women give her characters an abiding charm. Her characters are types of humanity that we come across from age to age. They may put on different clothes and assume different manners but their essential human traits do not change. The secret of Jane Austen's characterisation lies in her ability to perceive clearly and represent truthfully this essential human nature in its varying aspects.

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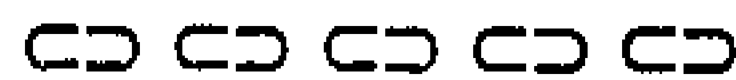

Ted Hughes - Into The Animal World

Ted Hughes,' poems catapult into the animal world, where he stands in awe, hypnotised and possessed by the atom-smasher energy compressed in the animal casts, mesmerized by the pearl sheen of the distilled animal essence, gripped by the muscular strength of the poetry.

Each of the animals is trapped by the slow careful pussyfoot movement of the highly sensitised imagination. This process of how a poem is written and an animal captured is illustrated in "The Thought Fox," The timorous movement of life is detected by the poet between "The clock's loneliness" and the blankness of the page - a body that is bold to come slips out - the delicate tentative tread of the fox has begun—

Two eyes serve a movement, that now
And again now, and now, and now
Sets neat prints into the snow,
....
Till with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox
It enters the dark hole of head
....
The page is printed."

It is accurate observation of the animals, perfect forging of the physical forms, the computer precise training of their movements, tastes, habits and the conjuration of their adapted surroundings that enables Hughes to feel the soul of his animals breathing under his fingers.

Hughes can lay the trap in the bold drawing of the physical make of the otter, with the accurateness of a zoological diagram —the otter has

"Under water eyes and eel's
Oil of water body, neither fish nor beast is the otter
....
With webbed feet and long ruddering tail
and a round head like an old tom cat
(An Otter)

All done in black and white, the delicate spirit is shaded in — as it

"Does not take root......wanders cries......
To the old shade of the starlit land"
The unrhymed five line stanzas "Wallop on" or "melt" with the perfect understanding of the movement of (outfish fish," "wanders" "cries" gallops", "Cleaves the streams push till he licks the pebbles of the source.")
A sudden blanket rub of the finger - tips on "the old rough mat" and "a bundle of old rope" coat of the tom cat and it is springing up - mad glitter green eyes, yawning, wide red - ' Fangs fine" as "A lady's needle" - (Esther's tomcat.)
The almost audible beat of vitality in the veins - taut, as it "leaps and likely walks over sleep" or when the reader hangs on the edge of the high half door, "blinded by the blaze of darkness: a sudden shut eyed look/Backward into head" then "the warm weight of his breathing, the ammonial reek of his litter, the hotly tongued mash of his cud, stings the senses circulating once more, the focus widens - appear "the brow like masonry, the deep keeled neck" - the Bull Moses

After the statistical opening of
"Pike" three inches long, perfect
Pike in all parts" (Pike)
comes the knock out of "Green tigering the gold"—the rhythm of the verse mimicking the colours of the swirling stripes rippling against each other. Just one excited glimpse and the aquarium guide continues his informative talk, pointing out "the killers from the eggs: the malevolent aged grin" — giving a vicious twist to the duck snout of the fish.

The presentation of the hawk is done with the perpendicular directness so charecteristic of him. He does not have to pass any high test of aeronautics — ride the high velocity of the winds or flick like fire into wild tremblings. He does not even need a poetic voice to speak for him. But although the hawk sits roosting with his eyes closed the unexpected first person narrative plugs the reader in the live wire circuit, the blood whirring to a churn. With the same black out finality of the last line, the hurtling release drops him feeling the tiny earthquakes race trembling through his tissues.

The concrete reservoir of strength is vigorously dug in—
"It took the whole of creation to produce my foot" the fine eyelash spun of each feather and "now I hold creation in my foot
of fly up and revolve it all slowly". (Hawk Roosting)
The effortless globular movement set by the vowel sounds carried on the "light" "l" sounds in the words "resolve" "all" "slowly". Instead of being bursted into a churn of feathers itself it glides down on "The airs buoyancy and the sun's ray".

The effect created by the poems is not that of a high pitched ventriloquism or that of the poet on his knees giving mouth to mouth respiration to his fading animals. But all o Ted Hughes' animals stand out individuals — "Perfect in all parts," a stepping out of the loom of loneliness, despair, meaninglessness, the slow bite of disease, decay and death itself. For when this "hallucination in the streaming air " the hawk in the rain is spun down to pulp when the " ponderous shires crash on him, the horizon traps him, "his" heart blood mixed with the mire of the land" he believes it is the inevitable result of loosening his will, a cramping of the hot vitality.

These animals do not remain mere individuals but with this high accelerated energy gear up to stand representatives of their whole species. As the Hawk declares "Nothing has changed since I began / My eyes have permitted no change" and with the finality of last thump on the keys — "I am going to keep things like this."

Speeding up still they are the symbols beaten out of the dynamism in Nature into forms or with the elevator lurch into the deep seated depths drag out the entrails of the past long since dumped in and done with.

The Otter clearing out of "the streams push" brings "the legend of himself/From before wars and burials". The tomcat is "locked" around the night's neck "like a trap of hooks" but that was 'hundreds of years ago'. The pond with its "stilled legendary depths: as deep as England" throws up "pike too immense to stir". Possessed by the "blaze of darkness" as blackness is depth beyond star in "The Bull Moses" Hughes is seen rummaging through the strata of this excavation site. The boy hangs from "the square of the sky" shouting and waving to the bull but it was nothing to him; spreads his feelers out and then gasps in realisation "nothing of her light found any reflections in him in the locked black of his powers". The fascination lies in the richness of these dark powers, they can be vaguely felt and finding no opening Hughes manages to gain just enough control to swerve away from a nosedive smash into the unknown.

Almost all of Hughes animals are predators, the tomcat who "grallochs odd dogs on the quiet "or shaves the simple pullet" clean of its head. Pikes that "spare nobody", not even themselves—teasing the water with their harpoon sharp, spikes of polished steel as one jams "past its gills down the others gullet." But the slammed in declaration of the Hawk not only threatens to crack but crush the egg-headed humanity.
"My manners are tearing of heads
The allotment of death" — "a life subdued to its instrument". But this gun powder energy is not allowed a volcanic sprout, checked it streaks smouldering through the primary laws of survival, "the bullet and automatic purpose". It is this acuity of the instincts seen in " the attent sleek thrushes that wait, taut — all energy" coiled steel into the light little spring. "The delicate legs Triggered to stirrings beyond sense" to drag out some "writhing thing", overtaking the instant, the meteor shot swiftness.

This efficiency which strikes too stream-lined for any doubt to pluck at is seen in "the sharks mouth That hungers down the blood smell even to a leak of its own side/And devouring of itself". (Thrushes)

In this world where animals are more sensitive, vitally alive and more controlled than human beings man rocks in the opposite side of the see-saw plank. He is a snuffed out dull old colour evaporated photograph with his "yawning stares" and "headscrat-chings", " the indolent procrastinations". He is reduced to the scare-crow hulk hung by his shirt collars to warn the animals as he is a senseless murderer, who hounds land and water not for the natural "sagbully satisfaction" but to lean against "the long pelt over the back of a chair".

This bull dozing energy that threatens to dent the very sphericality of the world into a thin flying disc is drawn out of the dilating and cringing movement of the stanzaic patterns, the fluidity and the sudden dried end drops of the sentences, the pulsating verbal imagery, wrenched syntax, savage consonants and the pounding monosyllables.

The perfect images surf out of the lines uncurling the tiny fist of each word nudging out meaning, suggestion and the life itself. Against the emerald green lights of the sea-bed are seen the pikes, "Silhouettes Of submarine delicacy and horror". "The terror submarine and the pikes all magnify into a projection of hundred feet long in their world". And the reader follows their move-ment, the cautious sly sinister slicing through the layers of water, tense any moment expecting a torpedo tear to burn through his body.

Each animal is brought to life by similes and metaphors drawn out of his own particular world. The tomcats coat is seen as an "old rough mat" a "bundle of old rope and iron", his eyes "green as ring stones" and fangs "fine as lady's needle and bright". Thus the similes not only perform their illustrative function but suggestively place the tomcat in the domestic world to which he belongs.

In this animal world where all senses of the animals and the trespassing reader are tingling with life "triggered to stirrings" beyond sense the impossible is made possible by the oxymorons—to "overtake the instant", hear the "silent splashes" on the dark pond or feel some "beheld future" founding in the quiet of the Bull Moses.

Touched by this leaping blood vitality pressed on by the gale force of the poetry often a reader fails to sense the rise of an unnatural screeth of high drama, the twisted exagerrations the hyperbole as the poet fishes in the darkness of the night with his "hair frozen on his head" or drags across ploughed field in a rain storm pulling up "heel after heel from the swallowing of the earth's mouth," from the clay that "clutches" his "each step with the habit of a dogged grave".

The repetition of beaten out verbs tears out as the natural outcry of these "wounded gods".

Sometimes Hughes loosens the strings letting the words hung on the lines drop to prose. As in The Bull Moses the finality of the boys resignation, his total defeat in trying to ripple the stagnant black deaths of the bull is spit out in simple prose.

"I kept the door wide
closed it after him and bolted the door".

The lines in this poem sprawl over the page and leap down as the poet dives again and again to heave out, to see something loose in the bowels of darkness. But in "The View of a Pig" they are laid in short sentences forming geometrical parallels of equal length. The crisp, no nonsense, matter of fact trot of the four lined unrhymed stanzas seems specially constructed to hold the dead pig.

The technique adopted is stating a short factual statement followed by a clear illustration of exactly how dead the pig was.
"They were going to scald it
scald it and scour it like a door step" (The View Of A Pig)
The quick clean hard strokes of a mason's trowel are automatised by the mimetic rhythm of the verse. It is this beat in the poetry that regulates the movement of the animals—"A start" "abound" a "stab" of the thrushes to overtake an instant is contrasted by the "indolent procrastinations," of the "headstraching" man the slow dull response brought out by checked drag of the three and five syllable words.

Whipped on to the spermatic reproduction of animals the metaphors pant and the rhythm weary of frenzy catches the move of the animals, leaving the reader with the feeling of completeness — the rise to identity with the animal word.

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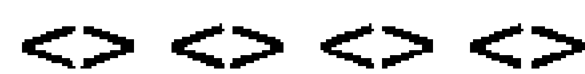

Sylvia Plath - Confession and Control in Ariel

Sylvia Plath's Ariel poems take us to regions of the mind-unfamiliar and dark. They propel us into the Confessional mode, and the seething maelstrom of the schizoid psyche with its thirsting cry 'I want, I want,' sucks the reader in a centrifugal spin into deeps which are 'starless and fatherless, a dark water.' Nevertheless, this searing and terrifying descent does not blind us to the technical virtuosity which compels our attention, controls our responses and manipulates the movement of our mind.

The success of her poems is due to this external order that the Confessional is given by an artists' balancing of the elements involved, a calculated, deliberate spilling over of her major preoccupations. In no instance is her poetry in this volume, confined merely to the interptetation of a purely idiosyncratic psychological state. The range and brilliance with which she, as Alveraz points out "systematically probes that narrow violent area between the viable and the impossible between experience which can be transmuted into poetry and that which is overwhelming" demands of the reader a chameleonic alertness to the eddying patterns of her mind.

A study of two of her most successful poems 'Lady Lazarus' and 'Daddy' reveals this perfect control over the dynamics of a poem. The rapid exploration of her motifs, the use of rhyme and stanza, image and metaphor, the use of voice and tone with precision and brilliance are part of her mastery over her material.

'Lady Lazarus' thrusts the reader into the vortex of death - a suicidal instinct an urge that rushes the speaker to doom "One year in every ten." The speaker says Plath is as woman who has the great and terrible gift of being reborn. The only trouble is she has to die first. She is the phoenix the libertarian spirit, what you will. She is also just a good, plain, very resourceful woman." This woman "a thirty year old cargo boat" (Tulips) opens her monologue with a self-mocking, studied casualness an underplayed simple statement. "I have done it again," The monosyllabic words with the end stopped short line, is an acceptance and recognition of a repeated action, giving the idea that what is present has also been before. In its clipped abrupt sounds and the pause we sense a certain reluctance to speak of it, as if the speaker has only by uttering it come to grips with it. The mechanical, almost automatonous yet slightly defiant, slyly triumphant tone does not indicate that the speaker is a person caught in the coils of a suicidal urge.

Much of the effect of the poem depends on the exploitation of the speaking voice whose changes of voice tone and cadence indicate the rapid revelation of the complex maze of her dominant motif in this her poem - death.

"One year in every ten she seeks annihilation" and "this is number three." The movement gains momentum as she surfaces to consciousness after her latest attempt. A glancing irony reminds us that she is 'Lady Lazarus' a variant of the biblical Lazarus—so she is not exactly a miracle only a sort of "walking miracle." She comments on her "just skin and bone" appearance in metaphors of horror.

> "......my skin
> Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
> My right foot
> A paper weight
> my face is a featureless, fine
> Jew linen"

Yet this description reveals layers of horror in the harsh sounds of " bright " " right ", " nazi ", " foot ", " late ", with the undertone of the holocaust of World War Two, of the grissly souvenirs of German cruelty at " Dachan, Auschwitez, Belsen. It fixes her private nightmare within this violence and savagery, the destruction and decay of western civilization in the Twentieth Century. This fusion of the private and culturally symbolic marks a " Genuinely confessional poem" (Rosenthal) and is more evident in " Daddy ".

The speaking voice hitherto mockingly, ironically restrained explodes harshly in the fourth stanza with the dramatic gesture

"Peel of the napkin
O my enemy."

And the poem's structure begins to emerge. From a mere visual presentation of external appearance it moves to an exposure of the inner state behind the grim, emaciated skeletal death - mask. Her appearance produces an instinctive withdrawal, a revulsion which does not pass unnoticed. Her " Do I terrify?" is a harsh derisive laugh implying the insensitivity of the onlooker to her actual condition, a pointer that they will come merely to gape without understanding? Her assurance

"Soon soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me"

is disquieting by its very restrained, its weary repetitive tone sugessting that she has been through this process, this business of dying resurrection. This is emphasized by the compulsive urge to suicide exhibited in the next stanza.

I am only thirty

And like the cat I have nine times to die.

Her changes of mood, the recollection, of the past, the present situation, her motives are all perfectly caught by the tonal changes, the sound texture, the ebb and flow of her voice. The slow release after the opening spirals into motion that becomes more powerful as the poem proceeds. Her frustrations, inadequacies, and barrenness in life are possible motifs beside the urge to die. She has "Trash to annihilate each decade," a " Million filaments " to burn away, to destroy with herself. Her Death would also symbolically spell death to all she hates - the world and men, society which is incapab able of comprehending the dark impulses of the speaker. There needs to be a renewal every decade. But now " The peanut crunching crowd / Shoves to see / Them unwrap me hand and foot/The big striptease. Her reactions to this public viewing of her private calamity is savagely derisive. The contempt and scorn is trapped in the alliteration of " crunching crowd ", rythmically crushing peanuts and watching the fun of her survival as they would an exhibit. She is a doctor's exhibit No. I, the victim of insensitivity. The speaker here mimicks the doctor presentation of a case history, takes on the tone of a master of ceremonies and the refinement of the voice is taunting, bitterly mocking this " Big striptease " of emotional and psychological trauma. She supplies information, data on her previous attempts for the benefit and amusement of the crowd.

"The first time it happened I was ten
It was an accident."

But attempt No. 2, was not and the pathos of her desire is evoked by the brilliant metaphor of withdrawal.

"A rocked shut
As a sea shell.
They had to call and call
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls."

The image captures the deliberate withdrawal, the closed shut in tightness of spirit of the suicide, the isolation and the passionate yearning for oblivion.

" Dying is an art " and she does it
" Exceptionally well ".
"I do it so it feels like hell
I do it so it feels real
I guess you could say I've a call."

This and the next stanza shows how Plath uses rhyme and sound stanza to precisely convey the impression of her mastery over the art of dying. The hammering repetition of " I do it ", feels " mounts to nerve racking response the rhyme of 'hell' and ' well ' ' call ' and ' cell ' and the casual tones of " I guess you could say " points not only to the instinct towards death but also the complete horror of its reality. She has a call and the mission is destruction of self.

Dying is easy yes, but
" It's the theatrical
Come back in broad day "

to the cries of " A miracle !" that prove unpleasant. The monologue addressed to " Herr Doktor ", " Her enemy " by his valuable opus, his " Pure gold baby," exhibit No. I melts to a shriek as she phoenix like turns and burns. The poet resumes the tone of master of ceremonies in the sauve malicious mock - grateful " do not think I underestimate your great concern ". Her immolation is completed, accomplished to the ritual ceremonial chant indicating the wider destruction that is symbolised by this self destruction - the destruction of the whole matrix of society which she hates. She promises a resurrection that is a threat for she will rise in demonic fury and revenge herself on man.

"Herr God, Herr Lucifer
Beware
Beware
Out of the ash
I rise with my red-hair
And I eat men like air."

Of ' Daddy ' Plath says " Here is a poem spoken by a girl with an Electra complex. Her father died while she thought he was God. Her case is complicated by the fact that her father was also a Nazi and her mother very possibly part Jewish. In the daughter the two strains marry and paralyze each other - she has to act out the awful little allegory once over before she is free of it."

This poem confess her own love-hates complex for Otto Plath her father. At the same time it enacts in a twentieth century war-torn race-prejudiced context what was first highlighted by Sophocles and Euripedes— the obsessive love of a daughter for her father. She has to act out the awful little allegory, exercise this stifling overwhelming love. The poems ' progression from awareness and realization to the ultimate achievement of this exorcism is beautifully traced by the sound patterns, triumphantly affirming once more that Plath's Confessions in Ariel are controlled by an artist. In this poem more than others in the volume she shows that her poems " were intended for the ear not the eye ; they were poems written out loud."

The poem takes off on an insistent, repetitive incantatory nursery rhyme line a passionate realization that the father has to be done with, for he has proved insufficient. This is reinforced by the short syllables of this line, the hammering repetition.

"You do not do, you do not do"

mocking by its sound the marriage service ' I do I do ' which occurs later in the poem. The explosive abruptness of the plosive consonants and the short vowel sounds makes the realization concrete and final. The immensity of her bondage dawns after this realisation. For thirty years she has endured captivity like "a foot in a shoe, not daring to breathe or Achoo." The black shoe becomes the symbol of tyrannical love, against which the speaker rebels. The captivity is a fearful one for she hardly

rebels. The captivity is fearful one for she hardly dared to breathe or sneeze, the horror hidden in the deliberate light tone, the comic-ridiculous of the nonsense rhyme 'Achoo'. But the very image a snug fit of the foot in the shoe implies the acqueiscing nature of the speaker. The reader is also subtly led to dwell on the "poor and white" nature of the relationship. The speaker caught in the shoe is not open to other vital experiences that would have enriched her emotionally. This will be echoed later when she finds herself unable to relate to her husband.

The bondage has been total and the expulsion, the escape from the black sheep is a difficult one. The anguish of this gesture is expressed in the half-plea, half-explanation of the cry - a cry for understanding of her motives,

'Daddy I have to had to kill you.'

The Colossus in her emotional life, the God whom she worshipped, disillusioned her, proved traitorous by dying- "You died before I had time". The harshness of her contempt the accusatory bitterness at the treachery, and the repulsion, is caught in

"Marble heavy a bag full of God,
Ghastly statue with one great toe
As it contrasts with the Atlantic
Where it pours being green over blue
In the waters off beautiful Nauset."

The sounds escape with a contemptous hiss and the reduction to 'bag full of God' the visual impact of the grotesque "Great toe" express the intensity of her emotion.
There is revulsion but the love is strong, the mesmeric tug of the father

"I used to pray to recover you,"

But neither through the language nor through a historical search for his roots could she unite with her father.

The Polish town of his origin has been scraped flat by "the roller of wars, wars, wars". Not one but many wars and the destruction of the town is total earth-levelled, the II World War with the levelling of whole nations, the despairing cry of generations of wars and conflict, underline the heavy repetition of "wars". The tongue stuck in her jaw, "It stuck in a barb wire snare", so she could hardly speak in the father tongue. The barbwire snare with its implication of restraint of concentration camp limits indicates that she came up not only against the difficulty of the language but the harshness of the Germans itself. The language and its meaninglessness is deliberately mocked at in the obsessive repetition "Ich, ich, ich, ich."

Her yearning unfulfilled finds a means in a deliberate hatred of all men, an identification of an entire race by one she knew - "I thought every German was you". The Jewish strain rebels against the German in the mockery of

"And the language obscene
An engine an engine
Chuffing me off like a Jew
A Jew to Dachan, Auschwitz, Belsen."

Plath here succeeds in synthesizing her private experience with a larger universal experience - she achieves this by identifying herself with a Jew - 'like a Jew' which finally in the next stanza becomes an emphatic "I may be a bit of a Jew." The language which was earlier equated to harshness is now projected as an engine which carries Jews to the concentration camps. The sound of the death trains puffing their way, the close relation of chuffing with "snuffing" brings the horror of the camps ringed by the barbwire snare closer to the reader "I have always been scared of you" she says. The "Luftwaffe" and "The Gobbledygoo" symbols of brutal insensitivity are mentioned. The parody of rhyme, the nursery rhyme "Gobbledygoo" the fairy tale element contained in the word, parodies the father's fussy fastidiousness-the neat moustache, the Aryan eye. The taunting repetition

"Panzer-man, panzer—man O you
Not God but a swastika
So black no sky could squeak through"

enforces by its very jaunties the overwhelming hardness of the Nazi. Yet the brutality is itself an attraction for

Every woman adores a Fascist
The boot in the face the brute
Brute heart of a brute like you

The alliteration assonance and consonance the repetition of 'brute' the impression of the kick in the face from the 'black shoe, of the first stanza strongly evokes harshness and cruelty, and points to that part of men that responds with fascinated adoration to brutality. Black is a dominant word—the black shoe, the black swastika, the blackboard, the black man, the man in black, the black heart, the black telephone. The sound the echoes of these words remained to give the impression of harshness of brutality and cruelty.

The yearning for her father, her intense love constantly conflicts with hate. From mockery to pathos, contempt to longing, the tone alternates underlining the complex nature of her attitude to her father. The five stanzes which emphasised the tyranny and brutality of the father dims to the pathos of

"You stand at the blackboard, Daddy
In the picture I have of you."

The picture a literal and a recollection, reminds her that he is no less a devil who has Dracula fashion, "Bit my pretty red heart in two".

She was ten when he died and the yearning for union was so powerful that she thought "even the bones would do so and so."

"At twenty I tried to die
And get back, back, back, to you."

But this attempt to recede to the blackness, the far depths of death was frustrated. They rescued her and stuck her together with "glue". The consequence was, she married a substitute father a "model" of him who had similar traits the "Meinkampf" look and a "Love of the rack and screw" The parody of the marriage service is brilliantly suggestive of this mock-marriage.

"And I said I do I do."

But it does not suffice and results in hatred for the husband "the vampire" who had to be eliminated along with the father for he was her father's likeness. She has finally arrived at the point where the poem began "You do not do" in her emphatic statement that statement that she's finally through. The connection has been severed, the "black telephones off at the root" and she's beyond the reach of those voices. In ridding herself of the father, she also purges herself of that part of her which responds to such tyrannical love hence her husband too is eliminated.

"If I've killed one man, I've killed two,"
The ritual communal purging of the
speaker is savagely relished :
"There's a stake in your fat black heart
And the villagers never liked you
They are dancing and stamping on you."

The "fat black heart" with the revolting impression of swollen with blood, the stake which in superstitions connected with the defeat of vampires and Dracula, the communal rejoicing which is of a violent nature, a ritual ceremony of exorcism which is a brutal savage reprisal is however at the same time spoken with anguish. The final line in spite of the strong emotions expressed earlier, doesn't fail to shock us with its anguished, yet malicious spitting out of sounds.

"Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through."

The intricate weaving in Daddy of several strands gives it its complexity. There is on one level the nursery rhyme and fairy tale element which tones down the overwhelming horror and creates the impression of

patterned order in the poem. There is too the use of superstition with the sinister and dark connotations of ritual exorcism the myth of Dracula and the vampire which is hinted at and indicates the blood sucking nature of love in the poem, a love which drains and exhausts. The poem is also placed within a larger context, with the over tones of the Freudian Electra complex, the speaker re-enacting an eternal impulse. The clever placing of all this within this circle of the concentration camp brings the poem closer to the twentieth century experience, pointing out that psychic aberrations such as that exhibited by the speaker is a part of the violence of the world. The use of rhyme and sound repetitions too is complex; the alternation between love and hate are cleverly presented by sounds rising to a frenzied longing or harsh rejection. The sounds also produces in effect of simultaneity, the mingling and presence of love and hate - a united response. The content which seems rejection of the father is undercut by the predominantly "OO" sounds which give the impression of tenderness, gentle cooing concern. In' Daddy' too we find the supreme example of biography detail transformed into art, psychology translated into poetry and vision. Plath's father had died when she was nine ; she had attempted suicide at twenty and had been married at twenty seven to Ted Hughes. Yet within the context of the poem these facts work independent of their origin transcending and triumphing over them to enter the area of poems that live by their artistry and fidelity to universal experience.

These two poems from ARIEL are only two of the many which exhibit Plath's control over her personal horrors and griefs, through a technical mastery that lends objective reality to these poems. The little poem which present her dominant motif

> "And I
> Am the arrow
> The dew that flies
> Suicidal"

the poem 'Tulips' with her confinement in a mental asylum, the Bee poems and 'Little Fugue' with a quiet anguish of a

> "Such a dark funnel, my father
> I see your voice
> Black and leafy..."

all exhibit the control of the images, tone and voice that characterise 'Lady Lazarus' and 'Daddy' so that the reader is left with the impression that Plath has got confession firmly under the control of art.

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A Response to Pound's Rihaku - "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter"

"Ezra Pound never translates 'into' something already existing in English;" - sounds strange, but he believes that "something new" must be made to happen in English verse, Only he has the boldness and resourcefulness to make that "something new" happen.

Take his translation of Rihaku's "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter". The poet has chosen days in the life of a Chinese girl of comfortable status and means. The letter is to her husband, bridging the gap in their separation in time and distance. The poem is the voice of the lady speaking her childhood, her marriage, and the inevitable parting from her husband. We see a definite progress in time, encompassed in the verses.

Nonage years -

"while my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers."

We are whisked down the passage of time from "now" to "then". It stirs up those half forgotten memories, and right across our "inner eye" flash glimpses of our childhood days; we are transported from the drudgery and complexity of our toil, to the placid, ephemeral past. We have the child, fresh and naive, for whom days will not end as they go on living in Chokan:

"You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums"

ah! for those guileless days of childhood - "Two small people without dislike or suspicion" - it is the sigh of the lady reminiscing the child she was.

The two succeeding verses now portray the growing maturity of the girl to womanhood. With her marriage, at fourteen, to her playmate who has now gained dominance, and is "My Lord you," she steps down in submission to the inevitable male supremacy. A coy young maiden now emerges, who "never laughed being bashful". Inspite of all that talk of "Women's Lib" don't we too, at times, surrender the equality and freedom of childhood and tread in all submissiveness!

Another year rolls by. The lady, now fifteen, is on the brink of full womanhood. Love, like a flash flood, comes singing in; she desires her dust be mingled with his, "forever and forever and forever", with no thought of parting - "Why should I climb the look out?"

At sixteen the inevitable happens. He has to leave her to pursue the world of business in a faraway place. She is lonely and forlorn; even the gay chattering of monkeys, engaging creatures at best, so like gossipy humans, becomes tiresome and sorrowful. The poet has sought to use the commonplace in a different light. Haven't we too had these dark moments, when the bright blue and gold of a beautiful day, only evokes thoughts of sadness and foreboding. The sadness and loneliness isolate the lady. She lives in utter seclusion, never venturing forth, so that by "the gate the moss is now grown" so deep, it defies clearing - adding to the picture of desolation. She remembers this sadness is reciprocal: "you dragged your feet when you went out".

The simplicity in the choice of words conveys the distress at parting, the young man torn between the calling of his profession, and

the love and security of his household. There is no wallowing in sentimentality. There is a simple truth in this parting, full of that unexplainable sadness and silent grief, so different from the usual passionate stormy tears of the usual partings.

The seasons change. Autumn serves only as a bitter reminder of the blissful summer. Now consigned to the past is the summer of their youth, for the parting has brought the sudden realization, " I grow older ". Doubts creep in-is he still true? does he love her as dearly as he did at the parting ? why doesn't he write to her? A cocoon of sadness envelops her. And she writes from her heart pleading in her simplicity and plainness :

> " Please let me know beforehand,
> and I will come out to meet you
> As far as Cho—fu—sa."

She wants to hasten the moment of re-union, for only when he returns will life which is in suspended anticipation, commence functioning once again.

One may say here is just a portrayal of a young girl, newly wed and enamoured of her husband. But the simplicity and truth of it all touches us—we know that she is genuine, true, insecure, and still very young. What is striking about the poem is its stark simplicity. It is simple, naive, plain, and true, free from the passions usually made to go with love, revealing the progression of the lady's life in its simplest form. The poet however hasn't laid the bones bare. He has left us to probe and uncover and with a sense of wonderment—how is it going to end.

Pound retains the Chinese locale of that particular century, with an art peculiar to himself, and avoids the temptation to impose familiar English/American touches. In this poem we have that touch of "something new" so typical of Ezra Pound. Because in translating he does not consign this story to an occurrence of yester year; under his choice of words and phrases the narration becomes a thing of the moment, vivid and embracing, and involving the reader in every change of mood or progress in time. The narration never falls flat. In a series of moving pictures the poet conveys the involvements, till the final syllable has been sounded.

Is this the mind of the ancient poet Rihaku, or is this the skilful handling of available material by Ezra Pound, that conveys this feeling of movement and vitality ?

Should a protest of 'gilding the lily' be raised, one could in all sincerity, remark in support of Pound, that even lilies can be made to appear to their full advantage, if arranged artistically in a suitable manner.

SHARON D'MONTE
III B.A.

Notes:

1. *The Translations of Ezra Pound* with an introduction by Hugh Kenner. (London : Faber & Faber, 1970), p. 9.

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Rough Passage—Crisis in Identity

(Paper presented at the seminar in " Indian writing in English " held in Ethiraj College, in Jan.'78.)

R. Parthasarathy's " Rough Passage " may be considered as an artistic piece in miniature confronting in poetic terms the crisis in identity that all humanity faces. That this is one of the major themes will be shown through an analysis of the titles as related to the content and the imagistic text-motif in the text of the collection.

The usual controversies as the 'Indianness' of the English of the Indian creative writer, or his sensibility are needlers as is evident in the following quotations. One is from Kamala Das:

" The language I speak
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queerness
All mine, mine alone, it is half-English. If
Indian, funny perhaps but it is honest".

The other is from Henry James:

" One's own language is one's mother. But the language one adopts as a career as a study is one's wife and it is with one's wife that one sets up house......English is a very faithful and well-conducted person, but she will expect you too not to commit infidelities. On those terms she will keep your house well."

In the case of "Rough Passage", what is important is not the ' Indianness ' in the language but the crisis of identity which any Indian or non-Indian artist writing in a bi-lingual and bi-cultural tradition will face.

"Rough Passage" is a collection of thirty-seven poems written over a period of twenty years. The poems have been so arranged as to ensure a continuity that would characterise a single poem. The poet deals with the qnestion of language and identity and with the inner conflict that arises from being brought up in two different cultures. "Rough Passage" has been described as a sort of overture, in an unpretentiously modern line and voice made with the aim of starting a dialogue between himseif and his Tamil past".

The title " Rough Passage " and the sub-titles "Exile" "Trial" and "Homecoming" clearly reveal the traditional phases involved in the journey of life. In the passage through life, one does rough it out, going through a period of exile, of alienation, a period of trials and tribulations and the fortunate few do enjoy a happy homecoming.

"Passage" is no doubt a hackneyed and overused metaphor as Whitman's poem or Fosters novel "A Passage to India" or Chaudury's "A Passage to England" may signify. But it becomes significant in the context of the artistic personal experience. Here is a poet who is in the throes of a deep-seated conflict, a conflict which has cultural roots. Like many other Indians born in his time, R. Parthasarathy was fed on "English manna" so much so the Alibaba's cave of native linguistic and cultural treasures was almost unknown to him. Like many of his contemporaries whose parents and off-springs could not resist the lure of an English education, R. Parthasarathy had the best of it in Christian missionary institutions in Bombay. Having been weaned away from Indian traditions and culture, the "English Brahmin" could not fully understand it. To find a passage in this uncertain cultural zone which baffles by its heterogeneity would indeed be a matter of roughing it out. The passage cannot be smooth or pleasanf for him who

has not trodden it. Others may have, but to take the initiative even though the promise of homecoming is there, is a matter of painful decision making. It is the ironical reversed dilemma of Robert Frost's "The Road no taken".

The other "passage", the road to English culture and English life so easily accessible as it seems through a mastery of the language, seems less fraught with problems of identity. Equipped with a coveted English education and a Master's Degree in the literature and language of the imperial race, no Indian could make a false move and least of all R. Parthasarathy who had the additional qualificafion of being a poet in English. But the disillusionment of the cultural alien comes full cycle in the frank narration of the English experience. The tragedy of the sensitive Indian who is an alien in his land because of his English education and is still an alien in England in spite of it is poignantly highlighted when he cannot really identify himself with the English situation. The deadlock in the poem is this painful realisation that "Passage there is none" when there is a painful loss of identity and the poet is neither Indian nor English and approximates to a kind of "Indish" against which his refined intellect naturally revolts.

The salient feature of this identity-crisis is the unyielding spirit of the man and artist. It is this that makes him reach home base his own Tamil past and present, the familiar Kodambakkam fleas and the poetry of Konarak.

While the content analysis in relation to title, may refer to life-experience, the title may be extended to the art experiencc of writing in Engiish, the experience of the "legendancy craftsman who roughs out, cuts, and sets his form as a Sculptor would extract his art from hls material. "(Deshpande Gauri's contemporary Indian Poetry in English). To say that R. Parthasarathy has made a "passage" in the world of English Poetry would be an understatement.

The first section "Exile" which consists of eight poems poses some very prickly problems which have disturbed other poets like Nissim Ezekiel and K . D. Katrak. Who is an exile? Is he one who uses an alien language felicitously? Even so, how is he an exile in his own country? Reading the poems one feels that the rheme is not so much "Exile" as imposed by others as a tragic self-alienation, a self-imposed withdrawal due to a pathetic failure to accept kindred relationships. But this experience results in a mature confrontation with the facts of the case:

> "There is something to be said for exile
> You learn roots are deep.........
> That language is a tree, loses colour
> Under another sky........." (Exile 2)

Where Ezekiel has accepted the problems of the bi-cultural situation which is accentuated in his case due to his being a Beni-Jew, R. Parthasarathy questions it and tries to come to terms with it with an objectivity and intellectuality which makes the language the language of the exterior thus highlighting the psychological impact of the poem.

In "Exile" the ironic incongruity of the cultural alien is frankly exposed. "Dressed in tweeds or flannels" he atands spart to view the English scene. The panorama of the English scene is there, but so the humdrum of every day life.

> "The noises of early trams, the milkman
> And events of the day become
> Vocal in the news boy." (Exile-2)

The joke is on the poet, for the daily routine is the same the world over whatever be the geographic or even cultural distance. But initially the 'alienness' is emphasised

and only mature retrospection bring out the basic similarity in this juxtaposition of the grand and the ordinary.

Yet the poet exclaims on his return to India "Between us there is no commerce."

His alienation in a foreign strand where he expected to be accepted has served to intensify his 'alienness' in his own country. This poignancy of a dual role (a schizophrenic role) emerges with full force in 'Exile 2.'

> "He had spent his youth whoring
> after English gods."

In Exile 7, it takes on a questioning attitude.

> "What have I come
> here for from a thousand miles ?"

Even the coldly objective assessment in the lines "the hour glass of the Tamil mind is replaced by the chronometer of Europe."

and "My life has come full circle
I must give quality to the other half."

only emphasise the tragedy of a split personality. The irony is that it is not really the artist's fault. Probably it is due to this that one may feel a sense of kinship with the artist as it is our problem too. Here also is an instance to defend the poet against the change of "coldness and reticence", The change that he does not really 'move' his readers.

This "exile" is eminently important in the quest for identity for it is an experience which does not merely involve a certain loss, a losing of face, a "forfeiting of the embarrassing innocence in the scramble to be man but also the acquisition of the Wordsworthian philosophic mind." In the difficult process of growing up, one has to suffer, get hurt and realise the intrinsic value of one's own racial identity, of one's cultural roots.

It is the 'felt-need' of any human being and more so of the sensitive artist to "discover himself." Identity, in the sense of one's "true and active self-hood" is the ultimate concern of a committed, creative artist for he has no existence without it. "Rough Passage" transmits this desperate quest into poetic terms, especially in 'Exile'.

What kind of identity is sought? Is it an individual, national, regional or "a global one? The poem described as 'a dialogue with his Tamil past" may make it an individual and regional identity. It also throws into relief the fact that the exile is "twice-exiled" - exiled from his state and also from his country. An identity with his Tamil past is probably the first step towards his own indianisation tho' in the light of successional moves one can't accept this fully. A related problem is the fitness' of this theme. How can so personal an experience have universal-dimensions? The 'Poetic worth' would largely depend upon how the artist has deployed the riches of the language. A study of poetic craft is beyond the purview of this paper which seeks to show that the theme is the quest for identity which transcends temporal or spatial barriers.

Though the second section 'Trial' (15 poems) begins with a preoccupation with death, the theme is definitely the theme of love, love as it affects the individual. The poems are of varied appeal and what the poet celebrates is the 'rainbow of touch' that holds him spell-bound. While there are flashes of felicitous poetry, the superfluity of erotic details bordering on the sensual does detract from poetic quality. But what does come through with full force is the TOTAL response of the poet to this thrilling experience. This search for identity in this human experience, results in the fruitful discovery of man's infinite potential for love the fascinating reality that "love

never really palls" (5) the "plessure of love is elliptic. wholesome" (5) that love is "touchable, expungable" (6), that nights help love to achieve a lucid exclusiveness and the "bodies scrape home for passions older than the stones of Konarak" However, the maturity of the artist's identity is seen in highlighting the transcience of this physical love. Poems 1, 10, 11, 12, 13 show the active concern with death - and in this context love becomes something 'perishable, trite and a wreath of empty words"- no more than 'ripples is the deep well of the throat' (11). The thought that "we live our lives forever leave—taking" while chastening the poet-artist also fills him with terror. The 'familiar aura' are no longer around him but an 'Octopus past'. Poems 12, 13 indicate a weariness, with the past (which one may rightly construe to be the English past) and possibly the immediate present in the lines "The heart isn't hospitable anywhere." The past is an "imperfect stone" and poem 15 shows the agony of endeavour to perfect his identity based on the lessons of the past:

> "the tight fist of my throat reeks
> of the sweat
> of winds......
> the flaws show, I polish
> The stone, sharpen the lustre to a point."

No search for identity can be without a period of testing-testing of past experience. testing of values. 'Trial' in Rough Passage thus becomes a moment of testing and of reckoning too. While the bliss of fulfilment in love is celebrated to the point of ecstasy, there is the counter-pointing awareness and mature realisation that love is not all in discovering one's selfhood, other experiences as that in England do count. What is most important is the meaningful cohesion of life and art, their interrelatedness and so it becomes a "question of living it all again."

Thus home base is reached in the section titled "Homecoming." The poet has reached Madras, the capital of his home-state. But "Homecoming" is the discovery of one's true self and not merely the physical presence in one's place. The setting may facilitate his but it is the "homecoming" of the intellect and the emotion where the individual has at least partially resolved the painful conflicts of the past. Again it cannot be the facile escape of "there's no place like home." While it has been a rough passage it may still be a rough coming both for the artist and man. For the artist there still remains the question of acceptance—how far will the world accept him as a poet in an alien tongue? And the man still cannot accept him fully as he is yet to identify himself with his language:

> "I falter, I stumble
> Speak a tired languag e
> wrenched from its sleep In the Kural"

This is the basic problem of the Tamil poet who uses a too-literary language. The 'true-lag' that separates the kInd of English that Indians use and the living English spoken in England is ironically emphasised even in the case of written and spoken Tamil and R. Parthasarathy trying to write in Tamil has to face this painful reality in 'Homecoming.'

But the conviction that one's past in one's own culture and language which is the psychological make-up of any can man best form the 'staple of one's lines' is expressed simply but vividly in 'Homecoming' 2

> "How can foreign poets
> Provide the staple of your lines?
> Turn inward. Scrape the bottom of
> your past"

Optimism coupled with a certain rueful acceptance of things as they are at home characterises the poet's endeavours to

reinstate himself in his own dravidic and Brahmanic culture.

In these poems, there is a felicitous re-capturing of experience through nostalgic recollection which has resulted in some artistically finished pieces like 3, 8, 13 and 14, to name a few. Such references to "rice-and-pickle afternoon, "mother's turmeric days," "father droning the four thousand" makes him personal. It is almost as if with Wordworth, he seems to assert that the child is the father of the man. But the other poems in the same section give the impression that **this is what it should be** but **it is not so** in his case. The mature realisation that he has "whored after English gods," that he has practised deception is there and this is also responsible for the sardonic humour in lines such as :

" for scriptures I recommend
the humble newspaper", (14)
" And marriage made it worse
He had not read his Greck poets
well " (12)

But R. Parthasarathy is essentially a serious poet, and the graver implications of 'Home coming' loom large. He may profess to be satisfied, going through life with the small change of uncertainties yet the future is not so small an issue. He cannot as he wishes, take refuge in the last refinement of speech —silence. Though the artisit may assert that poetry should approximate to the "condition of silence" and offer this as a reason for not writing poetry in English or in Tamil it stands to reason that it is poetry that is articulated that is heard and therefore appreciated. Unheard melodies may be sweeter, but the heard melody is what remains. With G. Deshpande we only hope that R. Parthasarathy will continue to write having cleared conflicts in his mind.

What the final identity Is in 'Homecoming' remains inscrutable. While the English experience was necessary to realise one's roots, there still can be no total rejection of the language which has taken root in India. The crucial personal experiences recalled vividly in poetry reveal the growth into maturity of the man and the artist especially his sense of responsibility towards life and the quest for perfection and this can be deemed a fruitful discovery of self.

The fragility of the experiences leading to self-discovery is underscored time and again in the image of glass that is recurrent in the text. Even air is the 'glass of air' the Tamil mind is an 'hourglass' the 'lens of noon' burns smoking the glass of bodies, the flesh was the glass: "I crashed a glass house hit by the stone of father's death." If, as has been maintained images are the key to unlock the personality of the artist and man, we may read into this repetitive strain, the delicately fragile quality of the experience, how easily it can be shattered. It may also reflect on the sense of insecurity of the artist whose identity is a mystery to himself and how at every point he is afraid to lose something, to break something in the frantic endeavour to find himself safely at home after the bitter-sweet experiences of exile and trial.

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Experiencing drama—

Ottayan (the lone tusker)—A play by Kavalam Narayana Panikkar

"He was an observer, not a participant. It was always like that in war though he had not realized it before. You were never you. The I part of you was somewhere else"[1]

A dislocation of context, and the Chakyar[2] withdraws the I part of him :

"My beloved woodsman, I am really frightened. I am quite sure that within my mind I am afraid. Don't you get the impression that I am afraid? You should have got that impression. Or is not because I am not acting ? (Turning to the auidence).

In such a helpless condition, how can anyone act ?"[3]

With perfect ease he can distance an achievement, having mesmerized his aggressors into supporting a pantomime beam.

"Are they two lizards perched on the ceiling ?

They seem to be bearing the weight of the entire ceiling. However I have won, and they have lost; I don't propose to make such a claim. For, I am after all, a loner."[4]

The Chakyar is the artist creating worlds, looking back to Hindu and Greek traditions of dance and mime, where rhythmic movement leads on to the experience of the divine, transforming the dancer into whatever role he impersonates. The technique assumes proportions when we consciously remember that the Chakyar gives us no clarifications in his switching of roles—a rare liberty one finds in the theatre—the liberty the cinema is allowed in transposing scenic shots in emotional retrospect. For example Tom in 'The Glass Menagerie' is the narrator who explains his stand—how else is he to recreate a memory play. For the Chakyar there are no such considerations. Here lies the fascinating dimension of Kavalam Narayana Panikkar's "Ottayan", played by a Chakyar who nimbles roles and identities. We have the familiar narrator—the Tom of 'The Glass Menagerie' the Stage Manager of "Our Town"—whose committment to art gives him cinematographic transformations. He is the lone traveller in a jungle.

"Oh ! what shall I do now ? Whither shall I go in this wild jungle?......Is it not a herd of grazing elephants that I see yonder? Are these elephants but a cluster of hillocks hugging the darkness to be distributed at dusk"?[5] This fear overwhelms him into the elephant he fears; he becomes the lone tusker who in the space of lines becomes the artist creating rhythm with his kuzhithala.[6] The Chakyar alienates the I part of him from these personae. He is the lone traveller watching the lone tusker charging for him. He is also the artist about to stake the profession of drama. These two aspects come together when we consider that the Chakyar who plays these roles is standing apart. It is this detachment that makes possible the quoted reaction :

"Come what may, let me try a bit of acting in front of this elephant. If I am blessed enough, the elephant may be frightened by my performance and may go back. In that case I won't have to give up my life; that would mean that the art of acting has triumphed. (He pretends to be an elephant and dances to the accompainment of drum beats. While the performance is going on, a woodsman appears on the stage. Even after his arrival, the Chakyar continues dancing. The woodsman on his part, also acts as if he were seeing a real elephant in front of him)

Woodsman: Are you an elephant, wretched guy?

Chakyar: Yes, I am a lone tusker in rut that has lost its way."[7]

Pantomime is an integral part of this play. In a context of shifting identities pantomime is crucial. It is through the Chakyar's pantomimic realization of the forest that the auidence is able to fix the forest, and set the Chakyar in its context. It is through the traveller's visual concentration that the auidence locates the elephants, particularly the loner in rut. It is also pantomime that makes this lone traveller the elephant in rut. Like Kathakali, like the Roman variant of the Greek drama, pantomime because a solo dance, with the tusker moving downstage and reciting the verse in the persona of the Chakyar:

"In fear I walked on, the woodsman struck me hard;
I paused in grief,
He roared from behind in command:
The thoughts of the very guardian deity in mind,
I flung myself to such justice as the forest proffers,
My fear and grief vanished."[8]

Upstage, marking a background is the woodsman setting movement to words. Another instance of pantomime in the play is the Chakyar and Woodsmen lifting beams to pulsating drumbeats, which pound to non-existence; the demarcation between illusion and reality. I assume an audience also loses sense of time and place, to be jerked back to an objectivity with an intruding narrator. We are pleased with the clever artist who has mesmerized his aggressors. And just as we are congratulating him, we are made to feel the stupidity of our involvement in mere pantomime. "Don't you see the wild cats lifting the beam! From two guys supporting such a weighty beam, you can guess their strength."[9] I find the effect paralleled in 'King Lear' In the pantomime suicide of Gloucester over the cliffs of Dover. The audience realizes a Brechtian alienation: that the Woodsmen have no beam to lift, that Gloucester's suicide is on a flat stage. The play concludes on a note which leaves an audience uncomfortable. "Chakyar: Meanwhile I shall recite a verse, close this drama and then join them to bear the weight. The audience may utilize that time for leaving the theatre".[10] One reacts with war memories. "Hard to believe. Impossible to believe that other life, so near in time and distance, was something led by different men. Two lives that bore no relation to each other."[11]

"Ottayan" is a piece of art; a phase in acting, an individual's creation. It is an arrogant assertion of the profession of acting, the power of the theatre to manipulate minds. If the artist could get through to the dense insensitive minds of the woodsmen with the sounds of his kuzhithala, and awaken them to a lyricism, to dance, one fears the pliant clay an intelligent audience would become in his clever hands. A bare stage that offers no potential for realistic makeup or costume is the actor's sacred ground to take an audience to peoples and places, and return eventually, to the actor, who in the first place introduces the audience to the theatre. We see the Chakyar objectively analysing his play the Lokadharmi and Natyadharmi aspects, styles of articulation. He familiarises the audience with himself, the actor.

"My name is Parameshwaran. Well versed in the art of speech and being incarnated in a family of Kusilavas or Sutas, I took up acting as my profession. And today I propose to enact an extremely and entirely enjoyable story for the benefit of an audience."[12]

The audience leaves the theatre listening to the actor who has circled his performance:

"who has won, and who has lost, I am not eager to learn;
To wish all happiness to you
Bharatha Vakya will be sung"[13]

The drumbeats pound, the barestage takes on dimensions as the Chakyar swings into the gait of an elephant carrying a log, bringing the play to its close. For the audience "Ottayan" is an experience in art, in the physical nature of drama, unclouded by the sentimentality of subjectivity. Here is art that can give a pattern to an otherwise unrelated series of experiences. One studies techniques in theatre, put to masterful use by a Chakyar, and comprehends with a clarity the sense of order which makes a mosaic a piece of art. One realizes the alienation and detachment so essential for an experiencing of the physical nature of drama. It is not the story, not the sentiments, but the rendering of technique, the mastery and fluidity in the rendering that makes it distinctive art.

One remembers Wallace Stevens :
"I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill."[14]

Notes :

1. Paul Fussel, THE GREAT WAR AND MODERN MEMORY (London : Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 193

2. The Chakyars are a community of artistes who perform the Koothu and Koodiyattam in the Koothampalams of Kerala temples.

3. Kavalam Narayana Panikkar, OTTAYAN (Trivandrum : Thiruvarang, 1978), p. 29

4. ibid, p. 34

5. ibid, p. 29

6. A pair of small cymbals

7. Kavalam Narayana Panikkar, OTTAYAN, p. 29

8. ibid, p. 31

9. ibid, p. 34

10. ibid, p. 34

11. Paul Fussell, THE GREAT WAR AND MODERN MEMORY, p. 64

12. Kavalam Narayana Panikkar, OTAYAN, p. 27

13. ibid, p. 34

14. Wallace Stevens, 'Anecdote of the Jar', THE TREASURY OF AMERICAN POETRY selected by Nancy Sullivan. (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., '78), p. 382

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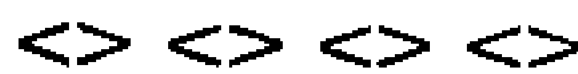

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